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Start Date: 04/12/07

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Jonathan Reams

- Purpose** To examine the central point in Bonnie's paper about the notion of ontology and view.
- Outcome**

 1. Some common understanding of how we are using the terms ontology and view.
 2. Some futher bridges into what may still be implicit in Bonnie's use of the terms ontological and view.
 3. Through this, some triangualtion on our own pre-understandings about what ontological means.
- Questions** Martin's questions can for the basis for this thread:

So how does this process view use the word ontology?
 Is ontology the same or different from "metaphysics" (as in "process metaphysics", the term used in the essay).
 How is adopting an ontological dimension possible apart from a perspectival field (standpoint epistemology of a theorist, thinker, meditator...)?
 How is it possible to think of ontology atemporally or without historicity for a being-towards-death, (Heidegger's Dasein)?
 Would there be a way to save the process insight by finding a more integral albeit non-reductive way in which perspectives (and states) implicate ontologies, and vice versa, in forming a view?

Introduction

Thanks Martin for posing these questions and focusing us on this first step of getting some clarity on how Bonnie (and each of us) may be using these terms.

I would suggest that each post restrict itself to one question for now. (Although I'm sure they are also all related). This way we can dig deep and mine the considerable potential that looking at this core distinction and premise of the paper presents.

Again, here are Martin's questions.

1. So how does this process view use the word ontology?
2. Is ontology the same or different from "metaphysics" (as in "process metaphysics", the term used in the essay)?
3. How is adopting an ontological dimension possible apart from a perspectival field (standpoint epistemology of a theorist, thinker, meditator...)?
4. How is it possible to think of ontology atemporally or without historicity for a being-towards-death, (Heidegger's Dasein)?
5. Would there be a way to save the process insight by finding a more integral albeit non-reductive

way in which perspectives (and states) implicate ontologies, and vice versa, in forming a view?

2 **Bonnitta Roy**

revised 04/13/07 10:11AM



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1. *How does this process view use the word ontology?*

My use of the word "ontology" is idiosyncratic, with respect to the history of the term.

Conventionally, "ontology" implies a fundamental ground, or ultimate basis of existence -- ontology can refer to the positing of an objective basis to existence (as in the hard sciences) or of a transcendental basis such as discrete levels of Being (as in the perennial philosophy) or a transcendent being/ realm such as God/Heaven. In our mainstream culture, if we adopt a physical ontology -- that's considered physics. If we adopt a transcendent ontology-- that's considered meta-physics.

The process model is careful not to hypothesize ANY ontological basis. The process model wants to look at the process which creates this tendency to establish basis, the process that creates the conditions of thinking/seeing in terms of ontological priors, and the process of experiencing certain aspects of reality **as if** they were ontologically prior to other aspects of reality.

I want to make a distinction between 1) the process which generates the ontological character of certain experiences, i.e. experiences that include elements that seem to be ontologically prior to that experience. and 2) the process that tends to extract from this experience, an ontological basis of reality. The first process I call the ontological dimensioning of reality. The second process I suggest is linked to epistemological dynamics. The process model suggests that there is no logical necessity (or one to one correspondence between) to hypostatize ontological entities (or posit discrete ontological realms) from the experience of an ontological dimensioning of reality. Therefore, the process model makes no truth claims for the various hypostatized entites or realms.

Rather, the process model argues, that the positing of such ontological entities is a kind of category error resulting from importing epistemological categories to an entirely different dimension of being. It considers this error to be an epistemological reduction of the ontological character of Being-- similar to Heidegger's critique of how the static ontic view is mistakenly applied to Being.



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3 **Bonnitta Roy**

revised 04/14/07 6:17AM



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In response to Jonathan Reams (1)

2. *Is ontology the same or different from "metaphysics" (as in "process metaphysics", the term used in the essay?*

A) I think one can make several useful distinctions between them. In my previous post I described the ontological dimensioning of reality as a basic phenomenon in many kinds of experience. This kind of "ontology" is not a metaphysical position -- it is a description of actual experience -- when I initially have the experience of object constancy, it comes to me **as if** objects were ontologically prior to my first experiencing of them. The sense of objects being ontologically prior *is* the formation of object constancy. There is no need to apply any metaphysical truth claims to the naive description of the experience.

B) The "process metaphysics" that appears in the article refers to the genre of philosophy, represented by Whitehead, Rescher among others. The distinction among process philosophers, is whether they are utilizing a process approach to build a metaphysical position, or are they utilizing a process approach to create a new kind of thought-framework to look at different empirical as well as metaphysical positions. It is not clear to me whether Whitehead believed he was discovering some ultimate metaphysical realities through his process-based inquiry -- I seriously doubt he did -- but it is clear to me that Rescher uses process theory as a methodology of inquiry, not as a metaphysical position. Jason Brown, I sense, is steeped deeply in his process metaphysics, and believes he is describing something ultimately real about cognition, rather than merely adopting a process framework to the study of cognition.

C) Finally, there is the study of, or philosophy of process metaphysics itself -- the attempt to define and carry forward the methodology of the process approach. This creates more of a meta-framework than a meta-physics, since its function is to create new process methodologies of inquiry. There is a similar argument among chaos (emergence) theorists. Is emergence theory a "metaphysics"? or a meta-systemic methodology of inquiry? The difference lies in what kind of ontological status the theory is given.

Bonnie



edit



4

Bonnitta Roy

revised 04/13/07 6:45PM



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In response to [Jonathan Reams \(1\)](#)

3. How is adopting an ontological dimension apart from a perspectival field (standpoint epistemology of a theorist, thinker, meditator ...)?

As a start, let us consider "perspectives" in a rather precise way as those defined in the AQAL model, namely along the line of the eight indigenous perspectives; such that the characteristics of the perspectival field are those of Wilber's Hori-zones of arising, namely, the inside and outside of the subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective. The process model calls this perspectival field, the epistemological field.

The process model uses the term "view" also in a rather precise way. It says that "view" is radically a-perspectival, in the sense that "view" does not entail interior-exterior relations (nor their correlates, inside-outside, subjective-objective and the like); neither does "view" entail one-many relations (nor their correlates, singular-plural, whole-part, and the like).

With respect to the notion of perspective, I can best describe "view", as it is understood in the process model, in terms of "degrees of freedom" . In this sense, a wider or greater view has more degrees of freedom. An (imaginary) completely open view -- the pure open-ing of being -- would then have infinite degree of freedom, and no perspectival points (conditions); an (imaginary) completely closed view would have no degrees of freedom and a kind of black hole singularity perspectival point of no escape (a sloppy metaphor for sure).

From a process dynamics standpoint, "view" is a function of the fluidity and scope of the processes that generate perspectives -- it is a function of the process' creative potential to maintain an open, unbounded state, versus a closed, habituated pattern that has exhasuted its potential.

Phenomenologically, "view" is the apperception of the "space", or the opening of Being through which the perspectives arise.

How this notion of "view" relates to conventional ontology theory is therefore contra-distinguished. Given the notion of "view" as degrees of ontological freedom, conventional ontology represents a more limited view, because it establishes a static basis, limiting the role of further creative ontological dimensioning of reality. The theorist who straps epistemological determinacy onto the open ontological dimensioning of reality, is providing a stagnant, limiting [...more...](#)



5 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/13/07 3:19PM



In response to Jonathan Reams (1)

4. *How it is possible to think of ontology atemporally or without historicity for a being-towards-death, (Heidegger's Dasein)?*

It's not possible. Operating from a view as a "being-towards-death" constitutes a fixed ontology -- an ontology fixed by an arrow of time (the self's historicity). If given this, the question then becomes "is it possible to operate from an atemporal view?". I believe yes, it is, and this entails operating from a transpersonal view, since the "self" is an epistemological construct that is already preconstituted by an arrow of time (as well as the other conditions of structural enfoldment).

What we commonly experience as the ontological dimensioning of reality is not so much its a-temporality, but the way that time seems to be entangled, such that ontological experiences come to us *in time* but come to us **as if** they have been always already in existence. It is from this pivot point, that we might start to further open into the ontological dimensioning of reality.

Bonnie



6 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/13/07 3:48PM



In response to Jonathan Reams (1)

5. *Would there be a way to save the process insight by finding a more integral albeit non-reductive way in which perspectives (and states) implicate ontologies, and vice versa, in forming a view?*

Yes, I think there is a more productive way to understand the connection between the perspectives of the self, and the states of consciousness and the process notion of view. I believe it has to do with the dual notion of the self as conditioned structure and the self as navigator. For example, consider the ontological dimensioning of object constancy. The self "qua self" does not navigate the experience of developing object constancy. Rather, object constancy is part of the constituent development of what we term "self". Therefore, object constancy has a strong ontological component to it, because it preconstitutes the self. As the self develops, more and more experiential aspects are enfolded as components of the self. The various levels of gestalts and shadows, one's foundational values and core beliefs, the complete historicity of the self-narrative -- as these get enfolded through the conditions of structural enfoldments, the entity "self" grows in its capacity to subsume these, and there is a corresponding strong ontological component

(bias) to what is subsumed in the construct "self."

On the other hand, there are the everyday experiences in which the self acts as central "navigator" of the experience, rather than the experience constituting the self, and the tendency then is to establish external ontological bases. In this regard, the self is enfolded into the experience in an extra-narrative form, rather than the experience being enfolded into the self.

The "self's ontology" then, is the accumulation of its subliminal biases, and supra-liminal (extra-narrative) bases. Together these constrain the self's view. In fact the very construction of "self" as a basis constitutes a limitation of "view." It is not until the self as a construction of various bases is rendered transparent, that one opens up to entirely new ontological dimensionings of reality-- opening up new degrees of freedom, entirely new views.

In his book "Human Development and the Spiritual Life, Ronald Irwin chronicles how in order for consciousness to grow toward transformation into the post conventional, one must move beyond the narrative constructs of self. [...more...](#)



7 **Bonnitta Roy**

revised 04/13/07 4:29PM



In response to [Bonnitta Roy \(6\)](#)

Having said that (post 6) I now want to make a shift ...

Response 6 framed the answer with the "self" as a central reference point. However, we can make a shift to a transpersonal point of view, in which the self is seen as being preconstituted by as-yet-to-be-navigated ontological levels -- in other words, this is the narrative of the involution of spirit prior to the self that navigates the levels. From the standpoint of a mature self, we see the infant navigating an ontologically prior objective reality. From the standpoint of a mature yogic, we would see the conventional man navigating ontologically prior levels of being. I have written about this elsewhere, in the Anderson Forum (Main Dialog/ Aurobindo and Ontological Levels./post # 2, 3).



8 **Martin Beck Matustik**

revised 04/17/07 5:17PM



Building on that idea...

April 17, 2007

The posts 6 & 7 are most helpful, Roy.

The self-perspective, whether personal-existential or transpersonal-divine, allows for integrating the ontological with the critical angles of vision in ways that support the move to the "view" or awareness to be the central axis of awakening and transformation.

In my recorded on-line conversation with Ken Wilber this has been my major rejoinder (I prefer that to calling it an objection), namely, that the Wilber-Combs Lattice has no axis of self-self-transformation: it has conscious structures and states.

Now, Roy, you propose to think of ontology/ies as more foundational even for perspectives: The W-C lattice would be underwritten by ontologically founded view out of which perspective emerge or are posited by conscious structures as well as states within

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them.

I hope I render your meaning well. This is what I grasped about the process view and what I find the key in it.

Your posts 6 & 7 introduce the self as the integral axis in the way that echoes my rejoinder to Wilber-Combs AQAL structure-state model.

With Kierkegaard, but not only him, self becomes the major performative axis of transformation. It would seem silly to speak of conscious structures and states and yet do not account for the difference of existential stages of spheres. I take the self to be an integer and so a process view is much more amenable here than the structural model. Yet, please note, shifts in stages of existence are neither evolutionary nor accumulative nor linear, they are radical gestalt switches, either/or shifts, like in a key of a music scale.

