

**IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE AND THE PROBLEM OF
REFLEXIVITY AND EXPLANATION.**

The problem of identity which inevitably involves the notion of 'difference' within itself, has been the central concern of all philosophical thought from the beginning. So also has been the relationship which it has to time and consciousness which introduce a radically different dimension to the problem as they bring in the notion of 'change' within the notion of 'identity' itself. Self-consciousness introduces yet another dimension as it raises the problem of that which is an object to it. Consciousness is generally supposed to be of 'something' which is an 'object' to it and when such a consciousness, itself becomes an object is introduced at two levels. The first level consists of that which is an 'object' to consciousness and the second consists of this whole complex constituted by "consciousness -and-object" when it becomes an object to self-consciousness.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that one has to distinguish between the identity of the different relations which obtain between these different 'wholes'. there is first the identity of the object which becomes related to some other 'object', then there is the problem of the identity of the relation between these objects which may be two or more in number. Then, there is the problem of the identity of the relation between consciousness and the 'object' or 'objects' which it is conscious of.

Besides this there is of course, the problem of the identity of consciousness to which the object or objects are 'objects' in the epistemological sense of the term. At still another

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level, there is the problem of the identity of the relationship between self-consciousness and the "consciousness" which is an 'object' to it.

The problem of the identity of self-consciousness introduces a new dimension as there the 'difference' is introduced in the very notion of identity, particularly at the 'existentially' experienced level. There are other complications and qualitative differences at each level which we may ignore for the present.

This may appear to be too complex a formulation but it is an ever-present feature of the reality as it is 'lived' by everyone in everyday life. The awareness of 'self' occurs at the level of 'self-consciousness' and it is here that the whole drama of mutually influencing interrelationships is played to the amazement and bafflement of all the observers including the self which is both the 'observed' and the observer at this level. To 'self-consciousness the consciousness, which is always a 'consciousness -of - object or of objects-in-interrelationship', appears primarily in terms of its relationship to them. And, as they in their own turn are primarily seen in terms of their relationship to one another, their consciousness has to be seen in terms of the relationship to this relationship. It is a second-order relation whose primary content is the first-order relationship because of the object apprehended by it. The relationships are mutually transforming where the characters and qualities of the apprehending consciousness are determined in a sense not normally understood by those who have thought about it in case they have done so.

smell along with those that are spatial and temporal in character. The temporal relations, of course, pose a problem of a different kind as they assume a succession of the states not only in the object or objects apprehended but also a succession in the states of consciousness along with the memory of what had happened before with the added awareness that they occurred before.

Kant was aware of this problem, but he did not see that the same problem arises in the context of simultaneous apprehension of different objects separated in, or by, space. The simultaneity of apprehension requires as much the unification of diversity and annulment or suspension of differences as does the succession in time. Annulment of spatio-temporal differences in consciousness and their unification in it without destroying the distinctions, however, meets a difficulty in the fact that consciousness itself is involved in time, a fact that is 'known' only in self-consciousness.

The objectification of consciousness that occurs at this level renders it a character whose intrinsic ambiguity makes it difficult to understand as it simultaneously makes it a subject and object at the same time. As 'object it has all the characters of 'objecthood' in the sense that it has not only properties of its own and the relationships that it has to the sensuous object at the first level along with the spatio-temporal relations among them, but also an awareness of the inadequacies and imperfections in respect of both the qualities and relations that it has in both directions.

There are thus three orders of relationship which themselves may have an indefinite multiplicity and variations within them. The first order, of course, is that of 'object' apprehended by the senses with all the qualities and relationships amongst them. But as at the primary level, 'objects' are not only perceptual but also those which are conceptual or imaginary or even linguistic or symbolic in nature, the realm of 'object' is so diversified that it is not easy to take hold of it in its totality.

