

Experience, Dulitability and Certainty

'Experiencing', not experience, underlies everything, and all 'thinking' presupposes it. The distinction conveyed by the 'suffix' is the heart of the matter. but what does this distinction 'convey', or wherein it lies, or what is its relevance and significance for self-conscious or 'reflexive' reflection that is called 'philosophy' is the central question around which that reflection has revolved since its beginning.

That 'something is' and that 'something' is happening or 'occurring' are two sides of the same distinction, the 'fact' and the 'event', 'time' and 'timelessness' joined together in a single 'act', distinguishable but not separable.

'Certainty' is at both levels, conveyed by the seemingly strange term 'something' and so also 'dulitability', raised by the perennial question that self-conscious reflection asks, what this 'something' is, be it 'seen' as a 'fact' or an 'event'. The former 'freezes' it caught in the timelessness of the +sentence or proposition conveyed by +is as the 'timeless present' which has nothing to do with the 'present' of occurring' or seeing' it as an 'event' stretching in an endless chain of 'before' and 'after'.

The answer to the two questions unfolds an 'infinity' within it as the answer in respect of 'something' whether it is seen in that context of 'is' or 'ing', that is, as either a 'fact' or an 'event' leads either to the ascription of a 'property' or a 'cause' in respect of which the same question might be raised by oneself or another.

But, both the questions and the answer assume that 'something' or an 'ex' which permits infinite predication both in terms of an affirmation and negation on the one hand and the 'infitation' complex nexus of 'causality' which not only makes one go back into the past, but also in the future and if one grants that the consciousness which asks the question and tries to find the answer has also the power of 'causal effectivity', as it must have if it has any sort of 'being' at all, then it may play a mediating role between knowledge and action, or the 'past' and the 'future', thus making 'knowledge' itself an ingredient of 'reality' and a 'lover' for bringing reality into being which normally it is not supposed to have, even though the phrase "knowledge is Power" is known to everybody.

The 'certainty', then, is not in the awareness that self-consciousness inevitably possesses, as is generally thought, but in the power of causal effectivity that it has and is, in a

sense, a function of it, as it varies with it. To the extent that I feel and can exercise this effectivity, to that extent alone I have this 'certainty', and not otherwise. It is not just consciousness or 'awareness' that confers 'certainty' as the philosophical and spiritual traditions of the world have said, but the effective power that they give that they bring certainty with them. It is not the 'I am' or 'i think' or the so-called "अहम् प्रत्यय" as Samkara calls it or the state of consciousness in the so-called *samadhi*, whether *co-vikalpaka* or *nir-vikalpaka* that give indubitability or that 'self-certifying certainty' which thinkers and 'spiritual practitioners' have sought and proclaimed the world over. It is the sense of being able to do or to withdraw from doing, the power of *sankalpa prayatna* and *cesta* or that of '*nirodha*', as in "*citta vrtti virodha*" that leads to the feeling of being able to do something positively or negatively that provides the ground of that 'certainty' that these all involve. The former require both mind and body, while the latter depends primarily on the power of the mind or at self-consciousness and indirectly on the body, at least at the embodied human level, as a minimum condition of its 'healthy' functioning is pre-supposed by spiritual practices and practitioners all the world over.

The relation between *samadhi*, *sadhana*, *siddhi* and *kaivalya* chapters of the *Yoga Sutra* perhaps becomes little clearer as without *siddhis* *samadhi* is useless and the emphasis on *Yama*, *Niyama*, alone and *pranayam* seem to make a little more sense than if one takes the notion of *citta vrtti nirodha* and the ideal of *kaivalya* alone as being the _____ of what is known as Yoga in the context of the *Yoga Sutra* in the Indian tradition.