After Kierkegaard, Heidegger but also Sartre render the self-talk in ontological language. Heidegger, especially later, is much more transpersonal and so amenable to Buddhist crossovers. Sartre remains in the ontic dimension of the self, but he has a critical ontology of the self-other relation. Levinas, from the Judaic angle, articulates radical alterity that opens every self to its other before it can even utter "I."

In sum: growing in awareness or in an open "view" is a self-transformative event, where self is both personal existence and transpersonal ontology or reality, and so awakening punctuates shifts that are at once ontological and perspectival, personal and transpersonal.

Now I need you to teach us how and whether this at all can work with [...more...](#)



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Bonnitta Roy

revised 04/19/07 9:28AM



Closely following ...

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In response to [Martin Beck Matustik \(8\)](#)

I'd like to go slowly and carefully now, because I think we might help each other learn here. I also think that we might be able to engage some of the people here to help us also -- especially thinking of Rich and his understanding of Aurobindo's work.

When I heard you on the audio with Ken Wilber, there was a point where it was like you were saying "look Ken, its right here in front of us... all we have to do is look at it. It's right there, just as plain as old day." ... and then Ken went straight on to talking about philosophical nuances and "fixing" his theory. I'd like to help bring forth in to daylight -- try to identify what it is that you are holding up for us to see -- what kind of realm of experience/ transformation is this "transversal axis" you are pointing to... I believe this requires sensitivity to subtle distinctions, adequate languaging, and also reflective self-awareness as we proceed -- in other words, there is an experiential element to this kind of conversation also. The experiential element requires us to "check in" with what is intuitively and implicitly understood in a deeper part of ourselves -- as it is this understanding that is trying to articulate itself into the daylight of we-space. Checking-in is like diving down to bedrock, where this "process-thought-thing" is rooted-- we need to ground our self-perspective (view) there, for there is where we need to do our inquiry. Also, we need to be sensitive to the subtle nature of this inquiry, paying attention to the experiential aspects of this "process-thought-thing" -- as it arises, how does it arise? what are the feeling-states/ energetics that accompany it? We take this subtle nature/ aspect.. and consistently compare it with the languaging we are adapting, until there is a suitable resonance between what is at the root, and what we call forth into we-space. That is the essence of dialog.

It is my hope that we can "get at" this proces-thought-thing" you are referring to as the transversal, by first, utilizing the WC lattice to identify this through various distinctions from the WC lattice; then try to associate/ distinguish/ characterize this with the basic properties of the ontological as described in the PM; and then see if there are some elements that can be carried forward into an [...more...](#)



10

Edward Berge

revised 04/21/07 1:47PM



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I have a question...

Forgive me but I am not understanding the difference between view and perspective. That's why I am here. I am also approaching this inquiry at Open Integral under the thread "correct view?" So I also now ask for forgiveness in violating one of the stated "rules" of this dialog in that I'm going to copy and paste others' thoughts below. That is because I cannot yet speak from my own self-knowledge on this topic. But perhaps you can get the jist of what they are saying to contextualize the distinction you're making Bonnie? Thanks.

From Open Integral:

Below are excerpts from an interesting article on the differences between Hindu and Buddhist "enlightenment." It starts with the differences of how they conceptualize the nondual and seems to indicate that to properly do "Buddhist" meditation one must have the "correct view." It also emphasizes that this correct view is not a mish-mash of intermixed Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist views with a "common core." It seems the latter attempt arises more from one's "personal ideas" or agendas. Such might also be the agenda, of which Ken partakes, to find the "common ground" of all the "spiritual traditions," aka the "perennial philosophy." So again I must ask: Is Ken's mixing and matching of nondual language and tradition more of his own creation and in effect watering down each mis-matched tradition? Or are the "traditions" so ethnocentric as to not see how "it all comes together?" Or what?

Also note that this "correct," Buddhist view is stated in the first excerpted paragraph.

Enlightenment: Buddhism Vis-à-Vis Hinduism
 Ācārya Dharma Vajra (Sridhar SJB Rana)
 Published: Buddhist Himalaya, 1996
<http://www.byomakusuma.org/Default.aspx?tabid=38>

...in the Buddhist context, illusion is not removed but rather seen as knowledge itself - or is transformed into knowledge. And this knowledge is not something that is the support or base of Samsara. It is the knowledge of the true mode of existence of Samsara itself.

There are two traditions of explaining 'advaya' in Buddhism. One is called the Vast Lineage (skt. Vaipulay parampara) of Asanga-Vasubandyhu based on the 'Five Works' of Maitreya which emphasizes subject-object (skt. grahaka-grahya) duality. But unlike the various forms of Vedanta, they neither merge into one whole nor does the grasper (subject) [...more...](#)



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Jonathan Reams

04/21/07 3:59PM



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Hi Ed,



As we also said earlier, we have guidelines, not rules, so these long quotes are not a foul of any kind.

Reading through the quotes you provided, I can see some of the reason for your question regarding view and perspective. My understanding of Bonnie's articulation of the Process Model (along with my own "view" on such matters), is that it points to some of the ways in which Ken's orientation may have some subtle mis-steps that lead to articulations that could lead to the kind of confusion you express. So reading these quotes, I hear a conception of view that is in subtle ways not the same connotation as what Bonnie is presenting.

What I would ask is what do you understand the quotes you have included to mean? How do you understand view and perspective based on them? While you say you do not have your own self-knowledge of the distinction, you surely have some aspects you can relate to (otherwise I suspect you would not be engaging in the conversation in the first place). These distinctions may not be clear to you from the language being used, but I suspect they are lying within your experience in some way. So to begin to tease this out, can you give us a (succinct) synopsis of your perception of these quotes? Then I suspect that Bonnie can relate it to her use of those terms and the connotations/distinctions they bring.

Alternatively, these quotes may not have produced any clear influence on your understanding, in which case you could be saying that they simply provide another form of confusion on the distinction between view and perspective.



12 Edward Berge

revised 04/21/07 5:05PM



What seems to be the heart of a "correct view" is the Buddhist view. Dzogchen is of course Buddhist. And this Buddhist view is basically the nondual, which doesn't see itself as a relative "perspective." At least not without some "transformation" involved. Which of course goes back to the two truths of Buddhism, the absolute and the relative. Hence Ken's discussion of the perspectives of the relative with the "nonconceptual" mind that provides direct experience of the absolute.

However, it seems to me that the way Ken describes it there is still this duality. And the "correct" Buddhist view is as stated in the first paragraph of the quotes, that "in the Buddhist context, illusion is not removed but rather seen as knowledge itself - or is transformed into knowledge. And this knowledge is not something that is the support or base of Samsara. It is the knowledge of the true mode of existence of Samsara itself." This seems to be the "view" that doesn't take even itself as a "perspective," that it is the correct way of apprehending the relation between absolute and relative, or ontology and epistemology. And I'm not sure if this at all relates to what Bonnie is saying.

And of course another point, which might or might not be related, is the first quoted author seems to think (my interpretation) that there might even be very different "views" as well as perspectives on this relation, and that there isn't a "core" understanding of view, perspective or "direct" experience among the various "religions." The latter is a core assumption of the so-called perennial tradition that Ken speaks of and for. Hence I'm even wondering if this "correct," Buddhist view is not just another ethnocentric quibbling over who is more right.



13 Edward Berge

04/22/07 11:14AM



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Building on that idea...

Setting aside for the moment Ken's dual nondualism, it seems Ken's other point is that the correct view is the Buddhist view. It is sort of an AQAL view in that it touches upon the various quadrants, like ethics, phenomenology, individual behavior and the social institution of its religion. All of them are required to make each of them complete, as it were.

Another point is that the view and emptiness are not two. I think Ken's explanation sort of captures the first quoted paragraph of the first author in trying to say that the Buddhist view itself "is the knowledge of the true mode of existence of Samsara itself." In other words, this (no)thing called emptiness is not something apart from the relative, it is inherent within it. Or as he says: "This knowledge is not something that is the support or base of Samsara." I.e., samsara doesn't "arise out of" nirvana. He explains that is more the monist Vendantic notion.

Which of course leads to the third point, again made many times before but it keeps arising. The Buddhist author makes a clear distinction between the Hindu and the Buddhist views on nonduality. It is not all one big happy family talking about the same (no)thing. And even more importantly, it requires a correct understanding to even begin to practice Buddhist meditation. It is not the same as Hindu or Taoist meditation, and they don't all generate the same "experiences." It is the view that conditions the experience.

In that way Ken is right about states being interpreted by views. But it seems that, and this is my current prejudice, that the Buddhist "view" is outside of relative "perspective" due to its own negation of itself, that even the "nondual" perspective is not attached to itself, that via this transformation the view and perspective are not only "not two" but not at all the same. So like nonduality being the paper on which the relative ladder is written, so too is its "view" outside the grid of relative perspectivity. Hence the nondual, not being a "state of consciousness," is not just another perspective that is interpreted by a relative (gross state) stage.



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Daniel Gustav Anderson

04/22/07 1:53PM



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Martin writes:

Now I need you to teach us how and whether this at all can work with the non-Western view you have tried to articulate here.

A way into this may be the distinction in Madhyamika between provisional and ultimate realities (and I am also thinking of Edward's comments on Buddhism here as well). The self that we see in Kierkegaard is none other than the transpersonal ultimate that Bonnie describes in post #5 (well spoken there, by the way), in the sense that it is revealed to be emptiness-as-form. Ultimately, it's all empty. In the world where we live, however, it hurts when empty-I stubs his empty-toe against an empty-bookcase. All these entities are provisional, constructed by causes and soon-do-be deconstructed by other causes--agent, toe, bookcase, pain, self-recrimination, self-medication, self-pity, &c.

This post is informed by Brook Ziporyn's treatment of Madhyamika in Being and Ambiguity, which explicitly emphasizes Kierkegaard and Hegel.



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Bonnitta Roy

04/23/07 6:32AM

*In response to Edward Berge (12)*

Hi Ed,

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There are so many twists and turns and difficult knots in your question. I find Wilber's use of the term "view" in Integral Spirituality very confusing. He seems to be both stretching the term "perspective" and conflating the term "view" with "form" (as when he re-writes the Buddhist saying to be "emptiness and view are not two.")

The PM was created to help us sort this stuff out. In order to do so, we have to start at square one, and work back into the kinds of complex questions we are interested in.

First, it is important not to confuse the casual connotations of the words "perspective" and "view" -- which can come closely to meaning the same thing , i.e. a certain "angle of opinion or perception" -- not to confuse them with the specific use of the terms in the PM. The terms are used in a specific way in order to make subtle distinctions. The term "perspective" is actually very precisely defined by Wilber as the 8 indigenous Hori-zones that arise from the 4 quadrants (i.e. the inside and outsides of the subjective, intersubjective, objective and interobjective). For Wilber, perspective is also conditioned by a holarchic relationship of development, and together (with the states of consciousness) assigns an address. With Wilber, there is already a distinction made between the Hori-zones and the states -- as illustrated in the WC lattice.

The PM wants to elucidate more distinctions between the states of consciousness and the perspectives. The PM prescribes a process that is responsible for the enfoldment of relations such that the quadrants and the perspectives and their apparent holarchic relations arise. These perspectives are outcomes of a cognitive process, and therefore are associated with epistemology.

The PM assigns the states of consciousness to the ontological dimensioning of reality, and uses the term "view" to connotate the ontological states. Wilber merely utilizes the Advaita concepts of gross, subtle and causal, to describe the states. He also associates these with waking, dreaming and deep sleep. I think that is hopelessly simplistic schema. And his association of these states with the waking, dreaming, sleep cycle requires a whole lot of explanation for it to make the kind of meaning that it is supposed to mean. The casual way he writes about these things sometimes, is [...more...](#)



edit



16

Edward Berge

04/28/07 9:02AM



Bonnie,

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I admit to not getting your "view." I also admit that this is likely due to my current and prejudicial "view" which is also not a "perspective" in light of Nagarjuna's dialectics. To explain myself and my interpretation of what you're saying I've enclosed some excerpts from an article below. It seems to me that you are positing ontology as distinct from epistemology, or committing a "duality" by "identify[ing] conventional reality with the phenomenal realm, and ultimate reality with the noumenal."