The diverse 'worlds' constituted by difference kinds of 'objects' have not yet been mapped or investigated except in the context of what has come to be called "varieties of reference". The primacy accorded to objects which are, or can be, apprehended through the senses has stood in the way of all such attempts as it is difficult not to think of all other types of objects as not being objects in the real sense for the simple reason that they seem to have only a derivative reality, or is as abstractions from the primary living concrete world of objects which gives them whatever reality they have as they can be understood only in reference to them. But as everyone knows their distinctive being refuses to be reduced in such a way and the history of the cognitive enterprise of man may be seen in the perspective of this essential conflict which is irresolvable in principle, though the dialectical conflict between them has given rise to what we know today as "knowledge", whether of nature or man or anything else.

Yet, there is another dimension of this conflict which has not been noticed at all. This is the conflict between different 'worlds' of non-sensuous objects that primarily arise in the

context of the human understanding of the 'world' constituted by man's seeking for the understanding of this world.

The relationship between 'objects' of different levels is in fact a relation between different 'worlds' in which man lives. And, men may be distinguished by the 'world' they habitually live in, even though the world created by sense perception remains the 'common world' in terms of which they recognise and negotiate with each other. Yet, though this provides the common meeting ground, it does not result either in the meeting of minds or hearts or of a feeling that they are 'wayfarers' or pilgrims on a common journey seeking something which gives meaning to their life or provide that from which they draw their spiritual sustenance which distinguishes them from all other living beings who also "live".

The relationship between objects of the perceptual world is thus spatio-temporal and aesthetic on the one hand and causal functional on the other. All these three types of relationships relate to consciousness in diverse ways. But the two primary relationships that consciousness has to them may be described as 'passive' and 'active'. Each type of relationship of them has some element of the other in a subdued and marginal manner. The former results in what has been called bhokariva in the Indian tradition. In other words, it is the attitude of enjoyment which begins to have a more active element in it as it becomes more subtle and sophisticated. This may give rise to a still more active attitude which seeks to transform the objects and their relationships in such a way as to yield more and more subtle, sophisticated and complex 'pleasures'. But except in the case of

visual and auditory 'worlds' the 'pleasure' received never crosses the quality of just being a sensation and hence fails to achieve the aesthetic quality which requires its overcoming, or at least minimization as a necessary prerequisite for itself.

The aesthetic relationships which affect consciousness as powerfully at the perceptual level seem missing in 'objects' at other levels, though feelings of 'relevance' and 'appropriateness' seem to be present there. But even these seem to be absent in the context of 'objects' that are apprehended in dreaming and day-dreaming, even though they are felt as pleasant or unpleasant and, at times, even as morally degrading or undesirable.

The autonomy and relationship between these different 'worlds' in which man lives has not been a subject of phenomenological study, but they are all connected by the consciousness which freely moves amongst them. The relation of consciousness to them, and their relation to consciousness thus assumes a centrality which subsumes and transforms all other relationships that obtain between 'objects' of a particular realm and those that obtain between the realms. The consciousness that is at the center of all these relationships is, however, not a monadic consciousness. It inhabits a world where there are other 'living beings' which also possess consciousness and amongst whom there are many who share the same human characteristics that one has.

The relation of consciousness to objects is not the same as the relations between 'objects' and the relation of self-consciousness to consciousness is also of a very different order.

The three different orders of relationship and the relationships amongst them are radically affected by the fact that amongst 'objects' there are not only 'living beings' which possess consciousness, but also persons who, besides being conscious are also self-conscious and hence have the diverse order of relationships that any such being possesses. The 'world' constituted by persons with self-consciousness is, however, arbitrarily divided in terms of gender and hence the relationships between them are constituted not only by the fact of self-consciousness, but also by the fact that the 'self' is seen in terms of 'gender' and identified with it. The bifurcation in terms of gender is found in most living beings and its relation to the maintenance of the species through reproduction is fairly well established. But the transformation that this 'divide' undergoes at the human level and the problems that it gives rise to have seldom been articulated by thinkers who have reflected on the human situation. The conflict between 'sex' and 'reproduction' is writ large on the human consciousness. This, at the level of self-consciousness, becomes so foundational that amongst human beings, for example, it is impossible not to think of oneself as either the one or the other. It is true that the bare sense of 'I-ness' does not, or may not, involve this. But the moment one thinks of the "I", one can not but think of it in terms of gender which again is understood in bodily terms. The point is that there is no such thing as sheer identity at either the level of consciousness or self-consciousness. At the level of consciousness, it usually is in terms of 'this' this the most of the time. What happens to this at the level of "I-consciousness" is difficult to say, but there is what may be called a "species-identity" or identity in terms of the species to which one belongs, a fact which is evident at least in the behaviour of

