

Article

Higher Consciousness & Transcendent Communication between Body & Soul

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Abstract

This article contemplates establishment of a community of souls - implying communication among souls and concomitant communication between body and soul and some governance of body by soul. However, we are bound to admit that the body is reluctant to surrender its independence and autonomy. When it does seek to communicate with soul and strongly desires instruction or information - it may find that ordinary verbal communication is a one way street. The response from the soul - or any intermediary such as spirit - may be substantively non-verbal - needing faith in one's higher consciousness to assign a practicable meaning.

Keywords: Soul, body, higher consciousness, transcendent communication, message, Akasha, superstratum, mesostratum.

Introduction

The soul is supposed to be in command of the body - providing a higher consciousness that merges spiritually with a transcendent reality, the superstratum, Brahman, the Mind of God [1]. The body is essentially a conscious survival-machine, an automaton with inherent abilities [2]. The automation tends to assume control, even denying access and control to the soul which it presumptively houses. When the automaton assumes command, it is confident that it alone is master of its destiny until the body's dusty demise. When circumstances permit, it revels in successes in coping with its environment and it assumes self-sufficiency. The bio-mechanism, the machine, takes over. It lives aloof from the transcendent reality of the soul, recognizes only tentative physical reality, and proceeds along a self-centered path. The survival-machine might casually admit to harboring a soul and proclaim as William Ernest Henley did in his poem *Invictus*,

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Is the soul then merely the occupant of the biological vehicle, just along for the ride, or is it the real captain and master? In a societal environment virtually every soul is but an observer, passive, and often ignored.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau, philosopher of the Enlightenment saw a fundamental divide between society and soul. Rousseau contended that the human automaton was good by nature, when in the state of nature - the state of all other animals - the condition humankind was in before the onset of civilization and society. Rousseau's 'noble savages' or 'living souls' are corrupted by society. By Rousseau's definition, they are good because they are self-sufficient when not subject to the customs and pressures of political society. According to Rousseau, society is artificial and therefore the development of society, especially the growth of social *interdependence*, is inimical to the natural soul-guided individual.

Rousseau observed that as people organize into large groups there will be fragmentation, corruption, and cruelty. Even when soul-guided individuals, saints, shamans, are given power to assist, guide, and maintain social order, power can corrupt them. Consider the eagerness with which ambitious opportunists will grasp power and wield it exclusively for their own personal benefit. We are now speaking of what can be observed in contemporary civilizations, which foster and manifest the 'will to power' - most often exercised by self-empowered tyrants, socialist dictators, maverick priests and corrupt clerics, and all too often by career politicians who harbor a prime ambition to perpetuate their hold on their subjects, power, and wealth.

Rousseau's thesis about the corrupting powers of society becomes evident when one considers that establishing an institution to solidify some 'great cause' immediately plants and nourishes the seeds of its own corruption. Societal institutions become hierarchical in order to function smoothly and thereby create convenient niches for parasitic bureaucrats and opportunistic tyrants. With institutions come specialization that allows even the most mediocre automatons to fit symbiotically into soulless societal organisms.

Apology

As individuals, we occasionally apprehend, perceive, and respond to our higher consciousness, our soul. But received symbols, ideas, thoughts, messages are transient when brought forth by the interaction of soul and body. When we attempt to express the messages received, what we speak or write is fragile and malleable, the documents we offer and the monuments we build are perishable. To capture a basic idea, we read, write, meditate, and refine until a core idea emerges. Even with concerted effort, we produce only a provisional verbal monument, not the eternal enduring essence of the original transcendent thought or absolute.

Soul-messages emanate from the superstratum fountainhead-like quantum foam emanates from the plenum of the energetic hyperspace substratum - through the osmotic gauze of the mesostratum. The messages need to alight in our mind, then be cast in language. The 'sound of thought' is ethereal poesy encapsulated in words. The words and sentences are but materialized thoughts - like cast and kiln-dried fragile pots meant to contain an essence. Fifteen centuries ago, Dignaga, regarded as the Indian Aristotle, wrote,

This sound is non-eternal,
Because it is a product of effort,
Like a pot, unlike Akasha.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

We review the transcendent meanings and messages that haunt us all, that envelope and potentially enlighten us. We cite instances of those rare individuals who seem to have been granted access to messages from their souls in the superstratum via the mesostratum and successfully enunciate them. These individuals may claim that they have been privileged to receive some Akashic enlightenment - most often randomly, unexpectedly - which they allow themselves to absorb, accept, transmit. What they claim is that they apprehended their Brahman fountainhead and allowed it to infuse them with a keen perception of transcendent messages which are accepted and revered - often in scriptural form - which is like a fragile pot fashioned from the imperfect clay of an applicatory vocabulary - presumably containing an ethereal absolute essence.