Now you can see that Nagarjuna's method/view is also, like yours, "a new insight into ontology and into our cognitive access to the world." But it is by admitting that "Nagarjuna's enterprise is one of fundamental ontology, and the conclusion he comes to is that fundamental ontology is impossible." Hence the "extirpation of the myth of the

deep," or in other words, the "myth of the given." As you correctly noted Ken applies this to everything except the Absolute, whereas Nagarjuna applies it even to his own "ultimate." Hence no ontology separate from epistemology. Hence the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth.

I know you know this stuff and so I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt. I'm just saying that I cannot understand it in light of my current prejudices like the below. I'm hoping that some others understand you and will express it in their own way. Perhaps from other articulations it might become more clear to me.

"Nagarjuna and the Limits of Thought," Jay L. Garfield and Graham Priest, *Philosophy East & West*, Volume 53, Number 1, January 2003, 1-21

<http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Nagarjuna/NagarjunaTheLimitsOfThought.pdf>

We will argue that while Nagarjuna's contradictions are structurally similar to those we find in the West, Nagarjuna delivers to us a paradox as yet unknown in the West. This paradox, we will argue, brings us a new insight into ontology and into our cognitive access to the world.

It is a quite general feature of theories that try to characterize the limits of our cognitive abilities to think, describe, grasp, that they end up implying that they themselves cannot be thought, described or grasped. Yet it would appear that they can be thought, described and grasped. Otherwise, what on earth is the theory doing?

For Western philosophers, it is very [...more...](#)



private



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Jonathan Reams

revised 04/28/07 4:39PM



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I appreciate your (Ed) expression of not getting Bonnie's view of ontology. It took me a while too, but I think that I was aided by some of my own prejudices. (I like Gadamer's use of the term prejudice as being required for us to see anything). I have long felt that much of this emptiness/form etc language is in some way trapped within a limited view. That it is like a Zen koan or paradox designed to (one lifetime or another) trigger the encounter with a view in which the boundary on perception/conception that generates such connotations to these words dissapates, and allows them to be perceived in a context that no longer makes them appear to be such a puzzle.

And, I feel that this view is not something that can be taught/communicated/conveyed. It can be pointed to, and if a similar view has been encountered within another, there is a kind of adequateness to allow recognition/perception of what is being pointed to. The language itself cannot do more than point of course, but at the same time our prejudices that are bound up in the language shapes the way we perceive the pointing, and the horizon which is available for us to see from the pointing.

All this to say that my view is that such seeing cannot, as Bonnie says, be reasoned into. It may be granted as a kind of grace, maybe as a result of many journeys within/round the cycle of life, as is alluded to in the last bit of your quotation: "In traversing . . . and we find ourselves to have returned to it, now fully aware of the contradiction on which it rests."

Which reminds me of T.S. Eliot's ending to the Four Quartets, (something like) "to find at the end of our journey that we have returned to the place we started, and come to know it for the first time." My addition to this (and the one indicated in your quote by the phrase

"now fully aware") is that this cycle repeats itself many times, and the process is often more like peeling away layers of an onion than making one round and being fully aware.

This is one of the reasons we are trying to inquire into these areas like you have, and focus attention on the limits of our assumptions/horizons. Then, with our attention focused away from the usual pursuits, some insights may have a chance to sneak in and catch us unawares :-)



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Edward Berge

04/29/07 12:08PM



Jonathan said: "I have long felt that much of this emptiness/form etc language is in some way trapped within a limited view."

Whereas I find that the way Nagarjuna address emptiness, form, and the emptiness of emptiness to be quite liberating. It in fact does take me to an "experience" (being or becoming, whatever) of allowing for the unbounded mystery of existence as always already, here and now. I might even say it's an "ontological view" except that it appears N even dissolves this "limiting" description. It's funny how the other person is always the one with the "limiting" view, eh? ;)

By the way everyone, I ask that you address me as Edward, thanks.



private



19

Jonathan Reams

04/29/07 5:23PM



Hi Edward,

Yes, looking from one's own horizons always seems to make the other horizons look limited :-)

And of course feeling liberated by something is an experience that seems to me at least to have many many gradations to it.



private



20

Bonnitta Roy

revised 04/30/07 6:21AM



In response to Edward Berge (12)

To make the distinction between perspective and view, first identify what Wilber means as "perspective". He means subjective, objective, intersubjective and interobjective (or these in both their inside/outside versions -- to make the eight indigenous perspectives). When you add developmental level and state of consciousness to his equation, you get a "kosmic address." For Wilber, the self goes through developmental stages and state changes to reach different kosmic addresses. This accounts for what we causally call the differences in people's views -- their kosmic address is the summation of their changing perspectives.

The PM says there is an alternative way to look at this result -- that people have all these different kosmic addresses. On the one hand, there are the perspectives -- the subjective, intersubjectice, objective and interobjective -- and on the other hand there is the way in which these perspectives are organized. When they are organized in one way, the world arises, effortlessly, under certain aspects of reality. For example, when they are organized conventionally, we experience the mind in the body, and the body as part of the physical world. The PM uses the term "view" as the organizing framework through which the

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perspectives arise. In this case, a conventional organization of perspectives gives rise to a sense of self -- rather than the other way around. The view creates the reality -- in this case a reality in which there is a self, with a mind in a body, in a world, shared with others. The conventional organization of perspectives also entails an arrow of time. So there is a sense of self in a temporal situation -- past, present, future. The conventional world arises organized in such a way that it feels "real". That is part of the framework of view-- it has the value of existence.

A different organization of perspectives (a different view) would result in a completely different reality. This is not an intellectual idea. I am making the distinction between the intellectual exercise of thinking/ understanding/ operating from the notion that the world is in my mind -- like a Zen student trying to trick herself into thinking of the world that way, despite evidence to the contrary -- a distinction between being able to argue, as Nagarjuna did, that emptiness is in the forms, because that's what you find when you [...more...](#)



edit



21

Edward Berge

revised 05/01/07 12:28AM



hide



First, thanks to Bonnie for taking the time and effort to try to communicate this to us all. I actually do get an inkling for what you're talking about but I think my intellect might be getting in the way. I'm also wondering to what degree, if any, some old arguments aren't in play here, particularly the Svaatanrika-Prasangika debates. You can also see that Guenther favored the Svaatanrika from a sampling below:

"An appraisal of the Svaatanrika-Prasangika debates" By Nathan Katz, Philosophy East and West, Vol.26, no.3 (July 1976), P 253-267:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/nathan.htm>

Poussin's observation is formal: that whereas the Prasangikas content themselves with the negation of all views as their modality for the cognition of suunyataa, the Svaatanrikas want to demonstrate suunyataa by positive argumentation.

The question of the relationship between the two levels of truth, samvrtti and paramaartha, is of utmost importance in understanding Maadhyamaka philosophy in general and the Svaatanrika-Prasangika debates in particular. Two key verses of Naagaarjuna underscore the vitality of the question:

Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching.

Without relying on everyday common practices (that is, relative truths), the absolute truth cannot be expressed. Without approaching the absolute truth, nirvaana cannot be attained.(15)

The point which we wish to make in citing these two verses is that apparently the Prasangika school concentrates on the former, while the Svaatanrika school relies more heavily on the latter. For the Prasangikas, paramaartha is utterly beyond constructed thought; they "...stress the contradictions between absolute reality and the human attitude of understanding, which constitutes the ground of logic."(16) Because of this assumption, they claim that paramaartha is the absolute negation of samvrtti. ('Absolute negation' means negation without counter thesis, or, the negation of A does not imply B. 'Relative negation', on the other hand, means negation from a position, that not A implies B.)

The Svaatantrikas, on the other hand, follow more closely verse 10 above, the charge that paramaartha cannot be expressed without samvrtti. Due to their understanding of the contiguity of the relationship between paramaartha and samvrtti, the Svaatantrikas seek to establish paramaartha not only by the negation of [...more...](#)



22 Edward Berge

revised 05/01/07 12:41AM



Here's a resource...

Since that old article above a much more current reference has been written called *The Svatantrika-Prasangika Distinction: What Difference Does a Difference Make?*, Georges B.J. Dreyfus, Editor, Sara L. McClintock, Editor, Wisdom Publications (December 2002). If anyone is familiar with it and thinks there might be some relevance to the current discussion please bring it in. I don't have a copy.



23 Bonnitta Roy

05/01/07 6:17AM



A not A



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In response to [Edward Berge \(21\)](#)

Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching ..

Truth be told, I don't know the distinction. I know what people are pointing to, when they talk in terms of that distinction -- but that distinction has no meaning for me. I started almost 32 years ago trying to reconcile immanent spirit with transcendent Spirit -- something that closely corresponds to that distinction -- and they ended up losing all their meaning for me. Its like one of those games I played as a child -- my sister and I would say a word over and over again, and at some point, the word would lose its meaning and we would shout "there" -- it was the funniest thing to be able to determine just at what point the meaning fell out of the word through this type of play. (We did this in the car on the long drive to Maine in the summers -- it must have driven my parents nuts!)

It seems to me that certain ways of philosophizing are like a complex pre-ambule to the two truths doctrine. We start at A, we get to not-A -- two truths. Once we "tease" A out, we are already locked into the two truths paradox. To end up with a different ending place, we have to start with a different starting place.

If at the beginning we mistake A as being very different from not-A, then we have already set ourselves up to end up with two truths. We have inserted the divide right at the start. (See the simple diagram attached to this post.) If we look at the nature of dichotomous thinking, however, A and not-A are complements. They self-define. *Therefore, A and not-A by definition are the same "thing" under complementary aspects.* The more fundamental a term that A is, the more fundamental a term not-A is, eventually resulting in fundamental paradoxes like existence/non existence; relative/ absolute ... Its kind of like equal and opposite reactions. And yes, the more we keep A and not-A apart as two truths, the more we can build up the aspects on the one hand, and all kinds of aspects on the other hand, that give the appearance that there is a kind of deep complexity to reality.

However, if we see that A and not-A are the same at the beginning, and then we see how we tease A apart from not-A through [...more...](#)



24 **Bonnitta Roy**

05/01/07 6:34AM



Alfred Starratt



hide

view

I have attached a short excerpt from Alfred Starratt's *Your Self, My Self, & the Self of the Universe* as a perfect example of someone experiencing a shift in view. In his account, there are still all the persepctives, but their organization has radically changed.

Instead of the affect being in the self, the affect of the self is now in the objects, as "I felt the holding-on of fence posts; the grass reaching toward the light".

Instead of the observer inside the self, the self became part of all that was to be observed.

Instead of a fixed arrow of time, "the sense of 'me' at a fixed location in space and time expanded into less limited conscious perception."

Instead of a local point of view "It was seeing without any specific person doing the seeing from any particular perspective. The whole circle of the horizon was before my eyes simultaneously"

And seeing dissolves into being "Instead of seeing that living light, I became the light."

Instead of the opposing tensions in a field of dichotomous thought "The opposing tensions was experienced as one hears dissonant chords in great music... as they are resolved into harmony."



edit

25 **Edward Berge**

05/08/07 11:04AM



Here's a resource...

Here's something I encountered in researching Gadamer. Is this at all relevant? It might seem to Bonnie that "relational" properties are epistemic by definition, yet the ontological view certainly has relational properties to the epistemic, despite the "view" being unbounded. It seems the very act of creating a critical "theory" out of view entails such relational properties, the latter of which are not "relative" but relational nonetheless. Yeah, I know, another paradox...