The ideal of *kaivalya*, thus, negates the deepest impulse of Yoga, if the latter is understood as the exercise of that active power or consciousness that enables to withdraw from all objectivity and objectivation of itself to become aware of its own subjectivity, unalleged and untermished by any context contingent to itself, seen differently from the way *Samkhya* is usually said to have seen, that is, in terms of the denial of this power itself, a denial that is so absolute that it makes subjectivity bereft of all potentiality for any activity whatsoever. The *purusa* has to be *both* a *karta* and a *drsta*, and not just a *drasta* in order that it may have a "real reality" as nothing real' can only just 'be' without the capacity and the power of 'creativity' or 'effectivity' without itself. In fact, even the ascription of the residual 'witness a character' to consciousness shall have to be considered as mistaken as

'seeing' or 'witnessing' requires the exercise power of attending' and if that which is _____ to is as variegated and changing as *prakrtti* is said to be, that it will also have not just to attend or witness but choose and concentrate and even 'remember' as neither that is intrinsical 'seen' in any other way.

The logical step would have been to deny this 'seeing' or 'witnessing' also and make the *citta* or *cita acita*, that is, bereft of all 'experiencing' that had been supposed to have been contaminated by its relation to anything, whether it be the result of the activity or its own 'objectification' or independent of it. But, in that case, there would be no question of 'release' or 'freedom' either as the correct characteristic of the position would be the one given in *Nyaya* and not as in *Samkhya* or even *Advaita Vedanta*, as the latter too has also the notion of "*Saxsi-caitanya*" or the "witness-constituent" in it.

The desperate attempts both in *Samkhya* and *Advaita Vedanta* to save the 'experiencing subjectivity' of the subject after all relation has been negated and the very possibility of it made impossible result, as everybody knows, in the self-contradiction of accepting the 'feeling' or final release in the one and averse or positive bliss as the other. Ultimately,

therefore, we have only the *bhokta*, or the pure enjoyer or just the state of enjoyment or bliss, without the *kartrtva* or the *jnatrtva* that were supposed to be the defining factors of consciousness. Pure Experiencing, bereft of all power of knowing or acting alone remains, and that is what happens to consciousness if it is seen in terms of 'feeling', and 'feeling' alone, bereft even of the active element that is involved in it, reduced as it has been to Pure _____ and nothing else.

The desire for indubitability or complete certainty has perhaps been the reason for the denial or banishment, or even annihilation of the 'other' and, at another level, even the 'possibility' of the 'other' in any form whatsoever as its 'presence' or even the 'possibility' of its 'presence' is bound to be about it and of one's relation to it, and of its relation to oneself. A still deeper reason for this might lie in the 'fact' of a 'negative' relation to it in the context of 'feeling' and 'emotion' which give rise to that form whose very possibility the Indian mind has tried to escape in its age-long search, that is, 'suffering', that the simple experience of seeking of what is pleasant and avoidance of what is painful, could lead to such disastrous conclusions that involve both 'suicide' and 'murder' at the same time, is the wonder that Indian civilization seems to have sought over the ages and is seen

both by itself and others, in its terms as distinctively characterizing it.

It is true, as has been urged many a time, that there are contrary evidence also, particularly in the literary and art productions of the civilization, as also in the large and varied literatures dealing with *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* which have been regarded as legitimate pursuits for human beings in this world. But those who say it _____ that the 'world' they are talking about and in which these *purusarthas* have to be sought, is always regarded as the product of a primordial ignorance or *avidya* and thus has only the character of *maya* which is said to be *Sadguni-laksana*, that is, neither 'real' nor 'unreal', or different from both.

The paradox of Indian civilization and its essential ambivalence and ambiguity lies just in this that this is the *vyavahara-sat* in which lives and has to live, and yet not 'accept' it internally as this non-acceptance makes him feel like the 'lotus' in the pond, or at least have the illusion of such a 'feeling' as he can then ignore or then a blind eyed to the musk and dirt lying all around.