animal concerned. But it should be remembered, that one generally denies "self-consciousness" to animals who are usually "granted" only consciousness in case they belong to higher levels. There is, however, not only a sense of identity in terms of the 'species' to which one belongs, but also the awareness of the identity of the 'other' as belonging to one's own species or to a different one. The consciousness of the 'other' belonging to the same species as one's own is, however, always differentiated in terms of the gender to which the other belongs. It is not clear, however, if the differential identity in terms of "gender" operates in the case of the members of the other species which are recognized as belonging to a species different from one's own. At the level of self-consciousness on the other hand, the 'gender identity' operates not only with reference to the "I" when it becomes an object to reflexive thought, but the 'other' is also 'seen' in the same way and that too at the 'individual' level. This is important as the whole world created by this foundational 'gender-identity' at the individual level both in terms of the "I" and the 'other' has not been seen as defining the human situation in a way that no other identity does.

The relations between the individuals in terms of gender which cannot be "dis-owned" or "denied" at the level of thought, whether at the level of consciousness or at the level of self-consciousness has not been the subject of serious reflection either amongst philosophers or 'seekers' of the spirit up till now. The Buddha and the Mahāvīra show in their discussion that they always treated the others not as just the 'other', but as man or woman leading to such discrimination between them which cannot be regarded as just or even human on either moral or spiritual ground. The identification of the self and the

individual 'other' in terms of gender is so irreducible that it is openly visible even at the highest level of spiritual realization, even amongst those who are seeking complete de-identification with all "objectification" at any level whatsoever. In fact, the identification becomes transparently obvious when the 'other' happens to be of a sex different from one's own. The gender identification however, occurs only at the level where one "thinks" of oneself and not at the level where one is only conscious or aware of oneself. The level of "awareness" is not the level of thought specially when it is taken to be in the form of vyrttis and as constituted of vyrttis in the sense in which it is generally understood in the yoga tradition.

The consciousness that remains does not have any specific object or content, but still formulates or articulates as "I" in the sense in which Samkara, used the term. The "I" of Descartes on the other hand, is so enmeshed in the vyrttis indicated by the term "cogito" that it cannot occur without them and hence the Cartesian individuality of the "I" is radically different from that of Samkara. Samkara does not say "I think, therefore I am" as Descartes does. For him, the self is the referent of the term "I" independent of any content that is thought by it. In fact, it is the only constant that is ever present in the varying variegated play of content. But whatever the difference, the "I" of Samkara is still linguistic in character and as languages are plural in number the formulation of the "I" or its articulation cannot but be in the language of the person who utters it to himself or herself, the gender may be transcended or de-identified but not the language which constitutes, so-to say the spurious identity of oneself.

The problem of plurality of languages has not been dealt with in philosophy in the way it deserves to be. After all, there is no such thing as language but only languages and it will be strange for anyone to assert that the "aham" pratyaya of Śāṅkara has to be in Sanskrit alone. Yet, this obvious absurdity is found in almost all philosophical reflection in Sanskrit as, for some reason, they self-consciously regard Sanskrit as the only language even though they knew that there were others.

The "I" of the awareness thus, cannot be the "I" of any specific language, but of that which is trans-linguistic in character. But then one will have to accept that the 'thought' or even 'awareness' at the level of self-consciousness has to be trans-linguistic in essence. This will give rise to problems which, at the present level seem impossible to solve without postulating something non-linguistic which takes shape in the form of language but which is not ordinarily accepted in our lives. Bhartrahari's postulation of the levels of speech beyond the vaikhari attest to this, but they require an ontology to support it which will hardly be acceptable to anyone, as it will destroy the foundation on which the whole world of thought and action is "lived" by man.