Scriptures

Advancement of philosophy, metaphysics, theology, science requires written concrete language. Absent written language and absent the opportunity to parse and critique venerated scriptures, cultural atrophy sets in and intellectual evolution ceases. Although we focus on written and verbally articulated scripture, the language of music suggests itself as a preeminent alternative. Music speaks to everyone-through renowned composers - in ways that inspire and enlighten-beyond the lyrics or text sung by choirs and choruses. While we comment here on verbal and scriptural messages, it should be remembered that the ‘sound of thought’ is conveyed by many diverse means such as music, art, poesy (symbolisms, metaphors, allegory).

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer recognized that an essential absolute thought once written is lost: “Thoughts die the moment they are embodied by words.” Physicist philosopher David Bohm lamented that thought reduced to language ‘fragments’ our view of reality. Language is an imperfect instrumentality. Language can be precise yet unrevealing, just as mathematical statements do not reveal the exact nature of quantum entities they attempt to describe. Language can be semantically self-consistent yet fantastical as exemplified by Lewis Carroll’s *Jabberwocky*. In *Gödel, Escher, Bach* Douglas Hofstadter seems to agree with Lewis Carroll’s warning ‘beware the Jabberwock!’ Jabberwock, or merely common jabber, springs up in the vocabulary of politics, poetry, philosophy, physics, metaphysics, theology and literature. Hofstadter warns that many words, and symbols, often carry more than their ordinary meaning. They act as *exciters*, indeed as *stimuli*, that affect and modify one’s reaction to a core idea, or modify its essence.

Gershom Schollem, editor of *Zohar - The Book of Splendor - Basic Readings from the Kabbalah* notes that the Torah in all of its words, holds such supernal truths and sublime secrets that “The world could not endure the Torah if she had not garbed herself in garments of this world. . . . Thus the tales related in the Torah are simply her outer garments . . . Its narrations which relate to things of the world constitute the garments which clothe the body of the Torah. . . . People without understanding see only the narrations, the garment . . . But the truly wise . . . pierce all the way through to the soul, to the true Torah which is the root principle of all. . . . Just as wine must be in a jar to keep, so the Torah must be contained in an outer garment.”

The *Zohar* hints that there is an essence underlying all nature which is cloaked to limit our access to it. Perhaps ultimate realities are hidden because they are too overwhelming for mortals to

behold. In *The God Theory* Bernard Haisch argues that God devised the world in a way that literally filters out the brilliance that would envelope us, enthrall us and preclude us from pursuing our mundane lives and duties.

Were only one book is venerated to the exclusion of all other books we find abject orthodoxy and death of intellect. Religions and belief systems become banal methodical rites unless subject to renewed examination, endorsement and elaboration. How we react to scriptures is key. Should we mindlessly venerate them, should we make them sacrosanct as we do the Bible, Torah, Qur'an, Vedanta, or other scripture?

The Akasha

The Akasha in the philosophies of India consists of ethereal annotations in a communal shared primordial consciousness field [3]. The 'akashic field' belongs to the transcendental mesostratum - a storehouse, a resource, a replenishable and refineable repository of information, inspiration, knowledge and enlightenment. The greater and extended meaning of the Akasha is the notion that the *thought* preexists the *thinker*, that inspiration preexists implementation, that the imagined preexists its concrete expression, that the concept of a cosmos preexists its physical objective reality.

Ervin Laszlo in *Science and the Akashic Field* writes about “. . . linkages of a nonlocal kind . . . in the world of consciousness. Regardless of separation in space and time, the consciousness of one person can be subtly linked with the consciousness of another. . . . Transpersonal connections . . . have been reported by a number of psychology and parapsychology laboratories. Thought and image-transference experiments between sender and receiver have been carried out involving distances ranging from half a mile to several thousand miles. Regardless of where they have been carried out and by whom, the success rate has been considerably above random probability.” He is amazed by the accumulating evidence “. . . of the mysterious way in which quanta are connected across space and time, of the evident but nonetheless astounding fact that we and other organisms have evolved and can live on this planet and . . . of the seemingly miraculous capacity of the universe to bring forth human beings such as you and I, who now ask themselves why this universe is so well tuned that in all essential respects it is both instantly and universally interconnected.” Laszlo attributes these phenomena to an Akashic field that permeates the cosmos as a ubiquitous information field. We add the notion that the mesostratum is the source and residence of Laszlo's information field and of enlightenment - implemented by a two-way spiritual communication modality.

The following essays assume that souls have access to and use the transcendent resource of the Akasha to motivate, monitor, and guide incarnate individuals living in world's objective concrete reality. We suggest that souls implement and transmit messages derived from the Akasha and the primordial consciousness shared by all souls [4]. The process is inherently subconscious and subliminal. Apprehending and gleaning the benefits requires preparation, thoughtful concentration and meditative skill. We suggest that individuals can also draw from the Akasha and concretize and construct messages learned with words, actions, imagery, symbols, and structures - albeit imperfectly and tentatively within the constraints of this earthly venue.

Let's take stock of what we have to work with. Our basic resource is inspiration that we can draw from the mesostratum and physiostratum. Both are resplendent with wonders and informative phenomena. We may receive inspiration and flashes of insight from the Akasha and from the reservoir inherent in the trinity of our soul~spirit~body triad via the mind loop, as depicted in Figure 1. The genius and accomplishments of gifted philosophers, artists, metaphysicists exemplify benefices so garnered by attuned attendant minds.