"The relational properties approach to a theory of interpretation" by David Weberman at <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Inte/InteWebe.htm>

Let me turn now to two possible objections to my reconstruction of Gadamer's interpretive pluralism. First of all, a skeptic might contend that relational properties are not ontological properties of the object at all, but only epistemological items that merely introduce changes in the ways we describe an ontologically determinate object. On this view, when a later historical event leads us to see an earlier historical event differently, it is only our description of the earlier event that changes, not the earlier event itself. This position which denies the ontological reality of relational properties is mistaken for the following reason. It is true that our descriptions of earlier events change as a result of later events. Yet it is not just our descriptions that change. Relational properties are not features of our descriptive predilections, but of the events themselves. Our descriptions sometimes change because we have changed, but they sometimes change because the objects relational properties have changed. For example, if a person describes the

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Russian Revolution differently because she has undergone a political conversion, this descriptive change is a result of a change in that person's epistemic or attitudinal makeup, not in the event itself. If, however, a person describes the Russian Revolution differently because the Revolution has come to bear new relations to new events, then it is not the person that has changed but the Revolution, insofar as it now has new relational properties (e.g. the property of having led to a 70-year failed alternative to capitalism). For this reason, relational properties must be regarded as ontologically real; though they may lead to new descriptions, they are not merely changes in the epistemic makeup or descriptive activities of persons.



private

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All times are displayed in your local time (Eastern)

4 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/13/07 6:45PM



close



In response to Jonathan Reams (1)

3. How is adopting an ontological dimension apart from a perspectival field (standpoint epistemology of a theorist, thinker, meditator ...)?

As a start, let us consider "perspectives" in a rather precise way as those defined in the AQAL model, namely along the line of the eight indigenous perspectives; such that the characteristics of the perspectival field are those of Wilber's Hori-zones of arising, namely, the inside and outside of the subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective. The process model calls this perspectival field, the epistemological field.

The process model uses the term "view" also in a rather precise way. It says that "view" is radically a-perspectival, in the sense that "view" does not entail interior-exterior relations (nor their correlates, inside-outside, subjective-objective and the like); neither does "view" entail one-many relations (nor their correlates, singular-plural, whole-part, and the like).

With respect to the notion of perspective, I can best describe "view", as it is understood in the process model, in terms of "degrees of freedom" . In this sense, a wider or greater view has more degrees of freedom. An (imaginary) completely open view -- the pure opening of being -- would then have infinite degree of freedom, and no perspectival points (conditions); an (imaginary) completely closed view would have no degrees of freedom and a kind of black hole singularity perspectival point of no escape (a sloppy metaphor for sure).

From a process dynamics standpoint, "view" is a function of the fluidity and scope of the processes that generate perspectives -- it is a function of the process' creative potential to maintain an open, unbounded state, versus a closed, habituated pattern that has exhasuted its potential.

Phenomenologically, "view" is the apperception of the "space", or the opening of Being through which the perspectives arise.

How this notion of "view" relates to conventional ontology theory is therefore contra-distinguished. Given the notion of "view" as degrees of ontological freedom, conventional ontology represents a more limited view, because it establishes a static basis, limiting the role of further creative ontological dimensioning of reality. The theorist who straps epistemological determinacy onto the open ontological dimensioning of reality, is providing a stagnant, limiting view. Alternately, the thinker who thinks in terms of epistemologically conditioned "ontologies" is thinking from a limited or stagnant view.

If one defines "meditator" as one who allows the open and creative, fluid and uninhibited dimensioning of reality, without the interposition of epistemological categories, then that would suggest that meditation is the process of opening-up view.

There is also some overlap or correspondence between the notion that a process view allows for greater degrees of freedom (less closure) than a structural view, which depends

upon delimiting ontic categories. Of course, it depends upon the ontological status that is assigned to the structures... but it seems to me that a process-based view/ language is better apt to express the degrees of freedom we want to allow.

Bonnie

6 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/13/07 3:48PM



close



In response to Jonathan Reams (1)

5. Would there be a way to save the process insight by finding a more integral albeit non-reductive way in which perspectives (and states) implicate ontologies, and vice versa, in forming a view?

Yes, I think there is a more productive way to understand the connection between the perspectives of the self, and the states of consciousness and the process notion of view. I believe it has to do with the dual notion of the self as conditioned structure and the self as navigator. For example, consider the ontological dimensioning of object constancy. The self "qua self" does not navigate the experience of developing object constancy. Rather, object constancy is part of the constituent development of what we term "self". Therefore, object constancy has a strong ontological component to it, because it preconstitutes the self. As the self develops, more and more experiential aspects are enfolded as components of the self. The various levels of gestalts and shadows, one's foundational values and core beliefs, the complete historicity of the self-narrative -- as these get enfolded through the conditions of structural enfoldments, the entity "self" grows in its capacity to subsume these, and there is a corresponding strong ontological component (bias) to what is subsumed in the construct "self."

On the other hand, there are the everyday experiences in which the self acts as central "navigator" of the experience, rather than the experience constituting the self, and the tendency then is to establish external ontological bases. In this regard, the self is enfolded into the experience in an extra-narrative form, rather than the experience being enfolded into the self.

The "self's ontology" then, is the accumulation of its subliminal biases, and supra-liminal (extra-narrative) bases. Together these constrain the self's view. In fact the very construction of "self" as a basis constitutes a limitation of "view." It is not until the self as a construction of various bases is rendered transparent, that one opens up to entirely new ontological dimensionings of reality-- opening up new degrees of freedom, entirely new views.

In his book "Human Development and the Spiritual Life, Ronald Irwin chronicles how in order for consciousness to grow toward transformation into the post conventional, one must move beyond the narrative constructs of self. He is talking exclusively about the external, extra-narratives of self. What the process model adds, is that the self must also render transparent its subliminal preconstitutions, in order to activate further degrees of freedom of view.

Bonnie

8 Martin Beck Matustik

04/17/07 5:17PM



close

**Building on that idea...**

April 17, 2007

The posts 6 & 7 are most helpful, Roy.

The self-perspective, whether personal-existential or transpersonal-divine, allows for integrating the ontological with the critical angles of vision in ways that support the move to the "view" or awareness to be the central axis of awakening and transformation.

In my recorded on-line conversation with Ken Wilber this has been my major rejoinder (I prefer that to calling it an objection), namely, that the Wilber-Combs Lattice has no axis of self-self-transformation: it has conscious structures and states.

Now, Roy, you propose to think of ontology/ies as more foundational even for perspectives: The W-C lattice would be underwritten by ontologically founded view out of which perspective emerge or are posited by conscious structures as well as states within them.

I hope I render your meaning well. This is what I grasped about the process view and what I find the key in it.

Your posts 6 & 7 introduce the self as the integral axis in the way that echoes my rejoinder to Wilber-Combs AQAL structure-state model.

With Kierkegaard, but not only him, self becomes the major performative axis of transformation. It would seem silly to speak of conscious structures and states and yet do not account for the difference of existential stages of spheres. I take the self to be an integer and so a process view is much more amenable here than the structural model. Yet, please note, shifts in stages of existence are neither evolutionary nor accumulative nor linear, they are radical gestalt switches, either/or shifts, like in a key of a music scale.

After Kierkegaard, Heidegger but also Sartre render the self-talk in ontological language. Heidegger, especially later, is much more transpersonal and so amenable to Buddhist crossovers. Sartre remains in the ontic dimension of the self, but he has a critical ontology of the self-other relation. Levinas, from the Judaic angle, articulates radical alterity that opens every self to its other before it can even utter "I."

In sum: growing in awareness or in an open "view" is a self-transformative event, where self is both personal existence and transpersonal ontology or reality, and so awakening punctuates shifts that are at once ontological and perspectival, personal and transpersonal.

Now I need you to teach us how and whether this at all can work with the non-Western view you have tried to articulate here.

Next week I will be writing from Prague See <http://www.action-m.com/patocka2007/>

Martin Beck Matu?tik

<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~matustik/>

9 Bonnitta Roy

04/19/07 9:28AM



close

**Closely following ...**

In response to Martin Beck Matustik (8)

I'd like to go slowly and carefully now, because I think we might help each other learn here. I also think that we might be able to engage some of the people here to help us also -- especially thinking of Rich and his understanding of Aurobindo's work.

When I heard you on the audio with Ken Wilber, there was a point where it was like you were saying "look Ken, its right here in front of us... all we have to do is look at it. It's right there, just as plain as old day." ... and then Ken went straight on to talking about philosophical nuances and "fixing" his theory. I'd like to help bring forth in to daylight -- try to identify what it is that you are holding up for us to see -- what kind of realm of experience/ transformation is this "transversal axis" you are pointing to... I believe this requires sensitivity to subtle distinctions, adequate languaging, and also reflective self-awareness as we proceed -- in other words, there is an experiential element to this kind of conversation also. The experiential element requires us to "check in" with what is intuitively and implicitly understood in a deeper part of ourselves -- as it is this understanding that is trying to articulate itself into the daylight of we-space. Checking-in is like diving down to bedrock, where this "process-thought-thing" is rooted-- we need to ground our self-perspective (view) there, for there is where we need to do our inquiry. Also, we need to be sensitive to the subtle nature of this inquiry, paying attention to the experiential aspects of this "process-thought-thing" -- as it arises, how does it arise? what are the feeling-states/ energetics that accompany it? We take this subtle nature/ aspect.. and consistently compare it with the languaging we are adapting, until there is a suitable resonance between what is at the root, and what we call forth into we-space. That is the essence of dialog.

It is my hope that we can "get at" this proces-thought-thing" you are referring to as the transversal, by first, utilizing the WC lattice to identify this through various distinctions from the WC lattice; then try to associate/ distinguish/ characterize this with the basic properties of the ontological as described in the PM; and then see if there are some elements that can be carried forward into an appreciation of Aurobindo's transformative ontologies ... If we can do this kind of triangulation, then we might be able to "capture" the essence of the ontological dimension of reality, in a way that the experiences of Kierkegaard, Aurobindo, Wilber, Martin, Guenther... are for each and for all validated by our articulation of what this "process-thought-thing" points to.

That would be way cool!

I've put Martin's thoughts in italics below:

The self-perspective, whether personal-existential or transpersonal-divine, allows for integrating the ontological with the critical angles of vision in ways that support

the move to the "view" or awareness to be the central axis of awakening and transformation.

Yes. If taking on different perspectives is a kind of continual movement, then we might say there is a sort of change from two-dimensional range into three dimensional possibility. If awareness is based in the perspectival self, it's movement is limited to the boundary conditions of perspectives. If awareness is based in the realm of ontological possibilities, then it is not limited to those conditions, and it has no boundaries. Moreso, an awareness that resides in a realm of ontological possibilities, unconditioned and unbounded, would certainly be experienced as radical divine-consciousness, or God-consciousness.

This suggests that the "movement" from personal-existential to transpersonal-divine, represents the re-positioning of awareness from the perspectival self to an awareness that transcends those perspectival boundary conditions.

In my recorded on-line conversation with Ken Wilber this has been my major rejoinder (I prefer that to calling it an objection), namely, that the Wilber-Combs Lattice has no axis of self-self-transformation: it has conscious structures and states.

It is my feeling that the WC Lattice falls short of what you are presenting as the transcendent transversal, because the WC lattice is primarily a psychology of self-structure, not a philosophy of being. I suspect that the WC- lattice doesn't do Wilber's understanding justice, in much the same way that his AQAL matrix falls short of his own non-dual understanding. For example, according to the Vendata tradition that Wilber utilizes, in causal states, the quadrants "collapse" into subject permanence. Where do the other quadrants go, then, if the AQAL scheme says that **all of reality tetra-emerges?**

Similarly, the WC lattice has no "escape clause" for what happens to the "self" when the self is transcended. In the WC lattice, the transformations of self are always in relation to the stage-structures "somehow"... mostly with respect to how they are given their interpretation. Here is where we can make a significant distinction. There is a distinction between "how the states of consciousness are languaged" and "how they are given their interpretation". The experience, at bedrock, has a certain kind of precision -- there is basic clarity at the root of state transformative change. In fact, it is the experience of precision, where there was uncertainty, the experience of faith where there was doubt, the experience of clarity where there was confusion -- that distinguishes the kinds of experiences that are transformative, versus translational.

