

The Dream Life and International Misunderstandings

Today the waking stage of consciousness has been identifying with reality through the use of the term “realism.” This in itself is a metaphysical assumption. There is no scientific proof that the waking stage is more real than other phases of consciousness of life. We might just as well say that the solid stage is real and that other stages of materiality are comparatively unreal. Indeed Prof. Ernst Haeckel pointed out that much of our metaphysics tended to either assume or prove it.

Indeed if the waking stage is more real we shall have to abolish all religions and much of religious experience, and if we do not wish to attribute this to the generality, we must to Christ and Buddha and Mohammed. When the late Ramakrishna declared he could see God all the time he was either accepted with loving devotion or else criticized, as he is even now not only by non-believers but by followers of rival Indian schools.

It was not so long ago that the nature of color was not understood. Sir Isaac Newton analyzed White Light and demonstrated his findings. In the early nineteenth century ultra-violet and infrared rays were discovered. Then there were investigations into Fraunhofer's lines, and still later the X-ray vibrations and the X-ray spectra came to light. As a result today Western physicists have reached a cosmic outlook. Western psychologists, philosophers and metaphysicians are now also beginning to have world-understanding. This is as yet foreign to those involved in diplomacy and international problems.

It required an Einstein to fathom problems of “space” wherein the experimenters had unconsciously regarded themselves inside when they were outside and outside when they were inside. Today contemporary psychologists have gone far ahead from a narrow, European-centered to a world outlook.

When the author, H. Rider Haggard, was living in South Africa he asked the indigences whether they believed in survival and they replied in the affirmation, claiming they could “see” the dead. When he asked about God or the Divine Being, they replied they could not see such a Being.

Indian cosmic psychology has terms for many states of being which have not been assimilated into western culture. We have the failing of expecting others to assimilate our terms, but not always being so opened minded toward their culture. The history of the Vedanta Ashram in Hollywood is the history of an institution which does not fit into our past heritages but fits very much into the outlooks of today and tomorrow.

What is called “reality” is often nothing but a consensus of opinion without any scientific evidence

behind it. The solid physical state is not necessarily more or less “real” than the gaseous state. Visible Light or the Color Spectrum is not necessarily more or less “real” than ranges of light-vibrations which do not impress the cultured portion of humanity. We have not yet made discrete studies of the light- and sound-sensitivities and sensibilities of cultures which do not depend so much on reading and writing. So when we come to consider groups which emphasize dream-consciousness or what we call “trance” or “ecstasy” we are outside the ranges of semantic exactitude.

In modern times Sri Aurobindo of India has done very much to harmonize ancient and modern culture-ranges. He has not only carefully studied the various psychologies and cultures of India, he has been very careful in the selection of words to delineate, connote and denote aspects of life which may be uncommon as well as common.

“Dream is felt to be unreal, first, because it ceases and has no further validity when we pass from one status of consciousness to another which is our normal status. But this is not by itself a sufficient reason: for it may well be that there are different states of consciousness each with its own realities; if the consciousness of one state of things fades back and its contents are lost or, even when caught in memory, seem to be illusory as soon as we pass into another state, that would be perfectly normal, but it would not prove the reality of the state in which we now are and the unreality of the other which we have left behind us. If earth circumstances begin to seem unreal to a soul passing into a different world or another plane of consciousness; that would not prove their unreality....” (*The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo)

The universal teachings of Sri Aurobindo is but slowly going forward for we still live in an age of analysts. Analysts may quote Sri Aurobindo but only those with the integrative or universal outlooks seem capable of putting the above into practice. In the end we may find that the consciousness of each and every one of us has luminous and opaque areas like the chemical elements have their Fraunhofer lines. In the end we may have to alter our ideas of sanity, insanity and unsanitary.

The whole world of Oceania seems to be peopled by those who have a strong reliance on the dream state. They feel that a veil has been lifted from the “soul,” so to speak in dream or trance or other state of consciousness and consequence the experience is more true. These people interpret “the kingdom of heaven is within you” to mean that when we are less sensitive to the physical world, we are nearer to spiritual realities.

Of course we can brush aside the outlook of these people only to find that much in their psyches and mythologies has parallels in our own earlier history. And the further we look the more uncertain we may become that our every day consciousness is most real—remember, we used to say that our limit of sight was most real. We have proven nothing.