Yet, whatever the problems raised by the necessity of postulating trans-linguistic level of thought, the problem raised by the trans-linguistic nature of the "I" is radically different. The sense of "I-ness" will have to be treated as co-eval with consciousness or as an intrinsic feature of it. Consciousness, thus, will have to be treated as an I-consciousness, or a consciousness that is always, first, of an "I" or just bare "I" and not of anything else that is distinct from itself. The "I-consciousness", however, will have to be seen as split

in two, depending on the primacy of the 'consciousness' or the "I" in it. The consciousness of 'I' is different from the "consciousness as I" even though it may be difficult to distinguish this at first sight.

The distinction is important as the consciousness of "I" already objectifies it in a sense which the 'I-consciousness' does not. The latter is entangled and even identified with consciousness in a sense which the earlier is not and can never be. In fact, consciousness has to be "I-consciousness" and there will be no difference in it from inconscient matter if it were not to be so. The consciousness of the "I", however, involves a bifurcation and duality which involves an "identification" with the "other" in the most intimate way possible. This is suggested by the Sāṃkhya notion of ahaṃkāra which is supposed to be both the result of this identification and its presupposition. The prakṛti, it should be noted, cannot have ahaṃkāra by definition as it is supposed to be unconscious in nature. But, then, does puruṣa, or the pure consciousness have ahaṃkāra in it? For the sāṃkhya it just cannot have it. Yet, it should have it if it is to be distinguished from prakṛti in its system. The ahaṃkāra or sense of 'I-ness' will, of course, have to be different from the other one and that is what we have tried to indicate by the term we have used above.

The Indian thinkers have struggled with the problem, but failed to come to terms with it because they did not see the distinction made above. Neither the advaitins nor the sāṃkhyans knew what to do with pure consciousness which, just because it is 'pure' cannot have any content or object in it, even if this object be itself. The idea that pure consciousness has to be nirviṣaya results in the manifest absurdity that consciousness

cannot be aware of itself as this will make it an object to itself and thus destroy its purity. The idea that it is svaprakasa or self-luminous does not and can not help to retrieve the situation, for if there is nothing to illuminate what can illumination do? The idea of drsta in samkhya fails for the same reason, though it could be saved if the purusa in the state of liberation, could be credited with the awareness of prakrti and its complete difference from it. The standard interpretation of samkhya, however, prohibits this and makes it collapse into the advaitic position a point we have argued and pointed out elsewhere.¹

Buddhism is not supposed to accept any idea of 'self' or what we have called the "I-consciousness" in it. But this is to think that "I-consciousness" can only be there if the 'I' is conceived of in a substantive manner. But this just is not the case. Neither the "consciousness of the 'I'" nor the "I-consciousness" need be conceived of in a substantive manner. Basically both are a consequence of the reflective nature of self-consciousness and the Buddhist self or the 'I' may be thought of in the manner of William James as a dynamic continuous flow of consciousness where each succeeding moment preserves and continues the process onward with additions, subtractions and modifications in which a series of 'I's' succeed each other providing continuity with change in both the consciousness of the 'I' and the 'I-consciousness'.

The Nyayaika sees the dilemma more clearly and opts for the position, that the self is "unconscious" or rather loses consciousness or reverts to non-conscious state in

1. Is Iswarakishan sankhya-karika Really Sankhyan, Philosophy-East and West, July, 1968

liberation, as the least trace of consciousness in it will force it to have an object or a visaya in it. Udayana's is the classic formulation of this position as he self-consciously puts the advaitic realisation of the self only as one step lower than that of Nyaya in his presentation of the subject.

But in whatever way the situation is interpreted the 'interpretation' arises from the same set of facts as existentially experienced. The interpretation, of course, affects the experience in its turn, creating an inner tension between the experience as it is experienced and the way it should or 'ought' to be experienced if the interpretation is accepted.

The history of the dynamic interplay between the 'experience' and the interpretation' in the various sadhanas called yoga in the Indian tradition is yet to be written. But beyond the two radically different forms that self-consciousness takes because of the fact that it is what it is, there is the third hidden dimension which paradoxically reveals itself only when self-consciousness, relapses back into consciousness, a fact which happens all the time.