Wilber rightly understands that how we language these experiences is less than precise, less than clear -- but it is only if we then assign the basis of this experience to the epistemological forms we use to call them up -- if we loose contact with the root by fixation on the forms that point to them -- then we are lost in a stage-limitation, i.e. a boundaried condition of interpretation. We substitute the **interpretation -- the signifier** -- for the signified (mistaking the finger for the moon, as the zen saying goes).

Therefore, it is my opinion, that the WC lattice charts the stages through which the self goes in mistaking interpretations of experience for the essential nature of experience -- which is endlessly chasing something that is given as always already in the first place. It's as if Kierkegaard took up bible school after his transformative experience, to try to re-construct it!

Now, Roy, you propose to think of ontology/ies as more foundational even for

perspectives: The W-C lattice would be underwritten by ontologically founded view out of which perspective emerge or are posited by conscious structures as well as states within them.

Yes. I would collapse the WC lattice into quadrants as Wilber initially did, because when Wilber ('s theory) talks about states, he seems to be referring to them, generally as the interpretation of states. That is why, IMO, he made the initial mistake of saying that states could not be skipped. In fact, he was saying that cognitive interpretations of states come in stages that cannot be skipped.

I want to make very clear, however, the radical way in which I think that the ontological dimension "underwrites" the WC lattice. The ontological dimension doesn't merely "underwrite" the cognitive *interpretation* of reality. ***The ontological view sets the possibilities of what arises *in perception* * as perception* -- the very existents that arise as objects, and their affective, value and belief components. Therefore, along with the "interpretation" or "meta-systemic interpretation" or "paradigmatic interpretation" of reality, the very components of reality that comprise the empirically veridical evidence for these levels of interpretation are "underwritten" by one's ontological view.***

Will continue ... thanks, Martin. This is good stuff.

Bonnie

10 Edward Berge

04/21/07 1:47PM



close



?? I have a question...

Forgive me but I am not understanding the difference between view and perspective. That's why I am here. I am also approaching this inquiry at Open Integral under the thread "correct view?" So I also now ask for forgiveness in violating one of the stated "rules" of this dialog in that I'm going to copy and paste others' thoughts below. That is because I cannot yet speak from my own self-knowledge on this topic. But perhaps you can get the jist of what they are saying to contextualize the distinction you're making Bonnie? Thanks.

From Open Integral:

Below are excerpts from an interesting article on the differences between Hindu and Buddhist "enlightenment." It starts with the differences of how they conceptualize the nondual and seems to indicate that to properly do "Buddhist" meditation one must have the "correct view." It also emphasizes that this correct view is not a mish-mash of intermixed Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist views with a "common core." It seems the latter attempt arises more from one's "personal ideas" or agendas. Such might also be the agenda, of which Ken partakes, to find the "common ground" of all the "spiritual traditions," aka the "perennial philosophy." So again I must ask: Is Ken's mixing and matching of nondual language and tradition more of his own creation and in effect watering down each mis-matched tradition? Or are the "traditions" so ethnocentric as to not see how "it all comes together?" Or what?

Also note that this "correct," Buddhist view is stated in the first excerpted paragraph.

Enlightenment: Buddhism Vis-à-Vis Hinduism
 Ācārya Dharma Vajra (Sridhar SJB Rana)
 Published: Buddhist Himalaya, 1996
<http://www.byomakusuma.org/Default.aspx?tabid=38>

...in the Buddhist context, illusion is not removed but rather seen as knowledge itself - or is transformed into knowledge. And this knowledge is not something that is the support or base of Samsara. It is the knowledge of the true mode of existence of Samsara itself.

There are two traditions of explaining 'advaya' in Buddhism. One is called the Vast Lineage (skt. Vaipulay parampara) of Asanga-Vasubandhyu based on the 'Five Works' of Maitreya which emphasizes subject-object (skt. grahaka-grahya) duality. But unlike the various forms of Vedanta, they neither merge into one whole nor does the grasper (subject) vanishes the illusion and only the eternal grasper remains. Here they are found to be untenable from the very beginning. What remains is emptiness. This system had many great teachers like Dingnaga-Dharmakirti.

The second lineage called the Profound Lineage (skt. gambhira parampara) started with Nagarajuna and was passed down through famous teachers such as Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti, Shantideva and Atisha. There were many other famous teachers like Shantarakshita and Kamakashila who also gave synthetic interpretations of 'advaya' using both traditions.

Any Buddhist hermeneutics must be based on one of these hermeneutics or their various

branches like 'Sakara Yogachara', 'Nirakara Yogachara', 'Yogachara' 'Sautrantic Madhyamik', 'Prasangic Madhyamika', and 'Svatantric Madhyamika' etc. Just because one understands Sanskrit or Tibetan, one cannot interpret the 'Sastras' (texts) as one likes, giving straightforward meanings to them. Any interpretation must belong to one of these hermeneutical methodologies. Otherwise it becomes one's own private idea of what these texts are teaching....Such interpretations are personal ideas and not true Buddhist hermeneutics and if analyzed, one will find many contradiction and inconsistencies.

It is only after having understood the view correctly that correct Buddhist mediation can take place. Otherwise, there would be no difference between Hindu, Sufi, Christian, Tao and Buddhist meditations.

Notice, I say valid study, valid study means study with valid lineage teachers (not just somebody who knows Sanskrit or Tibetan and happens to be a lama or Vajracharya by caste as is found among Tamangs and Newars respectively). Valid lineage Masters teach according to historically accepted Buddhist hermeneutics and do not give their own personal self-contradictory interpretations. Such a Master had studied with someone who belonged to one or more of these hermeneutical lineages. Such a study is not merely intellectual entertainment but a proper base for acquiring wisdom gained through listening and contemplation and creates an understanding of the correct view, which itself would be the proper foundation for proper Buddhist meditation i.e. the third wisdom gained through meditation. Simply doing 'nadi-vayu-tilak yoga' without such a base is the same as doing Hindu meditation even if it is part of Hevajra or Cakrasamvara or Vajrabhairava or Kalacakra practice.

Here is what Ken says in Integral Spirituality (draft) in the section "Emptiness and view are not-two":

When one is in deep meditation or contemplation, touching even that which is formless and unmanifest-the purest emptiness of cessation-there are of course no conceptual forms arising. This pure "nonconceptual" mind-a causal state of formlessness-is an essential part of our liberation, realization, and enlightenment.

In the Theravada, or early Buddhism, this formless state of cessation (e.g., nirvikalpa, nirvana, nirodh), is taken to be an end in itself, a nirvana that is free from samsara or manifestation. Mahayana Buddhism went further and maintained that such a view is true but partial, and promptly dubbed Theravada "Hinayana Buddhism" ("Small Vehicle Buddhism").

Mahayana Buddhism maintained that while the realization of nirvana or emptiness is important, there is a deeper realization, where nirvana and samsara, or Emptiness and the entire world of Form, are one, or more technically, Emptiness and Form are "not two." As the most famous sutra on this topic-The Heart Sutra-puts it: "That which is Emptiness is not other than Form, that which is Form is not other than Emptiness." This realization of Nonduality is the cornerstone of both Mahayana ("Great Vehicle") and Vajrayana ("Diamond Vehicle") Buddhism.

When it comes to the nature of enlightenment or realization, this means that a complete, full, or nondual realization has two components, absolute (emptiness) and relative (form). The "nonconceptual mind" gives us the former, and the "conceptual mind" gives us the latter. Put it this way: when you come out of nonconceptual meditation, what conceptual forms will you embrace? If you are going to enter the manifest realm-if you are going to embrace not just nonconceptual nirvana but also conceptual samsara-then what

conceptual forms will you use? By definition, a nondual realization demands both "no views" in emptiness and "views" in the world of form. Meditation in particular is designed to plunge us into the world of emptiness; and what is designed to give us "correct form"? That is, what conceptual view or framework does nondual Buddhism recommend?

Traleg Kabyon Rinpoche, one of the Tibetan masters who is as at home in the Western tradition as he is in the Eastern, is uniquely situated to comment on this (all following quotes are from *Mind at Ease: Self-Liberation through Mahamudra Meditation*; emphasis added). Traleg

Rinpoche starts by pointing out that correct views are just as important as correct meditation; indeed, the two are inseparable: Buddhist meditation practices and experiences are always discussed from a particular viewpoint that is always taken to be valid and true-this cannot be otherwise. Correct views have the ability to lead us to liberation, while incorrect views increase the delusions of our mind....

That is why we need a proper orientation or correct view when we embark on the path. Correct view is in fact our spiritual vehicle, the transport we use to journey from the bondage of samsara to the liberation of nirvana. Conversely, incorrect views have the potential to lead us off course and, like a poorly constructed raft, will case us adrift and deposit us on the shores of misery. There is no separation between the vehicle that transports us to our spiritual destination and the views that we hold in our mind.

Unfortunately, boomeritis ("nobody tells me what to do!") Buddhism was used in the whole spirit of "Dharma bums," where preconventional license was confused with postconventional liberation. Hence Buddhism was thought to be all about nothing but cultivating "no views," which is true only on the emptiness or Hinayana side of the street, but not true on the Mahayana side, which demands the union of emptiness and views, not the trashing of one of them. But this "no views at all" notion was uniquely suited to "nobody tells me what to do!"

Traleg comments on this strange westernized Buddhism:

Buddhism states that our normal views inhibit us and chain us to the limited condition of samsara, whereas the correct view can lead us to our ultimate spiritual destination. We should not conclude from this-although modern Western Buddhists often do-that meditation is all about getting rid of views, or that all views will hinder us from attaining our spiritual goal. This assumption is based on the legitimate premise that Buddhist teachings emphatically identify the need to develop a non-conceptual wisdom mind in order to attain liberation and enlightenment. However, many people mistakenly think that this implies that we do not need to believe in anything [Nobody tells me what to do!] and that all forms of conceptuality must be dispensed with right from the beginning. It is only incorrect views that we need to overcome. The correct and noble view is to be cultivated with great diligence.

What is this "correct and noble view"? It is simply the Buddhist view itself, or the central ideas, concepts, and framework that is Buddhism, counting its basic philosophy and psychology-including the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Way, the Twelfold Chain of Dependent Origination, the central recognition of Emptiness, the Nonduality of absolute Emptiness and relative Form, the luminous identity of unqualifiable or empty Spirit and all of its manifest Forms in a radiant, natural, spontaneously present display, and the central linkage of: right ethics and right views > leading to right meditation (dhyana) > leading to right awareness (prajna) > leading to right compassion (karuna) > leading to right action and skillful means (upaya) on behalf of all sentient beings.

15 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/23/07 6:32AM



close



In response to Edward Berge (12)

Hi Ed,

There are so many twists and turns and difficult knots in your question. I find Wilber's use of the term "view" in Integral Spirituality very confusing. He seems to be both stretching the term "perspective" and conflating the term "view" with "form" (as when he re-writes the Buddhist saying to be "emptiness and view are not two.")

The PM was created to help us sort this stuff out. In order to do so, we have to start at square one, and work back into the kinds of complex questions we are interested in.

