

2018

Languages of Reality

Sarah Lindquist

Dominican University of California

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.dominican.edu/senior-theses>

 Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lindquist, Sarah, "Languages of Reality" (2018). *Senior Theses and Capstone Projects*. 97.
<https://scholar.dominican.edu/senior-theses/97>

This Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Capstone Projects at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Theses and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact michael.pujals@dominican.edu.

Sarah Lindquist
Dr. Chase Clow
HCS 4920
03 April 2018

Languages of Reality

“I am he as you are he as you are me
And we are all together” (Lennon and McCartney).

Union

tree-root scented child
no knower of I
no I- I say
just one
with *all that is*
born yet limitless
boundless heart soaring
with infinite bliss
a child being
that which it sees
lemon leaves and lilac trees
vibrating with the humming bees
a searing sky of copper glass
a universe in a blade of grass
all is one
no knower of other
creation is her only lover
until a hand is espied
in the green world of grass
her world has lied
an intruder commits trespass
starfish hand
raised in astonishment
touches her face in wonderment
limitations form in new-found eyes
a soul now bound that once
soared to the skies
with savage suddenness
her union is shattered
a child is separated
from all that mattered
now she is just I – I say
for the I is now known
in limitation the other is shown
a child has found her face
and fallen from grace (Lindquist).

“He who gets the whole must have the parts, too” (Vivekananda 87).

“He [Ramakrishna] had inherited the long-garnered knowledge of his race, that religion is no matter of belief but of experience” (Nivedita 57).

Philosophic and religious constructs are forms of transitional language used to effect continuity between a fundamental, purely physical understanding of reality, e.g., manifest reality as revealed through sensory perception, and a cognized state of unitive consciousness referred to in Vedanta philosophic terms as Absolute Reality, or *all that is*. Absolute Reality can be understood as an undifferentiated state of being or consciousness, and as such cannot be spoken of in quantitative terms. Nothing can be said about the Absolute, except that it *is*; in this sense, it is a symbolic expression for that which cannot be known, but only experienced: “Not by speech, not by mind, not by sight can it be grasped. How can it be known except by admitting that it simply *is*?” (Krishnananda 54). For this reason, symbols are necessary to explicate theistic constructs, because God cannot be cognized with the mind; God is an experiential state of being for which abstract language was developed as a means by which pathways to understanding could be devised.

Once such pathway to understanding is symbolism, a device or cipher often used to convey abstract ideas or concepts. Because symbols are an effective teaching tool, religious and spiritual traditions use symbolic language to convey knowledge of the Divine, which is in and of itself an abstract concept that is not easy to explicate without symbolic or allegorical language. Symbolic language is a form of correspondence that acts to link together orders of reality; a symbol’s significance attains relevance in metaphysical terms only when it serves to point toward higher truth. Symbols, in form or language, can be used to transcend the limitations of physical reality and make the mundane marvelous: “A tree, by virtue of the power it manifests, may become a blessed haven, without ceasing to be a tree; and if it becomes a cosmic tree it is because what it manifests restates, point by point, what the totality manifests” (Eliade 18).

As Eliade states, an object in manifest reality, be it human or a tree, is a repository of the sacred, the Divine; a mundane tree is a cosmic tree when it is perceived as vested with the sacred by the perceiver. The power of vesting manifest reality with the sacred lies within the observer, who will act to project the character and nature of his or her own state of consciousness upon the people, places, and things that comprise their immediate reality. An integrated, or unitive, state of consciousness, informed by concepts of non-dualism, will convey the sacred to his or her environment more readily than a fragmented, or dualistic, consciousness can or will. An integrated consciousness will not tend to view external reality as distinct from the self, whereas a non-integrated consciousness cannot achieve this perspective. This is why the use of symbolic languages and allegories are useful to explicate abstract concepts of Absolute reality: “If the mind makes use of images to grasp the ultimate reality of things, it is just because reality manifests itself in contradictory ways” (Eliade). A unitive state of consciousness is referenced with allegorical or symbolic language because concepts of non-dualism are difficult, if not impossible, to convey in concrete physical terms. A non-dualistic state of consciousness is by its very nature unknowable [meaning that a non-dualistic state of consciousness is an experiential state of wholeness and unity that can know no *other*], requiring the use of symbolism and allegorical language methods to facilitate spiritual growth and understanding. The reason religious and spiritual teaching traditions use these types of teaching tools is to develop in spiritual aspirants a state of consciousness such that they cognize the ultimate spiritual truth: that they are in and of themselves an incarnation of the Divine.