The Other

In *Totality and Infinity* Emmanuel Levinas, sublimates the communication encounter in a way that invokes the soul~spirit~body triad. At the core of Levinas's thought are descriptions of encounters with another person, intrinsically an ethereal personage, he names the *other*. Levinas writes, “. . . the *other* impacts me unlike any worldly object/force. I can constitute the other person cognitively, on the basis of vision, as an alter ego . . . the other person addresses me, calls to me. He does not even have to utter words in order for me to feel the summons implicit in his approach.”

The *other* may be an alter ego, a reflection of one's soul, mother, father, loved one, compassionate person, colleague or simply someone close at hand. The appearance or apparition of the *other* person or personage is a manifestation of a more profound modality: a soul-inspired messenger. We should acknowledge that we communicate - often subconsciously - with and receive messages from the *other*, via the soul~spirit~body triad - from the mesostratum transcendent realm as well as from nature, the material world, indeed from companions, associates and the illuminators, as described in the next section. We need to teach ourselves and others how to receive and transmit messages which extend beyond body-to-body, brain-to-brain, exclusively verbalized terrestrial communication. As depicted in Figure 1 we may have access to the soul~spirit~body triad via the mind loop which affords communication interrelations with Atman, the Akasha, or the Platonic World from which theoreticians and mathematicians, like Roger Penrose, claim to draw insight, instruction and inspiration [5].

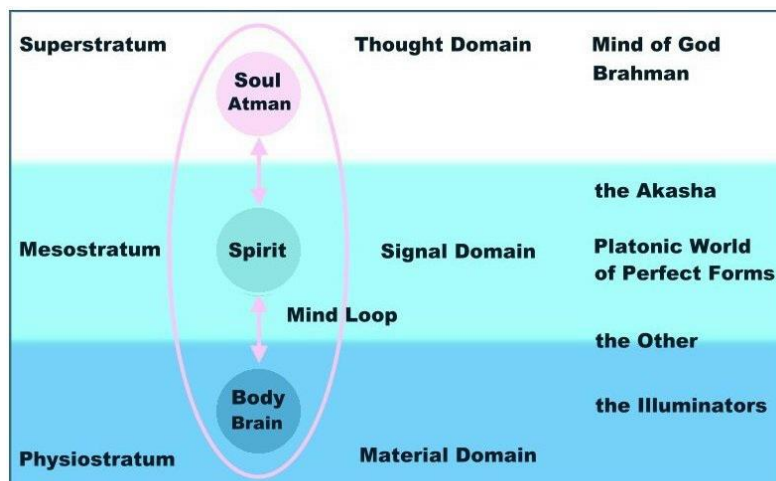


Figure 1 - Soul~Spirit~Body Triad and Mind Loop communication interrelations.

The Illuminators

The superstratum-mesostratum academe is the residence of spiritual teachers that intermingle with and walk among humans in different forms, in different worlds, at different times: They are Brahmin messengers - enlightened illuminators and teachers - select humans with messages of enlightenment. They come along and emanate an essence - through a Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Socrates. These are the renowned, venerated. Many, indeed most, are celebrated authors, artists, sculptors, painters, musicians, composers, poets, prophets, architects, scientists of their era, accompanied by *others* who enter our lives, uncelebrated, to illuminate *the way*. They are the media and the message by virtue of their *presence*.

Regarding the illuminators, Needleman in *What Is God?* writes, “We know of only a few of these greatly awakened men and women who shook the whole world. And, within the confines of each religious tradition, we know of relatively few of the countless spiritual geniuses who transformed the inner and outer life around them. Some have become mythic figures, while for others we have the external lineaments of flesh-and-blood biographies. We have the legendary or mythic figures of Moses, Christ, Mohammed. We have the countless, nameless flesh-and blood *Rishis* of India . . . in our present era. There is the endless line and endless number of lines of guides and teachers stretching from the beginning of history to the present, including the great lineages of Buddhist sages and saints, many acting in the world here and now around us. And from within our own Western culture there exist the prophets and rabbinic masters in the long history of Judaism, and the saints and mystics of two thousand years of Christianity. And much, much else, always and everywhere in the life of this planet, our earth.”

Needleman cautiously asserts that, “we are on the verge of saying, knowing, the shocking truth that God needs not just man, but *awakened man*, in order to act as God in the human world. Without this conscious energy on the earth it may not be possible for divine justice, mercy, or compassion to enter the lives of human beings.” It seems clear from this that *awakening* means emerging from the ‘sleepwalking’ bio-automaton state and engaging oneself with the supernal consciousness that is each human’s birthright.

Zoroaster

Zoroaster, also named Zarathustra, and his followers left the world one of its noblest bodies of religious writing, the *Avesta*, which is our earliest example of Persian literature. Persian poetry famous for its moral and critical reflections is familiar through the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the fascinating freethinker and ironist:

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And after many days my Soul return'd
And said, “Behold, Myself am Heav'n and Hell.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world-religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith.” (Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*) “Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity and Islam; yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest logical coherence. . . .”