Consciousness, it should be remembered, is not self-conscious all the time. In fact it cannot remain so, at least at the human level that we alone know of. Yet, the consciousness into which the self-consciousness relapses is not and can never be the same as a consciousness that has never become self-conscious. The former has not only

the 'memory' of self-consciousness in it, but also the actual possibility of becoming self-conscious once again within it.

The dynamic and dialectical interplay between self-consciousness and consciousness, however, is different from the interplay between consciousness of the 'I' and the 'I-consciousness' discussed above. The two interplays define and structure the human situation in such a way that they radically transform the problem of identity and difference as discussed in philosophical traditions up till now, whether they be those of the East or the West.

The roots of the identity thus lie in the 'I-consciousness' and the 'consciousness of the I', and at a deeper level in what we called the possibility of the 'I-consciousness'. The sense of difference lies therein also, but the identity is not only more fundamental now, but it is that which makes the distinction and the difference possible. The consciousness of the 'I' makes the objectification possible and thus becomes the basis of that primal distinction which provides the foundation of all difference later. But it is the relation between the 'I-consciousness' and the 'consciousness of the I' that is the basis of that identity in difference which becomes the paradigm or the ideal exemplar for all such relations at other levels. But neither the identity nor the difference nor the identity in difference, is of one type as has generally been believed in the discussion on the subject. Nor, for that matter, has the nature of 'real relations', both existential and non-existential, been considered from this perspective. The identity of relations, or their difference or the

identity in difference between them has been the subject of consideration and discussion as it should have been in the philosophical literature on the subject.

The relation between objects is continuously changing and as it is generally not symmetrical, it changes in different ways for entities between which the relation obtained earlier. The complexity introduced by relations which require more than two terms is baffling in itself but the dramatic change it introduces in relations that require only two terms is staggering indeed. The whole realm of society, polity and law is full of examples suggesting such situations and if one wants to find how 'chaos' can be created by a seemingly insignificant change in one of the relationships and order reemerging, if at all, we may find better examples in these realms than in nature where physicists, chemists and mathematicians have tried to discover it.

Identity is thus rooted in consciousness, and not in 'self-consciousness' as is generally held by almost everybody. But there it is implied as it should be, for the moment it becomes explicit it disempts or divides itself into the 'I-as-object' and that to which it is an 'object', the latter being necessarily presupposed by the 'objecthood' in which the 'I' is apprehended. The so-called atman or the self or the pure 'I' or the purusa or the witness-consciousness is always there as the necessary presupposition of the act of objectification which becomes transparent at the level of self-consciousness alone. The 'objectification', however, declares aloud the reality of difference and its transcendence in the reflexive act of self-consciousness without its annulment in any way whatsoever.

The problem of 'identity' and 'difference', thus cannot be understood without 'seeing' that identity is always more fundamental and the difference more 'real' at the phenomenological level of human experience which alone is relevant as the basis of discussion. At the level of theoretic cognition, on the other hand, the identity turns into the unity that unites the multiplicity in the act of cognition, which articulates itself in a sentential or propositional form at the human level. The transformation of the identity into the unity and of 'difference' into a plurality or multiplicity ensures that the cognitive enterprise of man is rooted in a foundational identity that belongs to consciousness at the human level where it achieves self-consciousness in a unique way.

The 'identity' and the 'unity' on the one hand and the 'difference' and the multiplicity on the other get fused at the level of feeling where phenomenological existential experience undergoes a transformation that has not been noticed up till now.

The identity of the relationship with the world of objects at all levels however is a function of the identity of one's relationship with oneself. And as the nature of this relationship to oneself happens to be, so is the nature of the relationship to everything else. The relationship to oneself is, however, itself differentiated in terms of knowing, feeling and willing and so also is the relationship to world of objects which is modeled on this relationship. The converse influence of the relationship to the world of object on the relationship of the self to itself, though always there, is mostly a subsidiary element in the makeup of the personality at the adult level. Perhaps, the growth of the personality may be seen in terms of an increasing lessening of this converse determination of the self's

relation to itself by its relationship to the world which consists of an intrinsic plurality and diversity of objects.