Spiritual traditions are embedded in the matrix of manifest reality (is known) the purpose of which is to function as a kind of interface with ultimate reality (is experienced). In the context of language as a conduit for the revelation of spiritual experience, divine revelation is an

expression of the consciousness of the individual. A spiritual experience, *God* if you so choose to name it, is not to be found through the dissection of material reality, because God is not separate from that which is being dissected. God is *that*, God is that which *is*: “In truth, O Gargi, this Imperishable One alone sees, but is not seen; hears, but not heard; thinks, but is not thought; understands, but is not understood. There is no other Seer but That, no other Hearer but That, no other Thinker but That, no other Understander but That. In this Imperishable One, O Gargi, space is woven, warp and woof” (Sivananda 9). Western civilization, with its emphasis on sensory perception of material reality alone as representative of the sum-total of existence, has experienced a devolution of increasingly fragmented consciousness due to the promulgation of compartmented and separatist interpretations on the nature of reality, a perception dominated by themes of duality. As noted by physicist David Bohm:

Mans general way of thinking of the totality, i.e., his general world view, is crucial for overall order of the human mind itself. If he thinks of the totality as constituted of independent fragments, then that is how his mind will tend to operate, but if he can include everything coherently and harmoniously in an overall whole that is undivided, unbroken, and without a border (for every border is a division or break) then his mind will tend to move in a similar way, and from this will flow an orderly action within the whole. (Bohm xiii)

Science and religion are forms of symbolic language, and both are the most common and pervasive means by which humanity seeks to understand reality. While both have contributed to the over-arching explication of reality in expansive terms, they both as well have imposed constrictions and limitations on states of consciousness by contextualizing concepts of reality in separatist and dualistic terms. There are similarities between the two disciplines; just as religious

and spiritual traditions use symbolic language, so does science -- even though religion and science are not working within the same conceptual framework, religion and philosophy, in their proper place, do not contravene or impede the scientific imperative to determine facts about the natural world. At their best and most functional, spiritual traditions provide insight into humanity's need for purpose and meaning and contextualize concepts of morality and ethics to form and inform human action. Scientific proofs are predominately used to make sensory determinations regarding the nature of reality; however, prominent physicists, both early as well as contemporaneous, have now begun to explore and develop theories that correlate philosophy with the mundane findings of science to explicate the nature of reality as a unitive whole, not just a factual presentation of scientific findings.

Some theists have challenged scientific determinations regarding the nature of manifest reality based on literal interpretation of religious dogma, as when fundamentalists claim that events in the history of nature were caused by divine intervention not verifiable through the scientific process. Historically, scientific proofs providing factual answers about the natural world, and the moral and ethical questions about the meaning and purpose of life for which religious and spiritual traditions provide context, have not found common cause; however, in the writings of early as well as contemporaneous physicists, comparisons with Eastern philosophies and belief systems are becoming more prevalent: "Reality can be considered as in essence a set of forms in an underlying universal movement or process...a worldview in which consciousness and reality would not be fragmented from each other" (Bohm).

Eastern religious and philosophic traditions hold as their most basic tenet that wholeness is the foundational nature of reality, and early physicists such as Erwin Schrodinger were proponents of philosophic non-dualism: "Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is

unknown; that there *is* only one thing and that what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing” (Schrodinger, *What is Life?* 89), and “There is obviously only one alternative, namely the unification of minds or consciousnesses. Their multiplicity is only apparent, in truth, there is only one mind” (Schrodinger, *What is Life?* 129).

The nature of consciousness is at the heart of scientific, philosophic, and religious inquiries; union and separation, birth and death, wholeness and fragmentation -- these states of being starkly create in humanity the longing, the hope for a greater unity within which all concept of separation is subsumed; humanity finds solace by overcoming the sense perception of limitation in the search for wholeness. When humanity attempts to understand reality with the senses alone and does not delve past surface sensory perceptions, a fragmentation of consciousness results; however, true wholeness cannot be found just in the perception of unity, but must be found in an experience of unity. A witnessing, unitive consciousness makes possible the discernment of a unifying force underlying the pluralities inherent within manifest reality; meaning, one cannot be aware of a plurality without a unitive consciousness with which to comprehend it.

There is a universal, synthesizing principle that cannot be understood from within the context of a subject-object relationship because such a viewpoint necessarily involves a perception of separation, i.e., the *self* and the *other*. The act of perceiving the *other* is also an act of separation from that which is being perceived; meaning, a subject-object relationship is inherently not compatible with an experiential union with Absolute reality, with *all that is*. When the observer reduces reality to the level of a conscious knower perceiving an unconscious known, a divide naturally occurs between the knower and the known, subject and object, the seer and the seen; the perceiver can only interpret what is being perceived from his or her own

narrow, or fragmented, world-view. When the nature of reality is contextualized by duality, the seer and the seen is the object of and acted upon by its fragmented perception. This fragmented state allows for perceptions of reality to be framed within a construct that is relative only to the human interest and needs of the observer: “The world is a construct of our sensations, perceptions, memories. It is convenient to regard it as existing objectively on its own. But it certainly does not become manifest by its mere existence” (Schrodinger, *What is Life?* 64).