Zarathustra became convinced that all events of the world are invariably based on cause and effects. He based his teachings on three principles: good reflection, good word, and good deed. He perceived that all the motivators of human beings are based on action and reaction; on how we and others respond to words and deeds. Zarathustra inferred the opposing concepts of the good versus the bad, of good deeds versus evil deeds, which are utterly foreign to the bio-automaton in its purely reptilian mode, the self-serving survival machine mode. The bio-automaton imbued with soul consciously contemplates concepts that transcend survival and replication: morality, beauty, destiny - and seeks rewards for good behavior.

Zarathustra never imagined that God is a bribe taker - to be bribed by worship, then rewarding the worshiper with a part of paradise. God does not need to be flattered by the creatures of creation. Zarathustra asserts: God initiates justice, kindness, and truthfulness and guides all soul-invested creatures to the same moral principles. Having delineated the essentials of God, Zarathustra unabashedly proclaimed, “Ah, ye brethren, that God whom I created was human work and human madness like all Gods!”

Zarathustra’s primary teaching was that everyone has the liberty to choose the right way by good reflection which, in turn, relies on self-education and natural science. He encouraged the search for knowledge and the quest for enlightenment. The search for knowledge can prove to be along a rather circular path, as pointed out by Omar Khayyam in his *Rubaiyat*:

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The quest for enlightenment may require heroic effort, introspection and meditation as, for example, taught by Buddha. First, it is worth considering Confucius’ comments regarding the societal setting that is required to recognize, assemble, and accumulate knowledge.

Confucius

“In his day Confucius was only one among many philosophers and by no means the most successful. But from him grew Confucianism, which for two thousand years, down to the end of the Empire in 1911, was the dominant force in Chinese thought.” (Karl Jaspers, *Socrates*,

Buddha, Confucius, Jesus) The importance of Confucius was because he was acclaimed as an illuminator, a messenger. But it should not be a habit to venerate the messenger, whether Confucius, Buddha, Jesus or Socrates, but the message. What is important is the evaluation of the message that the messenger illuminates or projects. That message, conveyed by a person speaking or by words written, is never a palpable object but an essence far beyond the words that convey it - never the 'clay pot' but its 'content'.

What is the essential message illuminated by Confucius, what are its salient elements? First, it behooves to appreciate the ongoing struggle in which Confucius was engaged: In retrospect, Confucius seems at times convinced that he enjoys the 'personal' protection and sanction of *Tian* - the extra-human absolute power in the universe - the supreme deity. At other moments, Confucius seems to be caught up in existential despair, lamenting *Tian* has apparently abandoned him, and by implication, us all. The latter complaint, to this day, is seized upon by apprentice atheists and agnostics when life becomes sour or foolish expectations are unsatisfied. What remains consistent throughout Confucius' discourses is that *Tian* seems to be present in all our earthly engagements with fate, nature and deity. Confucius finally resolves his issues with *Tian* by posting rules of social behavior and intercourse that complement *Tian's* preferences, rather than the preferences of the crowd, the unenlightened automatons.

Confucius was concerned with an individual's pragmatic interactions within an orderly society. Confucius saw that an orderly society was needed so that an individual being might perfect its relation with its soul. For Confucius human societal intercourse is the most vital aspect of the soul's physical life, its supporting mortal interpersonal infrastructure, "The superior man does not neglect his neighbors." Acknowledging that we encounter good and bad, Confucius says, "Have no friend who is not your equal," and declares: "The superior man honors the worthy and tolerates all men. . ."

In agreement with Confucius' ancient teaching, Albert Schweitzer (*Reverence For Life*) *vehemently rejected* the notion that "the only sensible line of conduct for a man is to withdraw entirely into himself and to concern himself solely with the deepening of his inner life . . . He has nothing to do with what may become of human society and of mankind. The deepening of one's inner life, as Indian thought interprets it, means that a man surrenders himself to the thought of 'no more will to live,' and by abstention from action and by every sort of life denial reduces his earthly existence to a condition of being which has no content, beyond a waiting for the cessation of being."

Confucius never thought himself in possession of complete knowledge and never thought such knowledge possible. "To represent what you know as knowledge and what you do not know as ignorance: that is knowledge." In his contemplations of the unknowable Confucius reverted to metaphysical indifference. He declined to think about the absolute or to pray for help, because uncertainty regarding transcendent realms enjoined him to be pragmatic and to turn to mankind in the actual world. Confucius leaves everything open by advising living in serene acceptance of death, not asking to know what we cannot know. He advises purposeful living apart from the extremes - the saint and the fool who are immutable - because men are, or should be, free to develop their potentialities.

In post-Confucian history the 'clay pot' instead of its worthwhile content became venerated. Confucian temples were erected throughout the Chinese Empire. At the beginning of the twentieth century Confucius was expressly declared to be a god. A god was made of a man who wished to be nothing but a man and who knew that he was not even a saint. Confucianism's metamorphosis is typical in this world where mundane words, *not the thoughts they attempt to represent*, are 'cast in stone'.