The 'other' in any form, or at any level, creates the basic problem or rather is the problem, and the search for pure contentless experience is the answer to the problem. But,

then, does this pure contentless experience has itself and diversion within it and does it have any 'experiential feel' in it, and does it create any 'world' of its own, is the question that has seldom been raised in the tradition.

The banishment of the 'object' makes the experience on self-sufficient, but does the fact of 'experiencing' or that the experience is 'experienced' not make it questionable once again? The question in respect of 'experiencing' can always be asked as to what is it and whether it is meaningful or significant, or even whether one would like to have it, or whether one 'likes' having it. The assumption that experience *qua* experience *must* have *all* these characteristics is just an assumption and has no necessity about it. In fact, the question whether it has their characteristics or not and that even if it has some or all of these does not, and cannot, _____ that it will continue to have them always with no quantitative or qualitative variation in them.

Experience, or 'experiencing', is not such a rare phenomenon as the general talk about it seems to imply. It is present everywhere. To be conscious *means* just that it is only another way of talking about it, drawing attention to an aspect that is generally ignored. But if it is so, the claim to 'certitude' on the ground of "something being experienced" is

banned to be spurious, unless one is prepared to grant it in all cases which, though necessarily true, would not only be vacuous, but also raise the problem as to wherefrom 'dubitability' would arise in such a situation. The usual answer to this, specially in the advaita tradition, has been that the doubt arises only in reference to what is experienced and not to the fact of 'experiencing' itself. The search for complete certitude, if such a thing is to be conceived as possible, must then lie in experience bereft of any content as it is the content that makes it dubitable. This, as everyone knows, results in the paradoxical situation that what is regarded by everybody as the most certain and indubitable becomes the most dubitable and this, for the simple reason that a radical duality or dualism has been introduced at the heart of experience itself. Nothing is considered as more certain than 'sensory experience' on which the whole knowledge of the world is based, and yet this very foundation of all perceptual experience is denied even the minimal certainty so that all content may be excluded from 'experience' so that it may claim absolute indubitable certainty for itself.

The 'givenness' of the content is no less than the 'givenness' of 'experience' and both should enjoy the same ontological status for thought, even if they are given varying

significance or importance in thinking. The ontological versus the *axiological* is the heart of the matter and the problem of certainty and dubitability has to be distinguished in respect of both.

The 'givenness' in the two cases, that is, of the content and the experiencing, however, is not the same. Normally, the 'experiencing' remains in the background and only the 'givenness' of the content is in the foreground and seems not only to dominate, but define the experience itself. Something is there and it is the centre of consciousness and even the minimal activity involved in 'knowing' is ignored and, if brought to consciousness, is considered irrelevant.

The philosophical critique that has been there for more than two thousand years, surprisingly, has failed to make the slightest dent in the faith that 'knowledge' is an intersubjective human construction and *not* the apprehension of something 'given' independently of that enterprise which may be called the "knowing activity" of human kind. The reason for this astonishing fact lies perhaps in the nature of consciousness itself which, inevitably, is 'object'-centered and interested in it alone, except when it is confronted with feeling as in pleasure or pain. The awareness of the feeling, paradoxically, is both subjective and objective at the same

time as it refuses, specially where pain is concerned, to be denied or to be turned away from as it seems to be so completely identified with 'experiencing' that it is almost impossible to 'objectify' it or 'see' it as an 'object', except in those rare moments of 'self-consciousness' when the consciousness allows it.

The 'experiencing' that comes to the fore and occupies the centre-chase obliterates all objectivity as 'seen' apart from oneself as everything else becomes non-visualized and 'seen' only at the periphery, if seen or attended to at all. The tables, so to say, are turned and it is the fact of 'experiencing' that becomes central to consciousness, and all the rest is either not seen at all or only as instrumental to it.