The primary relation, however, at all levels is in the mode of feeling as consciousness itself has to be seen and understood in terms of this basic fact for the simple reason that if there were to be no feeling, there will be no difference between inert matter and everything else that is supposed to be 'living' and 'conscious'. But the elements of knowing, and 'willing' undergo a radical transformation as the consciousness and self-consciousness of feeling develops at different levels. Knowledge is seen as that which can possibly bring about changes in feeling-states through the action based on it. At the center, however, there is always the feeling which both knowledge and action subserve in their different ways.

This, however, is not to suggest that hedonism is the truth of consciousness as Yajñavalkya argued long ago, or as Sidgwick tried to do self-consciously avoiding the naturalistic fallacy/inherent in it.

The world of feelings is too much associated with pleasure and pain in the popular mind and even great thinkers have not been able to escape it. But even a little reflection on one's own experience will reveal that it is not so and a 'look' at the life of others around one should confirm this. What will not appear as 'unnecessary' to one who really seeks pleasure in the accepted sense of the word. And, why make a distinction between pleasure and happiness and joy and all the other words which try to convey what cannot

really be conveyed by words. As for pain, who has counted its myriad forms or the shades of suffering one goes through life.

The point is that the world of feeling is uncharted, unmapped, unexplored except by the poet or the novelist or the artist who is generally lost in forms that evoke something that is inexpressible except through what is created by him. The thinkers, specially the philosophers, see as too irrational to be taken hold of by 'reason' which is the only tool. They possess to understand the reality around them. The subjectivity of feeling militates against the 'objectivity' of thought and its passionate existential intensity contradicts all that reason stands for.

To equate the 'feeling world' with pleasure and pain will be as correct as to equate knowledge with mere sensation or action with the reflex response one involuntarily makes all the time. It is, of course, true that like sensation and the reflex muscular response they provide the foundation and the basic reference point of all the complex construction built on that basis and that their basic roots lie in the body remains unquestioned at the human level. But the freedom and the distancing from the body is as evident here as in the case of knowledge and action and 'reductionism' is as much a fallacy here as there.

The problem of identity and difference, however, assumes a different form in the case of the world of feelings than it does in the case of knowledge and action. The identification with the world of feelings and the almost total submergence in it is a feature that is not to

be found in the same way in either knowledge or action. Strangely, feelings at every level, seem to mean the whole world to us and yet they remain dumb in a sense which is bewildering when contrasted with the unendingness of what is said about the realm of knowledge by man.

Identity in the realm of feeling, as in that of knowledge and action, comes from those deep underlying processual dynamic structures that give shape and direction to these in the constant process of change that seems to be such a permanent feature of consciousness at the surface level. But identity in terms of feeling provides not only the baseline on which identities of knowledge and action are formed, but is also more foundational and basic to the human person as it not only relates one to oneself but to others and the world in such a way that one relates to the 'world' through the others and to the others through the world in a manner where each reinforces the other in a complementary way.

Knowledge, except in the case of self-consciousness, is always of the 'other' and action, except in the case of meditation, contemplation or upasana is always in terms of an externality where some end in the outside world is sought to be achieved. The body may seem an exception, but as it is both an 'inner' and an 'outer' at the same time, both cognition and action in its case share the same dual character at the same time. Feeling on the other hand, is distinctly different in this regard as, at all levels, it refers only to the self and is generally identified with it, even when it is negative as in the case of pain when the body that feels it rejects it totally.

The world of feeling does not seem to have either difference or identity within it in the same sense as is found in those built around knowledge and action. Nor is the relation of the complex construction within the realm related to pleasure and pain the same as that which is found in knowledge and action. Their relation to the basic units out of which they are built is totally different. The difference emanates from the fact that feelings are not related to self and the object in the same way as they appear to be in knowledge and action. Neither the subject nor the object seem to be of any importance in comparison with the relationship that seems to be the essence between them. The preponderance of the object as in knowledge and of the subject as in action is annulled and a relation of equality seems to be established between the two. But this is a 'seeming' only an illusion fostered by the fact that a relation has to have terms in order to exist. But the fact that it is an illusion is easily realised when the feeling disappears and the terms between which it obtained are seen as hanging apart, having no 'meaning' apart from the relation which obtained between them. Something seems to have evaporated or vanished which lent them the 'realities' they felt as belonging to them. They are still there but only in the context of knowledge and action, bereft of the magical transformation which the feeling relation had endowed them with.