Buddha

"One night as Buddha meditated beneath a fig tree, the 'great awakening' came to him. All at once, a vision made everything clear to him: what is; why it is; how beings are caught up in blind lust for life; how they stray from body to body in a never-ending chain of rebirths; what suffering is, whence it comes, how it can be overcome. . ." (Karl Jaspers, *Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus*) Buddha became enlightened, self-sufficient, released from the enthrallment of suffering and sorrows that beset him and humanity. Soon after his sudden redemption and release, Buddha realized that it was inappropriate keep his enlightenment to himself. He struggled to devise and declare a doctrine that could help enlighten others. Although his preaching attracted a following of throngs of people, he despaired that his carefully crafted doctrine would not endure. Still he continued, vowing to 'beat the deathless drum in a world grown dark'. There is no certain textual record of Buddha's words but they echo vicariously in Buddhist scriptural accounts of his life.

In Buddha's philosophy consciousness becomes central and predominant. Consciousness overrides scientific inquiry and philosophical speculation. For Buddha, consciousness itself is the essential subject of contemplation through exercises in meditation. Buddha recognized that rational thinking is constrained by space and time - the primary aspects of the physiostratum which itself is a material extension of consciousness. In Buddha's view, the constraints of the physiostratum need to be overridden by a transcendent experience - by consciousness ascending to the superstratum. In effect, consciousness becomes a variable mediated by mesostratum resources.

Many centuries later, Albert Schweitzer in *Reverence For Life* regards the primacy of consciousness in close agreement with Buddha's teaching: "If man wishes to reach clear notions about himself and his relation to the world, he must ever again and again be looking away from the manifold [the physiostratum], which is the product of his thought and knowledge, and reflect upon the first, the most immediate, and the continually given fact of his own consciousness. Only if he starts from this given fact can he achieve a rational view."

Karl Jaspers (*Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus*) notes that in the Buddhistic exercise of ". . . speculation, meditation, and ethos alike, it is the human will that sets the goal and attains it. Each man has his own power of action and conduct, meditation and thought. He works, he struggles, he is like a mountain climber. That is why Buddha is forever calling for an effort of the will. All a man's powers must be engaged. Not all who try achieve the goal. To be sure, there are exceptional cases of spontaneous 'enlightenment' without effort of the will, especially under the personal guidance of Buddha. Then the goal is attained all at once, and for the

remainder of the adept's life it is merely clarified by repetition.” While Buddha soared to the transcendent, Confucius kept his feet firmly on the ground. Confucius demanded earthy self-sufficiency while acquiescing to spiritual mandates regarding social intercourse. Buddha counseled personal self-sufficiency while one acquires access to spiritual enlightenment through meditative consciousness.

Buddha cherished rational thought not by abandoning mortal experience but by a love of concepts, abstractions, enumerations, and combinations, fully consonant with the Indian philosophical tradition of his time. “But while Buddha's doctrine is accessible to normal consciousness, rational thinking of our finite brain is not an adequate vessel for it.” Karl Jaspers continues, “The core of the doctrine is perceived only by meditation, and rational formulation can give no more than a pale shadow or intimation of it.” To overcome this limitation, Buddha enunciated a process and vocabulary suitable for meditative access to transcendental enlightenment. “In the first stage of meditation, the spiritual self of the ethereal body becomes real, the physical self-vanishes into nothingness.” This means that consciousness engages the spiritual self of the mesostratum while tentatively abandoning the self of the physiostratum. In higher stages of meditation even the spiritual self is annulled and the ‘true’ self (the soul in Western parlance) is attained and coincides with Nirvana - the ultimate stage of enlightenment - supposedly realized in the superstratum.

Jesus

Jesus illuminated, indeed radiated, faith - faith in - not knowledge of - the unknowable. Revelation through faith, similarly to enlightenment through meditation, remains veiled for the unbeliever, but to the believer it is revealed, even then not in clear statements, but in metaphors, parables and paradoxes. When questioned about the parables, Jesus replies: “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.” Jesus’ parables are given in concrete terms, intelligible ideas and definite commandments in order to communicate with those ‘that are without’. However, all his direct statements are but vehicles of a meaning which ultimately evades rational interpretation. Because language is an imperfect tool, Jesus shows little concern for its logical consistency. He says, for example: “He that is not with me is against me.” . . . “For he that is not against us is on our part.” . . . “Resist not evil” . . . “I bring not peace but a sword.” His utterances do not represent a rational system of thought, but a message in signs wherein spoken words are symbols.

Because of the metaphors and the symbolism of his words, Jesus could be misunderstood, perhaps deliberately by his antagonists. “I come not to bring peace, but to bring a sword” (Matthew 10:34) is among the misunderstood statements of Jesus. During his last days, Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem was undoubtedly heralded by his words: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34) and the advice to his disciples “. . . if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. . . .” (Luke 22:35-38) These statements could be misinterpreted fostering accusations he aspired to the crown or overthrow of the existing regime; leading to his crucifixion. Situations like this may

have inspired Professor Karl Popper to remark, “It is impossible to speak in such a way that you cannot be misunderstood.