Drugs are the clearest example of the latter, but the 'experience-centric' consciousness takes other forms and leads in different directions which are diametrically opposed to the 'object-centered', 'truth-seeking' consciousness which is concerned not with itself but with something else. The cultural, aesthetic and symbolic creations of war are the result of a turning away from this object-centered, truth-seeking consciousness and the attempt to assimilate them to the latter by what has been called the "humanistic approach" is fundamentally mistaken as they have nothing to do with

'truth' as the question of truth or falsity is completely irrelevant to them. The so-called "humanistic enterprise" has been misled by its almost exclusive concern with language and the search for meaning' through an interpretative' activity which is central to it. A deeper engagement with non-literary, non-representational creatives such as music and architecture, for example, would have freed these thinkers from the illusion that 'interpretation' or 'meaning' was the heart of the matter, as the very question "what does it mean?" makes no sense at all with respect to them.

The 'reference-centered' construal of 'language-meaning' that is central to all cognitive concerns in the strict sense of the terms sees, to have led to a misconstrual of the 'sense-centered' meaning of language in its terms. The significance of the foreseen distinction was forgotten as for purposes of 'reference', the expressions with two different 'sense' could be substituted for each other without attesting the 'truth-value' of the sentence concerned. But where 'sense' alone mattered as seen in poetry, the substitution might make the expression meaningless, or at least as essentially different.

But the trouble with 'sense' or 'meaning' is that it cannot rid itself completely from 'reference' or 'referential meaning'.

Metaphors, however, metaphorical they may be, derive their metaphorical meaning from that primary meaning without which this would lose whatever meaning they may be trying to express. Poetic meaning in particular and literary meaning in general arises as an "emergent novelty" from a bringing together of diverse 'sense' and 'reference' and even tonality of sounds involved in the language, which cannot be ascribed to any one of them, or even all of them, except in the organization in which they have been brought together.

But poetic or literary or non-referential 'uses' of language are misleading if they are taken as providing the standard or as being the paradigmatic example for finding what the non-linguistic creations of man are trying to do. They are not imitating or recreating or replicating the world as they may appear to be doing at first sight. Mimesis is not the heart of the matter, nor *anukarana* or *anukriti* or even *anukirtana*. Both Aristotle and Bharata seem to have been mistaken, perhaps because they started their reflection on dramatic enactment or *natya* representing the human situation and not on non-representational creations, as we have pointed out earlier.

The 'experiencing' in the context of art, however, is not only dependent on the 'art-object' but has to be 'determined'

by it as not only it cannot be arbitrary in nature, but presupposes a prolonged educational-cum-learning 'experiment in the training of one's sensibility through encounter and engagement with art in general and that specific type of 'art-objects' in particular. The creation of these 'objects' requires a long arduous discipline on the part of the artist is accepted by everybody, but that it has to be so on the part of one who tries to apprehend, appreciate and critically judge them is not so easily accepted, or taken into consideration by those who think about it. What is even more discouraging is to find that there is no such thing, as a generalized aesthetic sensitive and that one has to cultivate it in response of each art-form separately, and that there is no facilitation in the development of a sensibility to a different field even if one has successfully cultivated it in respect of some other.

But even in one specific field, the problem of respect of the specificity and uniqueness of experience, tied as it is to the individuality of the 'art-object' remains, as it is 'nothing' except respect of it. The possibility of a sexual-level experience in respect of this 'experience' is, of course, always there, but whether it shall also be called 'aesthetic experience' and, if so, of what sort can be a subject of reflection.

But once a distinction between 'first' and 'second' order an experience emerges, it is bound to be extended and applied to all fields where 'experiencing' becomes the central fact of experience itself. The 'dubitability' that affects all 'object-centered' consciousness affects, at least to some extent, the inherent certainty of the 'second-order' consciousness in respect of it. "Did I really saw what I think I had seen" or "Did I really remember what I think I remembered" or "Did I really dream what I think I dreamt" are not entirely meaningless questions. There is, of course, some sort of certainty involved even in this uncertainty, it is infected with the sort of 'uncertainty' affecting the first-level object, centered consciousness.