First, it is important not to confuse the casual connotations of the words "perspective" and "view" -- which can come closely to meaning the same thing, i.e. a certain "angle of opinion or perception" -- not to confuse them with the specific use of the terms in the PM. The terms are used in a specific way in order to make subtle distinctions. The term "perspective" is actually very precisely defined by Wilber as the 8 indigenous Hori-zones that arise from the 4 quadrants (i.e. the inside and outsides of the subjective, intersubjective, objective and interobjective). For Wilber, perspective is also conditioned by a holarchic relationship of development, and together (with the states of consciousness) assigns an address. With Wilber, there is already a distinction made between the Hori-zones and the states -- as illustrated in the WC lattice.

The PM wants to elucidate more distinctions between the states of consciousness and the perspectives. The PM prescribes a process that is responsible for the enfoldment of relations such that the quadrants and the perspectives and their apparent holarchic relations arise. These perspectives are outcomes of a cognitive process, and therefore are associated with epistemology.

The PM assigns the states of consciousness to the ontological dimensioning of reality, and uses the term "view" to connote the ontological states. Wilber merely utilizes the Advaita concepts of gross, subtle and causal, to describe the states. He also associates these with waking, dreaming and deep sleep. I think that is hopelessly simplistic schema. And his association of these states with the waking, dreaming, sleep cycle requires a whole lot of explanation for it to make the kind of meaning that it is supposed to mean. The casual way he writes about these things sometimes, is a real disservice to readers -- it throws them off.

The PM suggests that by looking at the kinds of ontological dimensioning of reality reported not only by Wilber, but also by Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Aurobindo, Bohm, and others... we might be able to better articulate what is going on there. We might be able to better understand how perspectives arise by including the ontological dimensioning of reality and thinking also in terms of view.

It is my understanding that when Buddhist say "be mindful of your view" -- they are not pointing to the nondual, per se, unless one is operating from a non-dual view. It is my understanding that they are pointing what is sourcing the fundamental aspect of your Being -- the view from which the perspectives arise.

The biggest difference between Wilber and the PM, in terms of view, is that Wilber subtends everything in his system (except the absolute which escapes it) to the self-system. For Wilber, the complex constellation of developmental perspectives plus state of consciousness, comprising a kosmic address, comes very very close to the notion of view - except view is tagged to self-development. The PM makes an ontological interpretation. The PM says that one's view -- the foundation of one's very Being-- determines how the self-system arises in the first place. The self system is therefore in constant dynamic relation to articulate and express a view that in a sense (in an ontological sense) was always already, but latent, in an epistemological sense.

This description of the ontological dimensioning of view as Being-ness, explains many experiences that are otherwise not sufficiently explained. It explains, for example, why people have the experience of realizing something that they "knew all along" -- something very basic and foundational about themselves and their situatedness in the world. It explains how Newton and Einstein could work from the same Horizons (#6) and yet have completely different views-- and it further explains how the view of the relativistic universe was a part of Einstein's Being -- it was responsible for his early schooling difficulties, for example -- this view was somehow determining the entire nature of his experiences, both personal and professional, until he developed the capacity (the cognitive capacity and tools) to make explicit what was latent and implicit in him all along.

On a personal note: for me, the PM and the notion of view is an example of itself-- since it articulates something that I have been aware of, without being able to articulate it, since I was 2 years old and my mother taught me to pray. I thought it was very strange that grownups would bother to use audible words to pray to God; thought it strange that they would even use words at all; thought it strange even to use thoughts in your head to talk to God, since his perception of ME was greater than my perception of myself -- that my vocabulary was limited, my interest was perverted by my ego (please God, let me find my lost kitten).. and that the real way to "talk to God" was to allow those limitations to dissolve in a kind of absolute openness- a kind of resistance-less open line to God. From very early on I practiced being a T-1 connection to God.

Now, I did not *at the age of 2, reason myself into this view..* It is also true that there were many permutations of my self which sometimes resisted, sometimes acknowledged this view. Regardless what my self was "doing", through different stages of development and existential trauma-- what was always driving me, was this fundamental view. I could resist, I could run away, I could return -- but the energy behind my Being -- in all its forms, and perspectival points -- was always sourced from this fundamental view.

You can search the literature for many many examples -- from science, artists and philosophers -- of the same ontologically nuanced experience. Late in her life, Hannah Arendt said something like "It occurs to me that one has only one important thing to say in life, that one is born with this one thing, and then one spends one's entire life probing its presence, and trying to sound it."

So there is a long explanation. I am not sure if it is helpful in answering your question.

Bonnie

16 Edward Berge

04/28/07 9:02AM



close



Bonnie,

I admit to not getting your "view." I also admit that this is likely due to my current and prejudicial "view" which is also not a "perspective" in light of Nagarjuna's dialectics. To explain myself and my interpretation of what you're saying I've enclosed some excerpts from an article below. It seems to me that you are positing ontology as distinct from epistemology, or committing a "duality" by "identify[ing] conventional reality with the phenomenal realm, and ultimate reality with the noumenal."

Now you can see that Nagarjuna's method/view is also, like yours, "a new insight into ontology and into our cognitive access to the world." But it is by admitting that "Nagarjuna's enterprise is one of fundamental ontology, and the conclusion he comes to is that fundamental ontology is impossible." Hence the "extirpation of the myth of the deep," or in other words, the "myth of the given." As you correctly noted Ken applies this to everything except the Absolute, whereas Nagarjuna applies it even to his own "ultimate." Hence no ontology separate from epistemology. Hence the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth.

I know you know this stuff and so I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt. I'm just saying that I cannot understand it in light of my current prejudices like the below. I'm hoping that some others understand you and will express it in their own way. Perhaps from other articulations it might become more clear to me.

"Nagarjuna and the Limits of Thought," Jay L. Garfield and Graham Priest, *Philosophy East & West*, Volume 53, Number 1, January 2003, 1-21

<http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Nagarjuna/NagarjunaTheLimitsOfThought.pdf>

We will argue that while Nagarjuna's contradictions are structurally similar to those we find in the West, Nagarjuna delivers to us a paradox as yet unknown in the West. This paradox, we will argue, brings us a new insight into ontology and into our cognitive access to the world.

It is a quite general feature of theories that try to characterize the limits of our cognitive abilities to think, describe, grasp, that they end up implying that they themselves cannot be thought, described or grasped. Yet it would appear that they can be thought, described and grasped. Otherwise, what on earth is the theory doing?

For Western philosophers, it is very tempting to adopt a Kantian understanding of Nagarjuna (as is offered, e.g., by Murti 1955). Identify conventional reality with the phenomenal realm, and ultimate reality with the noumenal, and there you have it. But this is not Nagarjuna's view. The emptiness of emptiness means that ultimate reality cannot be thought of as a Kantian noumenal realm. For ultimate reality is just as empty as conventional reality. Ultimate reality is hence only conventionally real! The distinct realities are therefore identical. As the *Vimilakīrtinīrdesa-sūtra* puts it, "To say this is conventional and this is ultimate is dualistic. To realize that there is no difference between the conventional and the ultimate is to enter the Dharma-door of nonduality," or as the Heart Sutra puts it more famously, "Form is empty; emptiness is form; form is not

different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form." The identity of the two truths has profound soteriological implications for Nagarjuna, such as the identity of nirvana and samsara.

The Ultimate Truth Is That There Is No Ultimate Truth

We are now in a position to examine Nagarjuna's first limit contradiction. The centerpiece of Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka or "middle way" philosophy is the thesis that everything is empty. This thesis has a profound consequence. Ultimate truths are those about ultimate reality. But since everything is empty, there is no ultimate reality. There are, therefore, no ultimate truths.

Nagarjuna's enterprise is one of fundamental ontology, and the conclusion he comes to is that fundamental ontology is impossible. But that is a fundamentally ontological conclusion -and that is the paradox. There is no way that things are ultimately, not even that way. The Indo-Tibetan tradition, following the Vimalakirti-nirdesa sutra, hence repeatedly advises one to learn to "tolerate the groundlessness of things." The emptiness of emptiness is the fact that not even emptiness exists ultimately, that it is also dependent, conventional, nominal, and in the end, it is just the everydayness of the everyday. Penetrating to the depths of being, we find ourselves back on the surface of things, and so discover that there is nothing, after all, beneath those deceptive surfaces. Moreover, what is deceptive about them is simply the fact that we take there to be ontological depths lurking just beneath.

We think that the ontological insight of Nagarjuna's is distinctive of the Madhyamaka; it is hard to find a parallel in the West prior to the work of Heidegger. But even Heidegger does not follow Nagarjuna all the way the dramatic insistence on the identity of the two realities and the recovery of the authority of the conventional. This extirpation of the myth of the deep may be Nagarjuna's greatest contribution to Western Philosophy.

Central to Nagarjuna's understanding of emptiness as immanent in the conventional world is his doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness. That, we have seen, is what prevents the two truths from collapsing into an appearance/reality or phenomenon/noumenon distinction.

The ontological paradox, on the other hand-which we hereby name "Nagarjuna's Paradox"-though, as we have seen, intimately connected with a paradox of expressibility, is quite distinctive, and to our knowledge is found nowhere else. If Nagarjuna is correct in his critique of essence, and if it hence turns out that all things lack fundamental natures, it turns out that they all have the same nature, that is, emptiness, and hence both have and lack that very nature. This is a direct consequence of the purely negative character of the property of emptiness, a property Nagarjuna first fully characterizes, and the centrality of which to philosophy he first demonstrates. Most dramatically, Nagarjuna demonstrates that the emptiness of emptiness permits the "collapse" of the distinction between the two truths, revealing the empty to be simply the everyday, and so saves his ontology from a simple-minded dualism. Nagarjuna demonstrates that the profound limit contradiction he discovers sits harmlessly at the heart of all things. In traversing the limits of the conventional world, there is a twist, like that in a Möbius strip, and we find ourselves to have returned to it, now fully aware of the contradiction on which it rests.

20 **Bonnitta Roy**

04/30/07 6:21AM



close



In response to Edward Berge (12)

To make the distinction between perspective and view, first identify what Wilber means as "perspective". He means subjective, objective, intersubjective and interobjective (or these in both their inside/outside versions -- to make the eight indigenous perspectives). When you add developmental level and state of consciousness to his equation, you get a "kosmic address." For Wilber, the self goes through developmental stages and state changes to reach different kosmic addresses. This accounts for what we causally call the differences in people's views -- their kosmic address is the summation of their changing perspectives.

The PM says there is an alternative way to look at this result -- that people have all these different kosmic addresses. On the one hand, there are the perspectives -- the subjective, intersubjective, objective and interobjective -- and on the other hand there is the way in which these perspectives are organized. When they are organized in one way, the world arises, effortlessly, under certain aspects of reality. For example, when they are organized conventionally, we experience the mind in the body, and the body as part of the physical world. The PM uses the term "view" as the organizing framework through which the perspectives arise. In this case, a conventional organization of perspectives gives rise to a sense of self -- rather than the other way around. The view creates the reality -- in this case a reality in which there is a self, with a mind in a body, in a world, shared with others. The conventional organization of perspectives also entails an arrow of time. So there is a sense of self in a temporal situation -- past, present, future. The conventional world arises organized in such a way that it feels "real". That is part of the framework of view-- it has the value of existence.

A different organization of perspectives (a different view) would result in a completely different reality. This is not an intellectual idea. I am making the distinction between the intellectual exercise of thinking/ understanding/ operating from the notion that the world is in my mind -- like a Zen student trying to trick herself into thinking of the world that way, despite evidence to the contrary -- a distinction between being able to argue, as Nagarjuna did, that emptiness is in the forms, because that's what you find when you pursue them through intellectual rigor -- I am trying to make this distinction between the highly-cognitive rational manipulation of the idea that perspectives can be rearranged and interchanged ----

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and the actual experience in which there is a shift in view-- a shift which results in which our experiences are organized in a completely different way-- resulting in a completely different reality.