The problem raised by negative feelings on the one hand and unbelievable preponderances of the object in the drama of love, including friendship raise problems for the above formulation which seem intractable at first sight. But if the nature of the object in the latter case were to be seriously reflected upon, the situation will not seem as disparate or

the problem insoluble as it may have seemed in the first instance. An art object is not an 'object' in the usual sense of the term. Nor is a person an 'object' when it becomes a 'term' in a 'feeling relation' with someone who appears to be an 'other' but is not felt to be really so. The 'other', it should be remembered is not an 'object' either, or even a 'subject' in the epistemological sense of the term.

The case of an art object may be, of course, regarded as content of the world of feeling as it is an 'object' not only embodying and concretising feeling in itself, but also as being the creator of feeling without which it will not be what it is. In fact, it points to and evidences a fact that feeling themselves have a creative, dynamic aspect as they not only give rise to other feelings but engender that creative impulse which wants to express them in such a manner that they be fully apprehensible to all the faculties in man, including the sensory ones. This makes the world of feeling not only transcend the subjective in which they are considered to be inevitably involved, but gives an intersubjective objectivity which is available as a source of creative arousal in others in the same way as the ordinary natural world does. The dynamic and expressive nature of feelings leads in a way that is both subtle and invisible to the construction and constitution of an intersubjective world where feelings create the being of those that are related by it.

This may appear trivial or even tautologous to many but it does so only by forgetting what the world would be if there were no feelings in it. The relations between beings that are living are constituted by and in terms of feeling and feeling alone and both cognition and action are subservient to it. The ego – centric or self-centric or I-centric description

of feeling where the other is treated as the object and hence has to be granted, at least at the human level, an independent subjecthood, occurs because of the illusion that 'I' am the centre of the world constituted in this way. The truth is otherwise, I am not the centre, but only one of the terms in a relationship where the other is not only as important as 'I' but even more than it.

The two-term relationship as the paradigm for the understanding of feelings is only a convenient fiction or an institutionalized necessity as the binary treatment seems easy to handle in most domains one deals with. Besides this, there is the strange fact that intensity, depth and quality in this realm can only be realised between two persons, even though they require a supportive atmosphere from others around them.

The independence of feelings, or the desire for independence in this realm, may seem to be jeopardised by this, but it does so only because it is forgotten that, as we pointed out earlier, the world of feelings is not a 'self-enclosed', 'self-sufficient' still world which does not seek or demand a growth of itself in all dimensions in the same way as do other seekings of man. The seeking of a relationship is as much a 'seeking' as anything else, and a feeling-relationship is not an achieved stage of 'being' as most people seem to think. It requires a continuous striving or sadhana to fulfill the immanent ideal or purusartha involved in it. The illusion itself is at the root of that frustration and disappointment which inevitably befalls all those who share the illusion and make them into what may be called 'sceptics' of the realm of feelings, a term which up till now has not been used in this context.

The interactive realm of feelings, both in its dynamic and expressive aspects, gives rise to the socio-cultural realm in which institutional structures provide a quasi-permanent base to the realm where individuals and collectivities help in giving an 'objective', substantial dimension to a world which is primarily and inevitably 'subjective' in character.

The negative aspects of feeling create a problem of their own which is generally ignored in most discussions of the subject. Some analysis, specially those arising from the perspective of religion tend to emphasize only these and neglect the positive aspects which fill the imagination of those who strive to create a world of feeling that is independent and autonomous in itself Raga, dvesa and moha are the usual Indian terms for them, though there are many others which have found expression in the psychological and literary texts devoted to the subject. 'Negativity' in the realm of feelings, however, is basically parasitic on the positive aspect though as is the case with abhava in the realm of cognition, it may begin to dominate the consciousness which apprehends the world primarily in its terms. The negativity which affects the world of feelings is far more pervasive and dangerous as it affects both knowledge and action and poisons them at their source which happens to be consciousness itself.