The distinction notion would perhaps become clearer if we contrast the 'certainty' of "I am feeling pain" with the uncertainty involve din the second-order consciousness in respect of it which may ask "Am I really feeling pain". That the question is not so absurd, as it seemingly appears to be if we reflect on the second-order consciousness that asks, or may ask, the question "Am I really feeling pleasure when I am feeling pleasure". The latter, though 'self-certifying' and as certain as anything could be, gets infected, at least to some extent, with the 'uncertainty' or the 'doubt' experienced in the

second-order consciousness, even though one does continue to feel pleasure and liked the 'feeling' one has, or even appreciate it as 'worthy of being felt'.

Feelings are as 'close' to oneself as any thing could be, and their 'being' lies in their being 'experienced' and though this 'experience' has a certainty about it, it is not indubitable, not just in principle but in the phenomenological fact of 'experiencing' itself. The question 'what one is experiencing' is not easy to answer, as not only we just do not have words to describe their infinite variety, _____ and _____, but also because they do not seem to be substantive entities having a determinate identity of their own, or even the identity we attribute to a 'process' or 'flux' which has some sort of a continuity in time giving it that identity. There is an intrinsic ambiguity about these, not only just an ambivalence as Freud noted, but also a 'lived' and 'experienced' contradiction in them just as in pleasure that has an element of pain in it, or mild pain that may have a pleasure tinge to it. One need not go to the extreme cases described in psychological literature as _____ or _____ to see the truth of this. Literature and art may perhaps help us better in understanding it.

But if they seek 'identity' either as 'entity' or as 'process', there can be no knowledge about them in the ordinary sense of the word. And, as there seem to display all sorts of seemingly incompatible or even contradictory characteristics, they cannot be said to have 'reality' either, in the sense in which we ordinarily use the term. Yet, they are felt to be more 'real' than anything else, and being 'self-referential', the most intimately 'known' and the most certain of all.

The so-called 'certainty' of 'experiencing' is found everywhere at the level of feeling in the realm of feeling, and not just in certain sorts of 'experiencing', as is alleged by many. The distinction that is sought to be made is untenable as it is generally grounded in their being dependent on something or as being 'independent' of any object whatsoever as the 'fact experiencing' in the so-called 'spiritual consciousness' which is said to be '*nirvisaya*', that is 'objectless' and hence absolutely certain. The distinction between 'mystic' consciousness which is usually centered in what is called 'god' and 'meditation' consciousness which is not so centered is usually forgotten in this connection. The larger, of course, has _____ and *dhyana* as in the Yoga Sutra both thing are only incidental and required only if one cannot do without them, as the end is not to crop with them

or ' _____ ' them, as in _____ Samhita, but _____, that is without any awareness even of itself, as that would make it have some sort of an 'object' which it is not supposed to have. It is an *alambana* which need not have been there in the first place and which, in any case, has to be dispensed with as seen as its *alambana* character is realized.

There is, in fact, a basic contradiction in the whole process of Yoga if it is seen as central in *dharana* and *dhyana*, as one cannot thus attain the ideal of *citta vrtti nirodha* as both *dharna* and *dhyana* have to have an 'object' to concentrate and contemplate upon. This can, at least, result in the fullest _____ and realization of the 'object' meditated upon and not in a consciousness that has no 'objet' whatsoever, as is claimed and promised in the ideal of *asamprajhala Samadhi* in the text on the subject concerned.

The problem is at the heart of the disagreement between the *advaitin* and the non-*advaitin vedantins* in the Indian tradition, even though neither seem to have developed a separate *Yoga Sastra* of their own. These fear, in their different ways, to *bhaktas* which always has an 'object' of addiction contemplation and meditation as against the former which rejects even the _____ mentioned in the various

Upanisads in its strict hard core formulation epitomized in the works of Samkara and his followers.

