

Consciousness and the Assimilation of Experience

Experience requires a subject and an object; an experiencer and that which is experienced. Experience always produces change in the experiencer. Pure Consciousness, of which our everyday consciousness is a pale reflection, is not experience. Unaffected and free of experience, it simply observes and illumines what we experience: our life. Without its light we would experience nothing. Provided we are in an 'unattached' and sattvic state of mind, we can use some of that light to make sense of experience.

We need to try to make sense of life because unexamined experience remains uncomfortable, unpredictable and confusing. First and foremost we all wish to be happy and the way to this goal, we are told, is to be free ourselves of desires and attachments. Since life **is** experience, freedom does not mean detachment from life itself but from our conditioning, our unconscious tendencies (vasanas) and our un-informed interpretation of life which includes beliefs, opinions, prejudices, fears, desires and fantasies; in other words our personal 'baggage' which obscures the light of consciousness and produces all our suffering. For this reason we do not see life as it is, only how we experience it at any one moment in time.

As we have seen, Western psychology provides some useful tools, such as the Enneagram Types, to throw light on our personal conditioning and tendencies. Vedanta likewise provides help on this via its teaching on the three gunas which emanate from the Causal Body and directly shape the way we experience life; a recommended avenue for exploration by E group.

Only when all the layers of our psyche are assimilated can we cease to identify with them and instead, become that which we already, unconsciously, are. The function of consciousness is to illumine for us the body/mind machine so that the real purpose of the human level of experience is realized; namely the realization of our inseparability from the cosmos. If life's experiences remain unassimilated we cannot fulfil our destiny. If we do not at least try then our problems multiply instead.

Everyone has a unique path to follow in life. After a certain age one begins to get an eerie feeling that some unseen hand has been propelling us along a pre-determined path and making most of our choices for us. Furthermore it seems to be requiring us to experience things in a certain order which is tailored to our soul's capacity to assimilate.

When we look back at our lives we can see how it was not just our own unconsciousness or inexperience that lead to certain fateful choices but also the way our path was intricately and unavoidably interwoven with the paths of significant others around us – particularly parents and siblings – all of whom impacted each other. Whether one's father was required to fulfil the role of saint or alcoholic, or mother was habitually happy or depressed, each in their way has fatefully affected our life and choice of partner and, if we have children, the kind of parent we have in turn become.

Our personal stories just go on and on, each happy and tragic event unfolding out of the preceding event like clockwork. Who is responsible? Collectively, each and every one of us through the choices we make and have made in previous lives. Who is to blame? No one. Why is that

important? So that we know ultimately everyone is Oneself. Ignorance of that truth is the cause of suffering. The last words of Christ on the cross were; 'Forgive them for they know not what they do'

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Homework

Please come with answers to these questions.

'I am not my body'. Neither am I my thoughts or desires. What sort of consciousness might I have if I really believed this? Do I have an innate memory of such a condition?

What is the continually recurring lesson that my life provides, but which I never learn.

M.R.