Thusly, the dualistic observer cannot perceive the truth of Absolute reality; when a fragmented consciousness perceives the world, it can only do so from the perspective of its own needs and interests; it is a wholly self-centric perspective. Commonly, we are born in a world wherein sense perception is dualistic; by this, we are inculcated into a state of consciousness that defines itself in terms of a subject-object relationship with reality and acts to abstract from this perception what the individual’s perceived needs are for that moment in time. In this sense, the individual can only identify his or her needs as being one and the same as reality; one’s understanding of truth is skewed toward a self-centric perspective when derived from a dualistic perception:

The beginning of every act of knowing, and therefore the starting-point of every science, must be in our own personal experience...our direct sensory perception of outside things. These are the immediate data of the act of knowing. There are no other sources of scientific knowledge. [But] if the scope of physical science extends no further than the mere description of sensory experiences, then strictly only one’s own experiences can be taken as the object of such description; because only one’s own experiences are primary data. (Planck, *Where is Science Going?* 67)

Dualism informs a perception of reality that is relative only to the needs and interest of the observer of that reality; meaning, that everyone perceives from within the prism of his or her own experience. Subjective and objective reality is predicated on the conditioned perceptions of the observer; the subject, as well as the object, are expressed in terms relative to the cognizing individual.

When individuals correspond with a perceived dualistic reality, they are acting to reference the self within the framework of desire their desire nature; consequently, they will reflect a perception that is skewed toward self-centricity as being the truth of the perceived reality; however, this fragmented perception of reality is not truth itself. What is created is a notion of reality relative to the human interest and needs of the perceiver. In a dualistic state of sense perception, the subject is the correlate of the object, because the perceiver cannot know the *other* except in terms of the perceivers state of consciousness: “A spider creates a thread and takes it back into itself...the spider is both the maker and the material. The spider does not go outside itself for the material...therefore, it is both causes; the spider makes the web out of itself” (Dayananda. *Kenopanisad* 75). The interconnected web of manifest creation can respond only to the actuality of being -- not unlike a spider’s web that quivers as the spider races across its surface, so too does the universe hold us fast in the warp and woof of its eternal weaving. We are woven into the fabric of the universe that is God, and our perceptions of it become our stories -- racing across the surface of the web of our lives. The web we create reflects the truth of ourselves, whether we know it or not; the fish that swims in the ocean can deny the existence of water all it wants, but the truth of the water remains inviolate. Hence, the subject-object relationship is a form of self-entanglement, a web of entrapment we weave for ourselves, which cannot be resolved without self-realization.

The character and nature of that which is perceived is an act of creation engendered by the character and nature of the perceiver, because the perceiver is both causes. The perceiver, who is the subject, will experience the *other*, which is the object, as a reflection of his or her state of consciousness; should the perceiver be experiencing a fragmented state of consciousness, he or she can be more vulnerable to states of fear and anxiety: “Verily, from duality arises fear” (Sivananda 34). When the perceiver desires changes, the object of its perception also changes; there is nothing in the individual’s existence other than what is created by the perceiver of that reality. The perceiver is then subject to an experience of his or her reality presenting as a kind of constant moving target, often resulting in a state of panic or fear.

The more destabilized and fragmented an individual’s consciousness is, the more destabilized and fragmented will be his or her experience of reality. An integrated state of consciousness will interact with and perceive reality calmly and with more clarity because an individual’s perception of reality is reflective of his or her stage of self-evolution, meaning that the reality as perceived by the subject is reflective of the subject’s state of consciousness, which is revealed to them by the nature of the object being observed. Consciousness directly affects the behavior of the individual because the perceptions of the object are dependent on the consciousness of the subject -- objective reality is conditioned by the subject’s experience.

One cannot experience a unitive state of consciousness from within a construct defined by dualism; limitations on individual knowledge are removed only when the distinction between the knower and the known is resolved in self-realization; this is what is meant by the Hindu precept that to *know* Brahman is to *be* Brahman. Because Brahman is *all that is*, Brahman cannot be known, only experienced: “It is unknown to those who know it. It is known to those who do not know it” (Dayananda, *Mundakopanisad* 54). The moment realization of the self

occurs, individual existence is consecrated to the grave, for to experience the real of the Absolute is to die to the individual self, which is unreal: “He becomes non-existent, who knows that Brahman is non-existent. Who knows that Brahman exists, is said to exist truly” (Dayananda, *Taittiriya Upanisad* 63). To say one knows Brahman is a perpetuation of the illusion of the Self as separate from Brahman, because the only possible way to comprehend Brahman is to realize that thou art Brahman, which is to say, *be* Brahman. When it is said that All is indeed Brahman, plurality is not implied when referring to the essence of Brahman as All, because plurality is not possible if there is nothing second to Brahman: “Where there is duality, as it were, there one sees the *other*; but, where everything is one’s own Self, then, whom would one see?” (Sivananda 25). There can be no knower of Brahman because there cannot be separation from *that* which is Brahman. The manifest and the un-manifest do not exclude nor include the other, for relation is only possible between separate entities, and Brahman is one without second.