The contradiction, if it is a contradiction, is evidenced in its fullest and clearest form in the statement of the author of *Advaitasiddhi* when he declares in the most unequivocal terms, "कृष्णात् परम् विक्रमि तत्त्वं अहं जं न जानेः. If one has to have an 'object', be it Krsna or someone else, this is the only consciousness one can reach, or the *bhakta* has known all the time. The *acaryas* from Yamuna to Vamobha argued for this, something which the saints have proclaimed, both earlier and later, in the languages spoken in the geographical area or the region to which they belonged. Caitanya gave up even the practice of the great *acaryas* and dispensed with the whole perephernalia of the Yoga Sutra, and proclaimed the power of samkitree to lead to the realization of the truth and reality of the Lord instead of contemplating and meditating in loveliness and _____ in some one or forgot as remembered even in the *Nyaya Sutra* of Gautama.

The search for pure experiencing in the realm of feeling may be extended to a 'giving up' of the 'object' altogether as it is now seen more as an _____, an 'imagined' support for the _____ of 'feeling-experience' as one and hence as essentially contingent to the fact reality of 'experiencing'

itself. The advaitins state of _____ may be said to come closest to this, and the idea of advaita-*bhakti* may be said to capture this. But this, it should be noted, is just the opposite of the ideal of *Kaivalya* for which the practice of *dharana* and *dhyana* were prescribed in the *Yoga Sutra*. The *purusa* in the state of *kaivalya* is said to be neither a *bhokta* nor a *karta* and hence cannot be characterized in terms of *ananda* as the advaitin seems to do if *ananda* is really taken as really describing his position on the subject. The idea of *saksi-caitanya* or 'witness-consciousness' would certainly see to meditate against this as the only feeling that could be allowed to it, in some one is to talk in _____ of feeling, would be quietitude as _____ and not another'.

Experiencing is so integrally and intimately related in feeling that the question of its being 'true' or 'false' cannot arise, unless the notions of 'truth' and 'falsity' themselves were to be radically revised. Feelings do not 'refer' to anything outside themselves, though they may be taken as expressing something or even indicating a state of the body or the mind as in physical illness or psychiatric disorders. But even in these cases, they have no 'intentionality' as has been thought by some thinkers. The 'object' arousing the 'feeling' cannot be its reference', nor the state of consciousness or even

the 'feeling-consciousness' in case a 'second-order' feeling is assumed by it.

The fact that 'feeling experiences' do not 'refer' either to the 'subject' or the 'object' may become a little more clear if we reflect upon the experience of 'willing', specially when there is some 'resistance' to be overcome. The 'experiencing' in such a situation is so obviously 'self-centered' and yet integrally related to both to the 'actual' and the 'absent' situation that it cannot even be thought about it. But there will be little point in 'seeing' them as being deferred by it, no, not even when the 'object' of willing is state of one's consciousness which one wants to change as it is not what one would like it to be.

Yet, in spite of this, those who have talked about the 'certitude' and individuability of 'experience' have combined it primarily, if not exclusively to 'feeling-States' of consciousness only. Both 'knowledge' and 'action' have been relegated to the realm of the essentially dubitable and hence lacking that 'reality' which only the 'self-certitude' of experience called 'realization' is said to give.

The search for certitude 'thus', is as extensive in the realm of experience as it is in the realness of 'knowledge' or 'action'. That "something is" cannot be denied but, then it can

be said in all contexts and at all levels. The result is all 'dubitable'. The 'experiencing' does not certify any thing. It, of course, certifies itself, but that does not mean any thing for, in that sense everything certifies itself. The distinction between the 'varidical' and the 'illusory' cannot operate at this level, for in terms of 'experiencing' or even 'effectivity' there is no difference between them. There may be other differences such as say, 'felt significance' or 'importance' or even 'meaningfulness', but then they have nothing to do with certitude or dubitability as the mystical and the Yogic traditions have thought and proclaimed all the world over.