Jesus’ reference to ‘sword’ is properly taken as a metaphor for dividing people into those who accept and those who reject his teaching. Jesus is saying that his mission on earth is not to bring about world peace; it is to teach people the way to obtain spiritual salvation. In this context the sword separates people into those who believe and those who do not. Jesus is saying specifically that his teaching will cut through families like a sword with some family members believing and following Jesus’ teaching and other family members rejecting Jesus’ teaching. The Book of Kells, a Celtic illuminated manuscript copy of the Gospels, uses the word ‘gaudium’ meaning ‘joy’ rather than ‘gladium’, which means ‘sword’ rendering the verse in translation: “I came not to bring peace, but joy”. It is unknown whether this was an intentional or accidental change but it shows that with acute translation and interpretation there are no contradictions in Jesus’ sayings.

Jesus’ sayings and parables are meant to excite and awaken faith, not reason. Awakening to faith, experiencing epiphany and manifestations of religious belief were topics of particular interest and study for William James. His *The Varieties of Religious Experience* remains one of the great books on the subject, especially noteworthy for the evidence it gives for religious experience as a unique phenomenon. James applied his analytic clarity to religious accounts from a variety of sources and concluded that concepts of faith, divinity, revelation, belief, and religious mysticism, derive from states of consciousness invoked by transient surges of sensation, inspiration, intuition rather than by rational mental effort.

Pope John Paul II produced the encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*, roughly two centuries after Voltaire and his cohorts mocked the Christian church as the bastion of irrationality, in which he argued for reason and for faith as reason’s ally. Pope John Paul II calls for boldness from theologians and philosophers to respect the extraordinary dignity of human reason and to honor the love displayed by God in revealing to us dimensions of truth that would otherwise forever have eluded us, or left us in wavering indecision. In *Fides et Ratio* the pope issues a ringing call for the church’s theologians to abandon metaphysical timidity and to acknowledge that revelation, whatever else it may be, is a revelation of truth - truth about the superstratum that transcends us - also truth about the physiostratum that surrounds us. Revelation is not just Jesus exhorting the faithful to follow him but to believe that he leads to a supernal reality that transcends the objective reality of mundane mortal existence.

According to The Gospel of Thomas, in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, the disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us how our end will be.” Jesus said, “Have you discovered, then, the beginning, that you look for is the end? For where the beginning is, there will the end be. Blessed is he who will take his place in the beginning; he will know the end and will not experience death.” Thus does Jesus comment on the soul with its beginning coincident with its end in its transcendental domain, the superstratum, where the soul as an animating principle is ultimately more important and everlasting than anything that is physical or tangible. Then, later in The Gospel of Thomas, Jesus cautions, “Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul; woe to the soul that depends on the flesh.” The human bio-automaton must serve the soul but not slip into passive indifference abandoning its function as a survival machine and fiercely cope with the world

surrounding it. The soul, in turn, must not become corrupted by its mortal integument and must strive to retain its inherent God-given purity and integrity.

The Biblical scholar Albert Joseph Edmunds believed the Gospel of John to contain Buddhist concepts. Some scholars have suggested that the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas and the *Nag Hammadi* texts display Buddhist influence. (Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*). The Gospel of Thomas in the *Nag Hammadi* texts, has many similarities with Buddhism. These similarities suggest that Hindu or Buddhist tradition influenced Christian gnosticism. In *Buddhism and Gnosis*, Edward Conze points to evidence that Buddhists and Thomas Christians were in contact.

Socrates

In Plato's dialogue *Apology*, describing the trial of Socrates, Socrates utters the famous phrase "The unexamined life is not worth living." Remembering the Book of Job, we can paraphrase Socrates as, "The unexamined religious doctrine is not worth abiding." If we can fault Job for his unquestioning faith and adherence to dogmatical rituals, then we should fault ourselves for not exercising the reasoning capability that Aristotle perceived to be distinctive about humans when he declared that 'man is a rational animal'. Indeed, even an abject unredeemable reptilian automation calculates and maneuvers rationally to assure advantages over adversaries and to guarantee its own sustenance, survival and success.

Bertrand Russell, commenting on Socrates' advocacy of questioning and reason, wrote: "Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation." (*The Problems of Philosophy*)

Socrates did not hand down specific items of wisdom but encouraged others to seek and discover what can be known. When the others claimed they discovered this or that item of wisdom, Socrates had the temerity and tenacity to make them aware of their ignorance or make them authenticate their presumed new knowledge. It was said of Socrates that he could cause others to reach deep within and miraculously draw out what they already knew, but had not known they knew it. What comes to light is like a recollection of something known subconsciously or perhaps shared with a universal consciousness. Socrates' questioning, disproving, testing were justified by the confidence in the enlightenment people gained through introspective thinking, not by thinking in words, but by the meaningful thinking that springs from the 'source' of all innovation and realization.