Self-realization is attained when the individual is sacrificed to the infinite; unitive consciousness is always absolute. A dualistic perspective will not resolve into self-realization when the subjective shapes the objective. The healing of a unitive consciousness will not take place when the subject is constantly wounding him- or herself by the projection of a relative state of consciousness onto the object, the *other*; introspection and growth are difficult to integrate into a fragmented consciousness because the subject is not, in a sense, wearing his or her own clothes -- the *other* is. Spiritual and philosophic traditions are the remedy because they are predicated upon organizing principles of a deeper unity underlying the universe. There is no anthropomorphized, personal God lurking in the clouds, but instead infinite consciousness that cannot be found outside the self. The infinite is always present and integral to every human-being, which is why the Absolute is also referenced in terms of self-realization, not as a state of

becoming – one is not becoming anything else, one is realizing what one already is. When the Absolute is realized, all conflict is resolved; here, the meaning of heaven or nirvana is the cessation of dualism: “The essential character of scientific research is, then, that it moves toward the Absolute by studying the relative, in its inexhaustible multiplicity and diversity” (Bohm 25). By this means, the object discovers the truth of its own nature relative to its interactions with the subject; this is the purpose of apparent diversity.

Life is an external reflection of one’s consciousness; in that sense, external reality is a kind of objective energy field existing for the purpose of achieving self-transcendence: “From the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to Immortality” (Sivananda 77). Until a fragmented consciousness is resolved in an integrated state of consciousness, the conflicted mind will continue to project upon the *other* its disowned shadow and tend toward ideologies that are divisive, such as racism, xenophobia, and scapegoating:

One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow ground. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life within its scope. (Vivekananda 269)

Union with the Divine cannot be experienced from a dualistic perspective, given that the observer will reflect to itself only his or her wants, needs, and interests. Self-realization resolves the inherent dichotomy of the knower and that which is known in the experience of unity; in union with the Absolute, there is nothing to know and no knower to know it. It is not possible to

think one's way into this kind of experience; it must be found by embracing a language of wholeness that is beyond knowing, beyond change, beyond transformation -- a language of reality that ultimately leads the seeker to union. When humanity chooses a unitive language within which to perceive reality, wholeness is the result; when humanity chooses a language of separation, fragmentation results: "the role of language in bringing about fragmentation of thought...the subject-verb-object structure of modern languages implies that all action arises in a separate subject, and acts wither on a separate object, or else reflexively on itself" (Bohm xiv).

When an individual comprehends that dependence on the external world is the source of suffering, he or she can investigate the structure of objective reality to understand his or her relation to it. Objective reality involves the experience of complex relationships that can cause happiness or suffering, which are then qualified as good, bad, or indifferent, resulting in the confusion of consciousness with content. Duality is understood as two facets of the same crystal of an original reality. Reconciliation of the two cannot be obtained with destructive force, but by conveying love and compassion to the other, and hence, really, to oneself because the subject and object are inextricably interwoven. Compassion and love expressed for the other is compassion and love expressed for the self.

Vedanta, as in the science of physics, posits the universe as a law that is operating based on unitive states of being; scientists, such as Albert Einstein, investigated physics theory based on unification of the forces of nature. Einstein, speaking at his Nobel address in 1923, stated that the nature of reality could be investigated by means of a singular theory: "The intellect seeking after an integrated theory cannot rest content in the assumption that there exist two distinct fields totally independent of each other by their nature" (Einstein 484). Einstein is here referring to his unified field theory, on which he worked extensively for most of his life until the day he died.

Einstein is attempting to demonstrate that all known phenomena can theoretically be unified in one indivisible field of energy, reconciling seemingly disparate aspects by resolving them into a single set of equations, specifically the gravitational and electromagnetic fields: “The mind striving after unification of the theory cannot be satisfied that two fields should exist which, by their nature, are quite independent. A mathematically unified field theory is sought in which the gravitational field and the electromagnetic field are interpreted only as different components or manifestations of the same uniform field” (Einstein 489). Einstein had intuited, or cognized, that there is an underlying unity to the Universe that can be proved mathematically; however, he was ultimately unable to complete this aspect of his life’s work. Michio Kaku, and other contemporaneous physicists have taken up Einstein’s cause, and are still pursuing proof of his unified field theory. Kaku states that the investigation of a unified field theory seeks to find “an equation an inch long that would allow us to read the mind of God”. This seems a lofty aspiration; however, in this case, science does appear to be mirroring Upanishadic teachings by stating that the universe can be understood as one comprehensive whole comprised of a central elemental field.