So I go along, and have this conventional experience of time past and time future. And then there is a shift -- and for the love of peet, I completely lose that sense. I am experiencing reality in a completely different way. I am not thinking about "gee what would it be like if there was no temporal dimension to experience" -- its just that there is a shift, and experience comes up without a temporal dimension. When the organization of experience is such that there is a new reality -- the PM says there was a shift in view. The PM accounts for this shift in the organization of experience such that there is a shift in reality, as a shift in view. It doesn't have to do with a particular integration of perspectives, or the ability to take on multiple (subjective, intersubjective, objective, interobjective) perspectives-- it has to do with the actual experience of reality suddenly and somehow

coming up organized in a completely different way.

Take another example --

Conventionally we go around worrying not to injure our body, or we try to take care of our physical body so we can live as long as possible. We operate from the view that our consciousness depends upon the living physical body. We don't reason ourselves into that view. Reality just comes up that way. Now there might be Christians or Buddhists that will argue otherwise, but if you look at how most interact in the world, they are operating on the same premise, or view. The facticity of mortality is just too strong a part of how we experience reality. Most of us are experiencing reality as if we were mortal -- it is deeply deeply embedded in our view.

One time, however, this completely shifted for me. I had this prolonged period of experiencing the physical world as needing to be "impregnated" by consciousness, in order to become alive. I was experiencing reality as the disembodied self, functioning on a plane that was somehow separate from the physical plane. And it seemed to me -- not as an intellectual exercise, but as a fact of this experience -- that it was a tremendous act of compassion for consciousness to "come down" as it were, in a sense "and" "impregnate" the physical, And that this was happening in all sentient beings. I felt this communion with the disembodied aspect or plane of reality -- and this tremendous experience of the compassion it required of them/us to partner with the physical world -- given all its karmic and samsaric costs.

Now I am not going to assign a metaphysical status to that experience. However, I do understand how/why/that someone like Aurobindo assigns a metaphysical interpretation to experiences of that sort -- when he talks about the supra mental "descending into the physical" ... and these parallel axes of evolution. I believe his metaphysical explanation points to a similar organization of experience, such as I have had, that points out a different view of reality altogether.

Since I personally don't assign a hierarchical ontology to these sets of views, unlike Aurobindo, I feel that there is no real reason, except for kosmic habit, why conventional experience couldn't be like the latter, and then it would take the ability to allow that habit to relax, in order to experience reality within a conventional framework of perspectives, iow, a conventional view.

The purpose of the PM is to point out the possibility of allowing the habituated structured framework of conventional experience, to release, so that different realities can be experienced. If there is a reason why this is useful, then I might suggest that the old ways in which we approach problems, such as poverty, violence and environmental problems -- have exhausted their potentials, and that we need to create completely different views of reality in order to address these "problems" in new ways. But I don't believe that people actually change their reality. You might achieve the cognitive ability to adopt a stage three moral code, and think in terms of universal compassion. But that is not going to translate into transformational types of behavior/ thinking, until reality arises in such a way that you are constantly experiencing that oneness -- until you cannot help but experience that oneness ... You have to have the transformation of view, first, such that reality arises reorganized in a way that universal compassion is a "no brainer" -- just as today, "life liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is a no-brainer. When those are in opposition, intellectually -- which one do we default to, ultimately? We default to that which seems more "real", because that's how we experience reality-- according to our fundamental view.

When your view changes, you don't have to do intellectual gymnastics to know how to behave with universal compassion. When your view changes, you won't have to intellectualize span x depth ... in order to act, any more than conventionally, we have to

intellectualize not hacking our arm off with a chain saw when it strikes out at the plate. So in a sense, you becomes "less moral" when your view changes, because you are not in a state of moral in-decision all the time. Just as when you are cold, you come to the heat, or when you are lonely, you seek companionship ... those are not moral decisions we make, they are immediacies that arise from our reality. With a shift in view, compassion has the same feeling of immediacy, of being more real than the options, such that when there is despair you become comfort -- despite the form the despair comes in (the lover or the terrorist). When your view changes, experience changes with it. The self doesn't have to work it out by taking on multiple perspectives. This new self itself, and how it is situated in this new reality, is already preconstituted by the shift in view.

23 **Bonnitta Roy**

05/01/07 6:17AM



close



A not A



view

*In response to Edward Berge (21)**Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching ..*

Truth be told, I don't know the distinction. I know what people are pointing to, when they talk in terms of that distinction -- but that distinction has no meaning for me. I started almost 32 years ago trying to reconcile immanent spirit with transcendent Spirit -- something that closely corresponds to that distinction -- and they ended up losing all their meaning for me. Its like one of those games I played as a child -- my sister and I would say a word over and over again, and at some point, the word would lose its meaning and we would shout "there" -- it was the funniest thing to be able to determine just at what point the meaning fell out of the word through this type of play. (We did this in the car on the long drive to Maine in the summers -- it must have driven my parents nuts!)

It seems to me that certain ways of philosophizing are like a complex pre-amble to the two truths doctrine. We start at A, we get to not-A -- two truths. Once we "tease" A out, we are already locked into the two truths paradox. To end up with a different ending place, we have to start with a different starting place.

If at the beginning we mistake A as being very different from not-A, then we have already set ourselves up to end up with two truths. We have inserted the divide right at the start. (See the simple diagram attached to this post.) If we look at the nature of dichotomous thinking, however, A and not-A are complements. They self-define. *Therefore, A and not-A by definition are the same "thing" under complementary aspects.* The more fundamental a term that A is, the more fundamental a term not-A is, eventually resulting in fundamental paradoxes like existence/non existence; relative/ absolute ... Its kind of like equal and opposite reactions. And yes, the more we keep A and not-A apart as two truths, the more we can build up the aspects on the one hand, and all kinds of aspects on the other hand, that give the appearance that there is a kind of deep complexity to reality.

However, if we see that A and not-A are the same at the beginning, and then we see how we tease A apart from not-A through dichotomous thinking, then we can see that the path of pursuing A with the type of intellectual rigor that Nagarjuna did, is merely a circle from A back to not-A, and then we see that it is not surprising that he gets to not-A; and in fact both A and not-A were always embedded in the original starting place (before "thought" separated them, then journeyed back to them).

All this is really not that much different than what the logical positivists were doing in Britain -- except their language games were not tagged to experiential states of being. With the exception of Wittgenstein-- but that is another story.

The intellectual exercise rarely proves fruitful, unless you allow it to drive you to paroxysms of despair.

30 Richard Carlson

05/12/07 12:32PM



close



To follow up on Edwards post regards Gadamer and play which appears to be heading in the right direction. It seems to me like riffin' process view off aesthetic consciousness in the chapter on: Play as the Clue to Ontological Explanation could only be promising.

In turning to art and symbol rather than the word Gadamer also skillfully avoids the Derridian trap of signifieds/signifiers, because art is sensual, enacted, art presences through the sensual. Unlike discursive practice it does not simply substitute an infinite chain of signifiers in its presentation, rather it bodies forth in the world through each performance. I've always admired his hermeneutic skills for interpenetrating seeming dualities through an interpretive process unique to every instance. His aim was never toward a static end state but involved continuous phenomenal (interpretive) transformations through the fusion of horizons (horizonverschmelzung). More importantly regards process view he manages not to tie his project down to any single method or any one truth, since his interpretive method resists any one reifying hermeneutic scheme. This seems in accord with view as play

Here he states his thesis involving ontological difference and play:

"My thesis then is that the being of art cannot be defined as an object of aesthetic consciousness because on the contrary the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is part of the event of being that occurs in presentation, and belongs essentially to play as play (116)

When a distinction is made it is between the material and what the poet makes between the poem and the "conception" But these distinctions are of a secondary nature. What the actor plays and the spectator recognizes are the forms and actions itself as they are formed by the poet

More exactly one can say that the mimetic representation (Darstellung) the performance brings into existence (zum Dasein) what the play itself requires. The double distinction between a play and subject matter and a play and its performance corresponds to a double non-distinction as the unity of the truth which one recognizes in the play of art"

This also has consequences for the relationship of embodiment to theory (theoria), which I was attempting to get at in my post on Difference and View. In Truth and Method this involves social communion through the participatory consciousness which fuses the horizons of author and audience.

"Greek metaphysics still conceives the essence of theoria and of nous as being purely present to what is truly real and for us the ability to act theoretically is defined by the fact that in attending to something one is able to forget one's own purpose. But theoria is not to be conceived as primarily subjective conduct, as a self-determination of the subject, but in what is contemplating. Theoria is true participation, not something active but something passive (pathos) namely being totally involved and carried away by what one sees (124/125)"

Well I am not sure if I managed to produce anything of interest here, but if Gadamer himself attempted interpreting Santana for a buddy of mine in a class he had with him at Boston College, I thought I could at least take a shot at complexity of ontology in Sri Aurobindo which I will do in the next post..

31 Richard Carlson

05/12/07 12:50PM



close



Jonathan wrote:

the ways we describe an ontologically determinate object." As I read this, some kind of reflex popped into awareness for me. I'm not sure of its full meaning, but it has to do what linking ontological and object. My understanding of Bonnie's use of the term ontological is that it is not something linked to objects, at least not in the conventional way that my education and picking up of cultural connotations of language use brought me to believe were traditional.

I think of objects as existing within the epistemological field. This also comes from my understanding of Bohm, where reality is unbroken wholeness, and any kind of "object" is an abstraction from this wholeness, and thus an epistemological creation."

Rich:

I will have to admit not understanding ontology properly, perhaps because I am not a trained philosopher, or maybe my eastern metaphysics has along the way distorted my ability to categorize according to proper Western models of Logic, but I agree with Bonnie and Jonathan's view in that it seems to me that multiple ontologies fray easily and perhaps chiaroscuro into epistemologies depending our proximity to the "One ontology". In fact maybe it's the nature of ontology itself I have difficulties with or in the manner in which Western philosophizing divides mental phenomenology into either/or categories of ontology/epistemology, or perhaps because Sri Aurobindo almost never even mentions the word ontology or most likely due to my own innate slowness, but reality always seems to me a rather slippery slope.

Without attempting to champion it, I'll provide an Aurobindonian example of some ontological complexity which don't square easily to western philosophical models, this is completely from my own perspective of course, which may indeed represent "no view" at all. But as I believe process view also has a dialog going with Sri A here goes:

I believe it is incorrect to refer to Aurobindian ontological levels. (e.g.in the plural, but I will qualify this) Sri Aurobindo posits only "One" ontological level and that is: Sat-Chit-Ananda. It is from this reality which Aurobindo terms the upper hemisphere of the Divine Mother (Shakti) that the rest of creation (in the lower hemisphere) proceeds. The boundary layer between lower and upper hemisphere is what Aurobindo terms Supermind.

But although there is ultimately only one ontology Sat Chit Ananda, in the context of the evolutionary play however, this original ontology enters the lower hemisphere through the process of involution and subsequently bifurcates into three contingent ontological levels or structures which Sri A calls: Physical, Vital, Mental. Additionally there is the psychic being who is the true actor of the play. The psychic being is not an ontological level but an entity, one could perhaps say an ontological being which seeks to recover its essence through its embodiment, in a game of hide and seek (involution/evolution).

(In a Heideggerian sense one could perhaps refer to the ontology of Being = Sat Chit Annanda, and the ontology of beings = psychic being)

But the psychic being (chaitya purusha) is not the only actor in the terrestrial play, there is

a whole supporting cast, who perform within the horizons of the different "Koshas" of sheaths of Being which in Sri A number seven. In the lower hemisphere of creation there are three sheaths which are all inhabited by a being or a purusha (soul) proper to their (contingent) ontological level. There is the physical annamaya purusha, the vital pranamaya purusha, and the mental being proper to humanity called manomaya purusha. Sri Aurobindo unique contribution to this metaphysical schema is the disclosure of the chaitya purusha or psychic being as the integrating entity.