In keeping with the Socratic method, Plato and his student, Aristotle, debated the questions inherent in the teachings of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Jesus and the beliefs of Gnostics, Christians and Hindus. Plato believed that the physical senses interfered with our perception of the transcendent. To Plato, mortal embodiment distorts our view of the ultimate reality in which we are immersed and makes that reality seem like an illusion. While working at the level of the body and the senses, Plato thought that we could never fully experience things as they 'really' are. He

asserted there was a more perfect, non-material realm of existence, e.g., Plato's world of perfect forms, as represented in Figure 1.

We believe that the findings of quantum physics increasingly support Plato. We postulate and elucidate the existence of a reality that transcends the palpable physiostratum immediately available to our senses. We suggest that mesostratum phenomena mediate and govern physiostratum phenomena in ways that inescapably influence what we sense and can measure scientifically - specifically via quantum physics [6].

Out-of-body and near-death experiences, lucid dreamings, meditative enlightenment, psychic communication, manifestations of deity, epiphany of the soul, spiritual salvation and inspiration, incidents of reincarnation and, overall, the undeniable fact of consciousness cannot yet be empirically replicated or studied in a true scientific sense. These point to the possible existence of non-material aspects of reality and the serious consideration of these demands iterative application of the Socratic method.

Regarding soul, Socrates argued that any 'peace of mind' must be based on demonstrating the immortality of the soul, "which is beyond any doubt." Socrates admitted that any such certainty based on ratiocination is insecure, and that it is based expressly on the 'venture' of living in the hope of immortality. Then, Socrates, with unchanging serenity, revives a doubt. "If what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth; but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I shall not distress my friends with lamentations, and my ignorance will not last." (Jaspers: *Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus*)

The one point in which the many Socratic disciples converge is Socratic thought. Contact with him inspired people to think. But immediately after his death, fragmentation set in; each one began to think in a different way. Each one seems to have presumed that he exclusively possessed Socratic thought. But this is a consequence of Socrates' teaching which emphasizes the individual - the loneliness of self-enlightenment while seeking and discovering a connection to a transcendent being, to one's soul and its transcendent foundation. Perhaps the most salutary influence of Socrates is that people convince themselves in freedom, that is, they refuse to subscribe to faith or sectarianism in dogma. There is only friendship in seeking truth and clarity. Socrates met others as equals, wanted no disciples and neutralized his powerful personality by speaking ironically of himself.

Muhammad

Spoken in the context of Islam, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad - peace and blessings upon him - uncannily combine the essential teachings of Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus and Socrates:

God hath not created anything better than Reason,
or anything more perfect, or more beautiful than Reason;
the benefits which God giveth are on its account;

and understanding is by it,
and God's wrath is caused by disregard of it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The most excellent Jihad is that for the conquest of self.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The Qur'an was sent down in seven dialects,
and in every one of its sentences,
there is an external and internal meaning.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Do you love your creator? Love your fellow-beings first.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

To spend more time in learning is better
than spending more time praying;
the support of religion is abstinence. It is better to teach knowledge
one hour in the night than to pray all night.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The preceding selections are taken from *The Sayings of Muhammad* by Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy. Of particular interest are sage sayings that express the counsel and humility of the Prophet (translated by Kabir Helminski and preserved by Hazrati Ali) . . .

Islam began as something strange,
and it will become thus again, as it was at the beginning.

Blessed, therefore, are the strangers.

The strangers are those who restore
what the people have corrupted of my law,
as well as those who revive what has been destroyed of it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You will not enter paradise until you believe,
and you will not believe until you love one another.
Let me guide you to something in the doing of which
you will love one another.

Give a greeting to everyone among you.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Meditation in God is my capital.
Reason and sound logic are the root of my existence.
Love is the foundation of my existence.
Enthusiasm is the vehicle of my life.
Contemplation of Allah is my companion.
Faith is the source of my power.
Sorrow is my friend.

Knowledge is my weapon.
Patience is my clothing and virtue.
Submission to the Divine Will is my pride.
Truth is my salvation.
Worship is my habit.
And in prayer lies the coolness of my eye and my peace of mind.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The Prophet's words are unambiguous and seem to commend three essential considerations for those who aspire to spiritual ascension from the physiostratum to the mesostratum and higher: (1) Seek and find enlightenment beyond the words of scripture, (2) Love reasoned knowledge and companions who seek that knowledge, (3) Accept only the guidance of God and nature as you journey through life.

When the Prophet went from Mecca, where he and his followers were a persecuted minority, to Medina, where they were the majority, the Prophet used the sword to establish Islam by conquest. His followers gradually grew to an army and he went down the path of jihad. Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates, occupying a vast geographical area which was converted to Islam to further secure and establish their worldly power. (*New World Encyclopedia*)

The Medium and the Message

Herbert Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* is a pioneering study in media ecology. In it McLuhan proposed that media themselves, not the content they carry, should be the focus of study. McLuhan's theory was that a medium affects the society in which it plays a role not by the content delivered in the medium, but by the characteristics of the medium itself. This idea is popularly presented as 'the medium is the message'. McLuhan considers the light bulb as a demonstration of this concept. The light bulb certainly does not have intellectual or informational content of newspapers, magazines or books. Yet the *light* it casts enables greater access to the content of these print media. Analogously, a computer screen simultaneously illuminates and projects informational content. McLuhan suggests that sources of illumination function as media through their mere presence and social effect on people.