The essence of humanity, at its heart, is formed and informed by a desire to attain unity within which the perception of separation is transmuted and transformed into the actuality of wholeness; there are many paths to this kind of transformation: intimate relationships, immersion in spiritual traditions, renunciation, sorrow, loss, illness, death -- all these can provide the impetus for transformation because, when the perception of self as separate is challenged by extreme experiences, the resulting break with egocentricity can act to compel the aspirant into a search for paths of wholeness. Humanity seeks solace by overcoming limiting, self-centric perceptions that can act to prevent unitive states of consciousness: “If the many and the One be

indeed the same reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labor is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion” (Vivekananda xv).

The experience of Divine union is not attainable by means of objective speculation but is one of direct and personal experience, an act of self-realization. An intense religious or mystical experience can create in the spiritual seeker a liberating realization of self; what is needed to facilitate this experience is the right language, one that most eloquently sings to the seeker songs of the sacred and opens to him or her such that a transformation in consciousness can flower. A transformative experience can manifest in the seeker as variously as the breadth of humanity itself; the seeker may find mystical union within the languages of music, art, literature, religion, philosophy, or science; these all are a kind of language that humanity itself developed to seek the truth of self: “All forms of art, in their pure aspects, are different means intended, ultimately, to enable one to realize the goal of life” (Vidyānanda, par. 1). These various constructs of language may espouse different modalities, lines of thought, and methods of discernment; however, the common thread is the quest for truth of Self, though the means of attainment may express themselves diversely, or even seemingly at odds with other forms; joy can serve as the impetus to seek wholeness, as well as suffering.

There are many other such languages of reality, including shamanism, the arts, literature, and music, within which are commonly shared the attribute of being formed inside the crucible of intense experience. I suggest that these languages of reality, when engaged wholly, with utter abandon, determination, and reckless disregard of boundaries and limitations, take the seeker to the place where the edges of the manifest and the un-manifest meet. The most profound seers,

musicians, artists, writers, and mathematicians all pursued their cipher for understanding reality to such extremes that they found mysticism. For me, this understanding is the very foundation of the humanities discipline itself, because it is a celebratory embrace of the many languages of reality which humanity has developed in order to understand its experience of Self: “The unprecedented possibility of being forced to include the study of human consciousness explicitly in the future theories of matter...some physicists argue that consciousness may be an essential aspect of the universe, and that we may be blocked from further understanding of natural phenomenon if we insist on excluding it” (Capra 95).

The Indian philosophical system of Advaita Vedanta is one such cipher; it is a cognized truth that reveals the potential for religion to bring fruition to an experience of the divine in the manifest world. Vedanta proposes truth to be one of direct experience, an all-comprehensive awakening to oneness amidst apparent diversity. Vedanta holds it as truth that all religions are pathways to God, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna: “As one can ascend to the roof of a house by means of a ladder, or a bamboo, or a staircase...so diverse are the ways and means to approach God. Every religion in the world is one of the ways to reach Him” (Brahmananda 93).

Advaita Vedanta strongly advocates equality and is opposed to privileges based on distinction, because reality is one indivisible field of experience, with no second, no *other*. Humanity does not evolve its understanding by traveling from error to truth, but instead from paths of lower truth to higher truth; as such, there is no exclusivity, or elitism. Advaita Vedanta is a philosophical system devoted to profound and unequivocal non-dualism and is supportive of other systems that create in the seeker profound longing for the same goal of self-realization, albeit within constructs specific to any one individual’s collective moral and intellectual needs. Vedanta represents a way of life that is devoted to spiritual realization.

Vedanta is unique in its embrace of diverse spiritual and philosophic traditions, and suitable for a comparative analysis with other such languages of reality. Physics, for example, has moved away from conceptualizing reality in terms of pluralism in favor of an attributive monism by observing that, however many substances may comprise an experience of reality, those coalescing substances are of a single kind (Panda). This understanding is echoed by prominent physicist David Bohm: “Underlying far deeper the quantum chaos there lies a unity, a fundamental interconnectedness in the whole universe” (54), or this assessment from one of the most prominent physicists of the 20th century, Stephen Hawking: “It seems very reasonable to suppose that there may be some unifying principle, so that all laws are part of some bigger law. So, what we are trying to find out is whether there is some bigger law from which all other laws can be derived. I think you can ask that question whether or not you believe in God” (Harwood 53).