Consciousness has the threefold aspect with feeling as its core and awareness as its center, the one looking inward or being inward, the other looking outward and becoming all that it is aware of in a sense which is difficult to specify but not difficult to understand. As for the third aspect, it is silent but ever-present, a possibility that can

always turn into an actuality by a movement which no one understands, Awareness and feeling are always there but that which 'hides', and by hiding or even desiring or attending or shifting the focus of attention brings about a change, no one understands. Yet, it is as palpably there as awareness and feeling are, and the moment it becomes active, it assumes a centrality in that it affects the other two radically.

The relation between the immanent dynamics of feeling and the impulse towards expression and this third aspect of consciousness which is generally known as 'will', is not easy to understand as they appear to be independent of each other, even though the latter affects the former in unforeseen ways. There is an autonomy of the aspects which yet seems to be subservient to the third aspect which claims a sovereignty or superiority for itself as it is the hidden power of the aspects themselves. The tradition has called it sakti or the Force that lies coiled within consciousness and can awake spontaneously or be aroused by effort when needed.

The roots of identity and difference thus lie within these aspects of consciousness and their interrelationship along with the changes that self-consciousness introduces in them with the coming into being of what we have called the 'I-consciousness', 'the consciousness of the I' and the interactive interrelationship between them. The identity and the difference that originate from these and percolate down to all the other levels and get differentiated and diversified in this process are radically affected by the almost a priori modalities which consciousness has in dimensions of knowing, feeling and desiring or wanting or willing. Each of these has elements of the other but, inspite of this, seeks a

purity and pursartha of its own, unmixed or even uncontaminated by that which is immanently involved in the other.

The identities and difference in the realms of knowing, feeling and desiring, are thus, not the same and, in fact, cannot be the same because of the very nature of the differences between them. But as each of these have objects of their own which are not only different in the nature of their 'objecthood' but also have identities and difference of their own, we have, thus, the most complex and complicated picture where, at the human level, all those are sustained by a unity which has to respect the identity and difference of each at every level in such a way that it does not compromise the 'basis' of any one because of partiality towards another.

Yet, the variation and variety of personality structures at the lower level is not limited or bounded in any sense, not only because of the tendency and temptation of each to assert itself at the expense of others or to dominate over them and at times even to deny them altogether, but because of the changing relationship at the most fundamental level from where both identity and difference emanate, that is, at the level of consciousness and self-consciousness described above.

Identity thus predominates and pervades at the existentially 'lived-through' experience of the 'I-consciousness' in all its modalities, while difference is that which matters most at the level of 'object-consciousness' or where the consciousness is not only 'centered' in the object but is determined by it in a predominant manner. The doctrines of apoha,

abhava and enekanta attempt to capture this 'difference-centrality' in different ways, while Samkhya and Advaita Vedanta articulate the identity-centric thought and experience in their different ways. The 'feeling-centred' construction of various bhakti schools, some of which are found in non-advaitic vedantic Sampradaya, seem to have a strong combination of identity and difference at the existentially experienced level where neither predominates or prevails over the other, but both are held in an equal balance giving a strange flavour to their utterances which sometime seem to emphasise the one and sometimes the other. It is the creative poets who capture this quality of their experience in bhajans in all the Indian languages, and not the philosophers who have written on it in their learned treatises. The 'object-centred' thought is found predominantly in the Naiyaya Vaisesika and there 'difference' reigns supreme.

Consciousness as it moves outward thus encounters and experiences more and more of difference and enjoys it while as it 'withdraws' into itself, experiences an identity that is different at different stages of the 'return journey'. But as the 'return' and the 'withdrawal' are only temporary, the 'inward' and the outward journey alternates and while the self is constituted by both, it is only the philosopher who is taken in by it and argues for the one or the other, as is evidenced by the long debate between the advaitins and the non-advaitics vedantins on the one hand and the advaitins and the naiyayikas, on the other. It is time that futile debate is ended and the insights of both the camps are used to think and articulate the problem of identity and difference in other fields such as that of action, imaginative creation, ritual and acting in the context of a dramatic performance, to name only a few.