We propose a kindred viewpoint: Upon reviewing the lives and teachings of Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus it seems clear that their presence, their teachings, and associated scriptures provided the illumination of profound messages which still influence our lives. Each was an illuminator. Each such personage, as the messenger, *is* the 'medium' thus the 'message'. A convoluted version of McLuhan's dictum then becomes 'the messenger is the medium and thus the message'.

In Figure 2 we offer a medium in the form of a vase that by its nature intrinsically reflects a multitude of messages. The shape and decoration alone denote mastery of art, craft, technique attributable to the maker. There are artful embellishments and vague hints of text - perhaps drawn from the Bible, Torah, Qur'an, Vedanta, or other scripture. Such texts, as mentioned previously, will have external and internal meanings where the internal meanings may be so

overwhelmingly profound that their grandeur must be sought by intense meditation. As a practical matter the vase is a testament to a vast reservoir of science, technology and innovative talent and creative thought, accumulated by many over many years, perhaps requiring deep

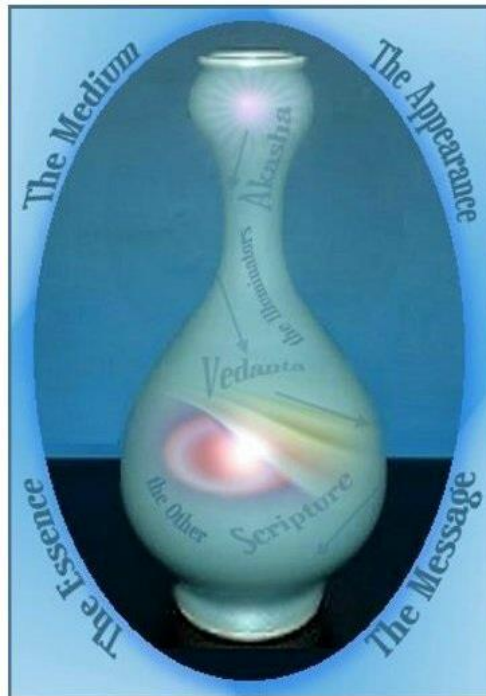


Figure 2 - The Medium as the Message.

thought, wisdom, and accumulated social intercourse, customs, traditions, and beliefs. The appearance of the vase, simple though it may be, conveys an essence which transcends description - because it was first a thought - then a thought that materialized - then an interplay of thought and matter - then a message which defies verbalization, because verbalization is superfluous - we are conscious of the inherent qualia. In accord with this notion, we suggest identifying the mortal body with a vase - a vessel - conceived and designed by a primordial soul-consciousness for spiritual occupation and for guided evolution on a terrestrial stage.

Conclusion

We aimed towards the establishment of a community of souls - implying communication among souls and concomitant communication between body and soul and some governance of body by soul. However, we are bound to admit that the body is reluctant to surrender its independence and autonomy. When it does seek to communicate with soul and strongly desires instruction or information - it may find that ordinary verbal communication is a one way street. The response from the soul - or any intermediary such as spirit - may be substantively non-verbal - needing faith in one's higher consciousness to assign a practicable meaning.

The response received may be esoteric, mysteriously symbolic or cloaked in a medium or a message that needs deciphering. For example, Jesus' parables seem to be vehicles of meanings

which ultimately evade rational interpretation and require faith. Although there is no logical consistency, we are assured: 'seek and ye shall find, ask and it will be given' when we appeal to such resources as are abundant in the mesostratum. We need to be cautious: we may be given more than we can endure, as when we unite by intense meditation directly with Brahman and utterly transcend space and time and become one with the universe!

Words spoken by the illuminators and then recorded as scripture are subject to interpretation and their inner meanings can be obscured, corrupted. But if tested and forged on the anvil of material reality, can one doubt that the Prophet's 'loving the seekers of knowledge' means welcoming all differences of insight and enlightenment and that loving means honestly and rigorously questioning another's rationale and agreeing or learning to disagree - for peaceful accommodation of differences in the search for enlightenment.

Guidance may be needed to assemble social infrastructures that provide maximum possible freedom to each individual body and soul. Guidance should be accepted only from unimpeachable sources such as those found in nature, discoverable by science, and through ratiocination and self-enlightenment. Sadly, organized institutions too often provide sinecures to pretenders and pedestals of power and control to tyrants who proffer questionable guidance under the guise of good intent and good works. The greatest teachers and illuminators invariably refused worldly power and abject supplication volunteered by their followers - instead, they urged self-motivation and self-enlightenment in an unbridled quest for a spiritual paradise.

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