The perception of anything as separate and independent from the whole is unreal; to view in a real sense, one must envision the whole in the perceived separation; this is what Vedanta means when it is said that a unitive state of consciousness alone is truth, is real -- as stated by Swami Vivekananda, the first Vedanta scholar to teach in the Western world: “Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is an unbroken ocean of matter, and Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, soul” (14). When the separate elements of material reality are perceived as the sole ultimate reality of the world, unitive consciousness will prove to be elusive. The Upanishads teach a fundamental truth: the universe is interconnected and interpenetrated by an underlying, unifying force, which they termed Brahman.

Concepts of an underlying unity pervading the universe is beginning to be commonly referenced in contemporaneous physics theory:

Science itself is demanding a new, non-fragmentary world view, in the sense that the present approach of analysis of the world into independently existent parts does not work very well in modern physics. It is shown that both in relativity theory and quantum theory, notions implying the undivided wholeness of the universe would provide a much more orderly way of considering the general nature of reality. (Bohm xiv)

Vedanta affirms that unity is both the premise of existence, and of all knowledge, and that self-realization is direct experience of this unity. Vedanta celebrates the divinity, bliss, and life that is the source of every being:

Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress because it would reach the goal. Thus, chemistry could not progress further when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfill its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations...thus is it through multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate reality is reached...this is the goal of all science. (Vivekananda 54)

All forms of matter and energy are essentially energy, meaning that manifestations of diversity have as their source one single substance that is measured in units of energy (Panda). As observed in science, the fundamental force of energy is manifesting in diversity, and similarly, in Vedanta terms, the fundamental force of consciousness is also manifesting in diversity. I posit that energy and consciousness are, in fact, the same force, and that physics and Vedanta are speaking of the same fundament of reality, albeit in different terms and perceptions:

“Modern science has really made the foundation of religion strong. That the whole universe is one is scientifically demonstrable. What the metaphysicians call ‘being’ the physicist calls ‘matter’ but there is no real fight between the two, for both are one” (Vivekananda 20-21).

The underlying goal of these two systems of thought is an attempt to explicate reality in terms of unity; early physicists such as Erwin Schrodinger and Werner Heisenberg approached physics from the position of philosophy before science: “In the world there is no kind of framework within which we find consciousness in the plural. This is simply something we construct because of the temporal plurality of individuals. But it is a false construction...the only solution to this conflict, in so far as any is available to us at all, lies in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishad” (Schrodinger, *My View of the World* 14), or, from Heisenberg: “The great scientific contribution in theoretical physics...may be an indication of a certain relationship between philosophical ideas in the tradition of the far east and the philosophical substance of quantum theory” (Heisenberg 45).

Modern physics demonstrates that even the single smallest form of matter, of sub-atomic particles, electrons, do not exist within a separate, independent reality. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, reality is whole; each atom reflects the whole universe: “The biggest is reflected in the smallest” (Krishnananda 21). As physicists peer into the building blocks of the universe, they have also begun to delve into the ways that consciousness permeates the universe, leading them toward unified theories in physics. The ultimate building block of matter, originally supposed to be the atom, has now devolved into more than 200 sub-atomic particles, and counting. If it is true, as Max Planck suggests, that consciousness interacts with and affects matter, then it is certainly possible that physicists will keep finding particles as long as they keep looking for them. If that is the case, then perhaps the direction of physics toward underlying

unity is more effective in determining the nature of reality: “Simplicity in physics may not probably be gained by the search for the ultimate particle, but it may be gained by discovering, if possible, a single force of which all the other forces in the this universe have been made” (Jitatmananda 4), or as stated in the Mundakopanisad: “What is it, O adorable sir, which having been known, all this becomes known?” (Dayananda 27). This means that the knowledge of all things can be gained by the knowledge of one thing because they consist of the same properties: “Just as by the knowledge of a lump of earth, everything that is made of earth comes to be known, all this modification being merely a name, a play of speech, the ultimate substratum of it all being the earth, similarly, when Brahman is known, all is known” (Sivananda 36). Vedanta states that when the root is watered, the branches also are watered, and that when gold is known, all gold ornaments also are known; this is allegorical language used to illustrate to the spiritual aspirant the real teaching: when truth is realized, everything is realized; for, truth is the underlying reality, the Absolute. This suggests that consciousness decides the outcome of an event, meaning that the consciousness of the observer is responsible for the manner within which reality is made manifest; the Vedantic idea is that the act of observation is inextricably connected to the observer and the observed. This idea is correlated in the writings of prominent physicists, such as Max Planck: “I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness” (Planck, *The Observer*).

Humanity seeks peace and happiness; to resolve the problem of pluralistic consciousness, a revelatory vision of integrated spirit is a pathway to truth; movement tending toward unity of consciousness creates joy. A spiritual awakening is the essential purpose of spiritual traditions; the soul, wandering among the shadows, must be made to hear the siren call of home. At the

meeting of the manifest and the un-manifest, the known and the unknown coalesce in Sat-Chit-Ananda: Knowledge-Consciousness-Bliss.