But what attracts the attention of most integral theorist, especially Wilber is the mental being, the manomaya purusha. Although this being (purusha) is particular to "man the mental being" and it is the mental being which takes the lead in evolution of the species making a vertical evolutionary/developmental ascent through the graduations of consciousness, the actual clearing of the horizon toward experience of Being and the integration of the super-conscious transcendent/mind with the inconscient immanent/physical, is accomplished through the play of the psychic being who topographically inhabits not so much the heights of Being but its depths.

The manomaya purusha (mental being) is described only as an ambassador of the psychic being, a minister of the true sovereign of our being. The reality or ontology of the mental being is somewhat contingent on the psychic being. The mental being and the psychic being also serve different function in the evolution. The function of the mental being is toward knowledge, while psychic being moves toward integration of knowledge with embodiment

Additionally in Sri Aurobindo the graduations of consciousness are not ontological levels proper -although they each may each spawn countless worlds - but are stages of increasing knowledge, ways of knowing. These stages may appear ontological - as they do to Ken W who confuses Aurobindian structures with its stages - because to a certain extent one's own consciousness assumes the structure and view of its epistemological backgrounding . But although these epistemologies background play these stages of consciousness begin to fray as ontologies as one understanding expands, (e.g. mental to higher mind to illumined etc).

45 Edward Berge

05/14/07 3:50PM



close

**Here's a resource...**

This sounds a bit like "the only constant is change." I'm trying to understand this which is why I'm trying various angles. Here's another angle on the stable "rules" of an ever-changing, yet singular, ontological process dimension. Maybe.

"An Ontology for Practical Wisdom" by Charles W. Allen, Encounter 67.1 (2006) at <http://www.cts.edu/Documents/EncounterCallenWint06.pdf>

The Ontology in Outline

- Reality is most coherently and holistically described as a network of relatively singular instances (that network itself being one of those instances).
- No such instances exist apart from their relations with other instances. They are relatively singular.
- All such instances involve more than their relations with others. They are relatively singular.
- As relatively singular instances, all these are more or less occasional instantiations of their relations and of themselves (set theory be damned). While they do illustrate more general properties, they are always more than mere illustrations.
- The relationships between the relativity (or relationality) and singularity of a given instance are inescapably tensive: neither is precisely the same as the other, nor is either completely different from the other. All attempts to specify precisely how they are related or distinct will at least implicitly presuppose this very tension that they aim to resolve.
- But our ability to recognize this indicates that such tensions are not the nonsensical self-contradictions of formal logic. Reality does not dissolve into an endless play of differences where nothing ever gets resolved. (At the very least we have to affirm what Stephan Körner calls the "weak principle of contradiction," which holds that not every statement is true, or in Hilary Putnam's version, that not every statement is both true and false.)
- For an instance to count as relatively singular there must be a kind of coherence to it (not a strict, formal consistency) every bit as fundamental as any tensions it might display.
- The relationship between such tensiveness and coherence is itself both tensive and coherent (or coherently tensive and tensively coherent-in the vein of Ricoeur's "discordant concordance").
- In abstraction from full engagement with constantly shifting, relatively singular contexts, we find many aspects of reality amenable to the strictly formal operations of traditional, truth-functional logic. But these remain partial

abstractions from reality in its full concreteness. Put more cryptically, the logic of identity and subordination follows what could be called a more dynamic logic of selfhood ("ipseity") and interpermeability.

□ Thus we may distinguish between universals and particulars and for many purposes treat both as stable realities. But we must not overlook the fact that intelligently relating a universal to a particular situation requires noting how the situation in all its particularity seems to call for that particular universal in its own particular way. In practice, then, universals are chock-full of particularity. Conversely, any attempt even to think of what distinguishes particulars from universals and from one another must rely upon universals in order to do so. So in practice particulars are chock-full of universality.

□ All reference to universals is but an aspect of relatively singular instances of relating relatively singular instances to one another; and all reference to particulars is but an aspect of relatively singular instances of distinguishing relatively singular instances from one another; and relating and distinguishing are themselves but two sides of the "same" tensive coin.

□ In fact, we do not know of anything altogether beyond relatively singular instances of distinguishing and relating relatively singular instances.

□ From this we can plausibly hazard a more dynamic understanding of reality, not just as a network of relatively singular instances, but as itself a relatively singular instance of distinguishing and relating relatively singular instances. (But given the elusiveness of the terminology here, we should not say that this conclusion follows with strict necessity from the preceding reflections.)

□ Since practical wisdom can itself be alternately defined as a relatively singular instance of distinguishing and relating relatively singular instances, we could then say that this is not only an ontology for practical wisdom, but an ontology of practical wisdom.

51 Bonnitta Roy

05/21/07 5:55AM



close



In response to Richard Carlson (50)

How does Starratt's experience reconcile in Brown's micro-genesis?

There tends to be a confusion of how Brown's microgenesis is used in the PM. I think this is because I didn't frame the introduction in the right way. The PM introduces Brown only as one cognitive organization of reality -- the conventional one. I think I noted that in a footnote. When there is a shift, as with Starratt's experience, there must be a re-sequencing of the cognitive occasion. So, for example, in Brown's conventional microgenesis, the affect quality is enfolded in the self and goes out to the object as interest and value. With Starratt, the affective quality exteriorizes with the object, such that he "feels the holding on of fence posts" .

IMO, Starratt's experience does not seem so much an articulation but a revelation and enfoldment in an Otherness that comes to inhabit him as Self.

It would be great if the notion of enfoldment could help us talk about/ understand/ disclose the nature of the kind of shift that Starratt experienced. I don't have it worked out. I tend to think that what is enfolded in the self "qua self" is hidden; so I would tend to interpret your statement above as "otherness" revealing itself as to be co-dependently arising, and as such the self "qua self" is becoming transparent(ly non-existent) through this encounter. Its like prior to this encounter, the self's notion of self, depended on repressing one of its constituent (enfolded) aspects. The self was used to being the central agent navigating an object-other world. Now the self sees that it's notion has been pre-constituted by it, and sees how/that the self is *both in the object-other world, and the object-other world is in the self.*

The description of an unfolding of perception from a "core" (monadic?) self unidirectionally toward an object to be articulated (linguistically?) appears an intrinsic duality, namely A) Core Self and B) Articulated World.

If you see them within a process, there is no need to see them as dichotomous. When the process articulates to a unified self and the self is imputed as a central agentic monad (the unit of being that stands in for its becoming), then the dichotomous aspects of cognition set into motion. Without the self coopting some aspects within, and others without, there is only transformation (articulation). However, articulation, conventionally, results in a unification of self qua-self that is situated withing interiority/ exteriority categories.

There is, however, the issue of the direction of the microgenetic series. There is every possibility of imagining also that virtual world is articulating to core, and in the process laying down levels of enfoldment (interiority) -- which results in the unified (imputed) self.

The notion of both self and world co-dependently arising seems wanting, or at least in what I am getting from y'all's Metanexus paper. But the experience of Starratt seems not to be so much of Self's intentionality toward a World but rather, a radical reversal of this epistemology, as Whole presences through Part.

Exactly. There is a shift from the conventional cognitive organization (self intentionality toward world) to a radically different cognitive organization . Both interior/exterior and whole/part get flipped. Perhaps also the direction of time (from an epistemological arrow to an ontological sense of always already). The PM doesn't say that this shifted state is somehow more real than the conventional state. It does say that it re- presents, or presences, or discloses what previously had been hidden aspects of self -- in Gebser's words, it renders them transparent or diaphanous, and opens the possibility of a-perspectival view. My guess is that a-perspectival is a state of non-enfoldment.

A different way of considering the move of world or actual object streaming toward a co-dependent subject or virtual self - who is the occasion of experience - can be found in Deleuze Difference and Repetition which he calls "virtual intensities" of the Actual.

Yes. There are many horizons of thought that are addressing/ nuancing this material in fascinating ways. It's like a box of assorted truffles. All offering something the same, all offering something a little different. And each one of them yummy!

Thanks for the lead on Deleuze and virtual intensities.

Bonnie

52 **Bonnitta Roy**

05/21/07 7:18AM



close



In response to Bonnitta Roy (51)

It seems to me that the notion of enfoldment can liberate us from the postmodern linguistic nightmare. (Of course, hard core devotees won't want there to be a way out.) It seems to me that at a certain point, for the postmodernists, language became enfolded in the self qua-self. The result is that language is always between the world and the self, in the same way that psychic baggage (affect level stuff) gets between the world and the self.

The shift in Starrat's view is a unfoldment of the structures of self, such that those aspects -- previously hidden -- liberate as experience. As long as language is enfolded in the construction of the self, then language can never again be experienced ... we cannot experience "that language is happening" because we can only experience through language. That is the trap that the supposed "deconstructionists" have constructed. It is actually quite a fortress.

Because signifiers can never re-present experience, when we put language between us and experience, we are caught up in a recursive cycle of approximation. If instead I come to discourse in such a way that I can experience language as an aspect of that discourse, but only as one aspect of that discourse -- then I become more present to the speech act -- I embody the speech act. When two or more people are present in this way, then there is a sense of an experiential field in which speech is happening. This I think is akin to what Bohm was looking for. When we use discourse in this way, then there is a clear sense that the form that language takes (the signifiers, or the memes represented) are not really that important. However, language is an aspect of embodied encounter -- using language in one way creates a certain intersubjective field, using it another way, creates a different field. Two people can use the same signifiers, and one come across as being very aggressive, and the other as being very receptive. The signifiers are hardly the message, nor the meaning. The message, the meaning is in the shared (ontological) encounter.

When signifiers get in the way, when language is enfolded in the self-constructed qua self, then that kind of discourse is nearly impossible. Working with children and animals -- who have not developed the capacity, or simply do not have the capacity-- to construct such enfoldments, can help us reclaim the experience of embodied communication -- and then recover the capacity to see more complex forms of language as an aspect -- one aspect, not even the necessary aspect -- of shared intersubjectivity.

Bonnie

56 Richard Carlson

05/22/07 2:22AM



close



excerpt:

"Toward the end of the second Christian millennium, Western philosophy had unleashed successive and simultaneous waves of resistance to the "self-same": to the metaphysical premise of "substance," ousia, as the simple unity of self-identically subsisting subjects and objects. Among anglophone thinkers, Whitehead and his school posed the major alternative, while the Nietzschean-Heideggerian-French lineage developed a continental antiessentialism. The one fights substance with process, the other with difference. Both have exercised a wide interdisciplinary appeal largely outside of philosophy proper. And both can claim the title "postmodern" with ancestral legitimacy.".....

RC:

Differance "is" Process by any other name, although the "is" in quotations maybe a bit misleading since these signifiers relate only within an infinite recursivity of signification. Because one also wishes to resist the metaphysical premise of substance becoming reified in either word, as either "process and differance", can themselves become problematic if we would ally Being in the single word of either.

Although (as with HK) it may have been through the post-conventional experience of a single (first) word which initiated us into the fourth dimensional curvature of language, the problem with signifiers is their tendency toward imperceptible reification: Even the term: Singularity can come to mean nothing other than -as they say-: "ousia, as the simple unity of self-identically subsisting subjects and objects".

When Aurobindo introduced the term Supermind it was to signify that whatever "IT" was, it could not be signified by mental processes at all. And although his use of that signifier has evolutionary significance similar language views can be found among other traditions, Dzogs-chen, & Hua-yen, and although as Steve Odin has shown there maybe some differences between cumulative penetration and interpenetration in the latter with Whiteheadian process metaphysics, a bridge can certainly be laid down between these eastern and western approaches, as between process and differance as well.

However, for the purpose of trying to find pathways beyond the mechanistic jargon of academic discourse which reduce easily to the couched agendas of ideologies and re-sacramentalize the world post deconstruction, perhaps harmonizing the languaging of differance and process with the creative imaginative praxis of certain esoteric theophonic traditions can help pry open a bit wider the horizon for an integral communicative action to emerge.

rich