Self-knowledge can be facilitated by understanding the relational nature of our interactions with others; love and understanding go together, and with deep understanding and love, compassion can become so deeply rooted in the individual that the Absolute is no longer an abstract consideration, but is an experience of reality that reconciles oppositions: “The human condition is defined by the existence of opposites, and liberation from human condition is equivalent to a non-conditioned state in which the opposites coincide” (Eliade 84). Because the Divine is our real nature, we can transcend our mundane sensibilities and develop a powerful understanding of our place in the Universe because our place is rooted in the Divine; it is our task simply to realize it. By transcending worldly experience and seeing the whole world as one, compassion and kindness informs all our relations with the other, and it becomes difficult to inflict harm on a being that is, essentially, recognized as one’s own self. The recognition that we have fallen out of harmony with our true nature facilitates a progression from empirical reality to the transcendent, and this cannot help but make us compassionate and concerned for others’ well-being: “It is when we try to grapple with another man’s intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun” (Conrad 223).

Cognizing the Divine creates a profound humanitarian outlook, and the embracing of an all-inclusive value system that begins with our own self and radiates out to others: “Deliberate living of a chosen value is a must to complete the process of assimilation” (Dayananda, *Value of Values* 3). A spiritual awakening translates into a compelling urge for the individual to place him- or herself at the locus of universal reference and relevance. It may be said that true

knowledge is not valid unless it is quantified by science; however, scientific inquiry as defined by physics theory is now replacing subject-object language with representations of fields of force, rather than separate objects. Vedanta explicates this concept with allegorical language; a ripple in the ocean may be perceived as separate from the ocean because it is apparently manifesting as such; however, it is in actuality co-extensive with the body of the ocean. There is no point in saying that the ocean is external to the waves cresting upon it, though the waves may imagine the ocean is existing outside of them. The ocean is the truth of the wave, despite the wave's perception of itself in relation to the ocean: "The waves of the ocean dash with great velocity, one over the other...the waves are the ocean. The waves are not moving in another, outside field, external to the ocean. The whole activity of the waves and ripples is within the very existence of the ocean itself" (Sivananda 9).

Self-Realization is not an act of becoming, but an act of being, a revelation to the self of a truth that has always existed, and always will be; essential existence never changes. Humanity travels in this physical, human body, journeying toward a realization of its own imperishable soul. In our human body, we are born to a manifest reality, a creation made for our benefit. This creation may seem at times like a field of experience that is fraught with peril and enemies; however, it is not, except that our state of consciousness makes it so. Humanity is blessed with this existence in manifest creation to transcend earthly experience into higher states of consciousness; we should not cry out as though haunted by a spectral ghost, dreadful in its aspect. Pain, sorrow, and suffering is experienced because our soul is caught in a cycle of birth and death, rinse and repeat; we must learn to transcend the web of desire that creates attachments and bondage, thus to come home to the consciousness of that which is eternal and does not change. The world is a field of energy that can be experienced as a form of limitation and

bondage, as we struggle to free ourselves from the web we ourselves wove through actions taken and not taken. However, manifest reality is not a curse: it serves as a remedy for the ills of humanity, to teach the truth of infinite soul and consciousness. The subject and object perceptions we experience serve to reflect to the soul our own hurts, wounds, and misconceptions; humanity pays the closest attention to the experience that causes pain. By focusing on that pain, we search for the means to remedy our suffering; thusly, the search for self-realization begins: “He is qualified to study this scripture [Vedanta] who feels ‘I am bound, I should be liberated’. He who deliberates on the means of liberation propounded in this scripture...surely attains liberation from the repetitive history of birth and death” (Venkatesananda 4).

Liberation in this sense may seem too lofty or unattainable; however, Vedanta assures that this is a practical matter that requires only the willingness to suspend limiting thoughts and begin to frame one’s life in terms of right action, or goodness. This is how we begin our journey; the choices and actions that are daily taken create who we are and how we experience the manifest. By making at first simple changes in our perceptions, informed by principles of ethical values, the way forward becomes more and more clear, and the means by which self-realization can be attained will present itself to the individual, be it one of religion, science, music, literature, or the arts: “What is essential is not always to forsake one’s historical situation and strive in vain to rejoin the universal being – it is to keep steadily in the perspectives of Great Time, while continuing to fulfil one’s duty in historical time” (Eliade 69), and, as stated in Vasistha’s Yoga: “He who desires salvation should divert the impure mind to pure endeavor by persistent effort – this is the very essence of the scriptures” (Venkatesananda 27).

Humanity's experience of life acts to create within the individual an urge for unification of the Self with the *all that is*; the essence of what we seek is to pierce the veil of illusory limitations to perceive the wholeness that is our right, our truth, our home. Life persists, breathes, loves, eventually to become the light of the Eternal expressing itself in us, through us, for us. Life is a drama unfolding as we quest for self and truth realization; every event that happens to us is devised for just this purpose. Life is not a mistake, a delirium of dreams, or a spectral haunting created by our past mistakes or misdeeds, but the process of realization of the Absolute. When life is lived on these terms, every action we take is a turning point of grace until the Absolute is realized:

Science is a game—but a game with reality, a game with sharpened knives ... If a man cuts a picture carefully into 1000 pieces, you solve the puzzle when you reassemble the pieces into a picture; in the success or failure, both your intelligences compete. In the presentation of a scientific problem, the other player is the good Lord. He has not only set the problem but also has devised the rules of the game, they are not completely known, half of them are left for you to discover or to deduce. The experiment is the tempered blade which you wield with success against the spirits of darkness—or which defeats you shamefully. The uncertainty is how many of the rules God himself has permanently ordained, and how many apparently are caused by your own mental inertia, while the solution generally becomes possible only through freedom from its limitations. (Moore 348)

The choice to liberate the soul or stay in bondage lies within every one of us; we are all children of a benevolent, sustaining force that permeates manifest reality. We create with our own actions the source of our happiness and our sorrows, our loves and our losses, our births and

our deaths. Even if one chooses to believe that concrete and physical reality is the sum-total of existence, the choice for how we live our lives should be guided by principles of loving kindness and compassion, for ourselves and for our fellow travelers: “Man is perishable. That may be; but let us perish resisting, and if it be nothingness that awaits us, do not let us so act that it shall be justice” (De Senancour 54).

Works Cited

- Bohm, David. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Brahmananda, Swami. *Words of the Master*. Rishikesh: Rama Art Press, 2002. Print.
- Capra, Fritjof. *The Turning Point*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. Print.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Lord Jim*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2001. Print.
- Dayananda, Swami Saraswati. *Kenopanisad*. 2nd ed., Saylorsburg: Arsha Vidya Center, 2009. Print.
- . *Mundakopanisad*. Saylorsburg: Arsha Vidya Centre, 2006. Print.
- . *Taittiriya Upanisad*. Saylorsburg: Arsha Vidya Center, 2009. Print.
- . *Value of Values*. 2nd ed., Saylorsburg: Arsha Vidya Research and Publication Trust, 2013. Print.
- De Senancour, Etienne Pivert. *Obermann*. Boston: Noumena Press, 2010. Print.
- Einstein, Albert. "Fundamental ideas and problems of the theory of relativity." Lecture delivered to the Nordic Assembly of Naturalists. Nobel Prize Committee, July 11, 1923, Gothenburg, Sweden. Web. May 2018.
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1921/einstein-lecture.pdf
- Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols*. 2nd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. Print.
- Harwood, Michael. "The Universe and Dr. Hawking." *New York Times*, 23 January 1983. Web. 26 April 2018.
- Heisenberg, Werner. *Physics and Philosophy*. 2nd ed., New York: Harper Collins, 1962. Print.
- Jitatmananda, Swami. *Modern Physics and Vedanta*. 7th ed., Kolkata: Ramakishna Math, 2012. Print.
- Krishnananda, Swami. *Katha Upanisad*. Rishikesh: Divine Life Society, 1974. Print.

- Lennon and McCartney. "I Am The Walrus." *Magical Mystery Tour*, performed by The Beatles, Apple Records, 1967. Recording.
- Lindquist, Sarah. "Union."
- Moore, Walter J. *Schrodinger: Life and Thought*. 1st ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.
- Nivedita, Sister. *Kali the Mother*. Belur Math: Advaita Ashram, 1995. Print.
- Panda, Nrusingh Charan. *The Vibrating Universe*. 1st ed., New Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 2000. Print.
- Planck, Max. *The Observer*. January 25, 1931. Web. 26 April 2018.
- Planck, Max. *Where is Science Going?* Muriwai: Muriwai Books, 2017. Print.
- Schrodinger, Erwin. *My View of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964. Print.
- Schrodinger, Erwin. *What is Life?* 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.
- Sivananda, Swami. *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*. Rishikesh: Divine Life Society, 2002. Print.
- Venkatesananda, Swami. *Vasistha's Yoga*. Albany: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993. Print.
- Vidyananda, Swami. "Music: A Unique Means for God-Realisation." *Divine Life Society*, May 29, 2017, <http://www.dlshq.org/discourse/may2000.htm>. Web. 30 April 2018.
- Vivekananda, Swami. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Belur Math: Advaita Ashram, 1977. Print.