

2022 Patanjali Class 63

8/29/23

Sutra II:19 – The stages of the triple modalities of nature are the particular, the universal, the differentiated, and the undifferentiated.

As it was being recorded for the book, sutra 19 surely occasioned a massive and complex talk, in which you can easily visualize the deeply absorbed listeners arrayed around the prayer hall doing their utmost to take it all in, as Nitya, sunk in his antique armchair, eyes closed, brought his vast knowledge to bear. While the collective minds in the room converged on the subject, they perhaps fleetingly noticed the rich decorations of the altar, the scent of the oil lamp, rustle of silks from bodies straining to remain upright on the slim cushions, savoring a lingering taste in their mouths from the delicious dinner that preceded it, all external awareness tapering inward to an undifferentiated hum that soothed all distinctions into irrelevance as Nitya's words led them into far fields.

What was preserved of the evening can easily supply two classes, and in 2016 we took each half separately on succeeding nights. As we have by now so much experience with the structure of Aum, this time we left the second half for personal perusal and took on only the first part, which mainly addresses the differentiated and the undifferentiated, with a bit of philosophical history thrown in.

I pointed out that the particular and the universal are two poles of a continuum, as are the differentiated and the undifferentiated, and it's possible to think of them as the horizontal and vertical axes, respectively. Only then did I read out the text through page 212, adding this helpful bit from the old notes:

The primary focus of the class was examining the differentiated versus the undifferentiated. Moni recalled a talk by Nitya where he stood at a white board, which represented the unconscious. Then he made a small vertical stroke, like the number 1. That was the conscious. If his mark had bisected the whole board, it would have also defined duality, by creating the perception of two sides.

This reveals a key idea of our continued progress in the Yoga Shastra. We have been dealing with bringing about a balance between what we might call the left and right sides of the board, which is a horizontal duality. Our class has developed expertise in that kind of balanced thinking. But there is also a vertical duality: that between the mark (line), and the unmarked (the white board). This is a tougher nut to crack.

Charles reinforced the idea that when you talk about the undifferentiated, it is no longer one, and I supported him with another reading from yesteryear:

The yogi's process is to balance and equalize the horizontal pluses and minuses—actuality and its comprehension—while remaining attuned to a value vision of a life of maximum evolution, however that might be appreciated. Often the vertical unfoldment remains on an intuitive level, only realized after a pattern is discerned in past events. If we make the vertical intentional, it becomes horizontalized. That means if we cast ourselves wholeheartedly into a meaningful lifestyle, our true nature will guide us from within, like a flower bud blossoming. We don't have to force the issue.

I suggested that if we can think of instances in our lives that include creative differentiation arising out of the undifferentiated, unintentional potential, it could reveal meaningful insights to us.

When the differentiation is genuine, we might not notice it until after it has undergone substantial development.

Bill liked Nitya's description, from the end of our reading, pertaining to the causal pole in the vertical axis: "In manifested consciousness the stuff of consciousness assumes shapes, and in the unmanifest, it is bereft of shape. There is no thick line between the manifested and unmanifested." Bill thought it was a great way of describing the causal being the repository of all potentials. Nitya talks about it as an undifferentiated space, but it is nonetheless the repository of experiences in the horizontal, and when we get to the fourth, the turiya, at the top of vertical, there is no longer any form at all: it's transcendental.

There is a paradox here, because the vertical axis represents evolution from the unmanifested pure potential of the negative end, into actualization, with the ultimate goal of the evolution being transcendence. We're not growing up to disappear, we're growing the capacity to realize more and more, nourished by our horizontal experiences. That means transcendence is the ultimate manifestation. Plus, there's no actual end—it's open-ended. Transcendence is not a cul-de-sac. Because manifestation is limited in scope and size, it normally converts to a new seed of nearly-pure potential before it expires.

The old Class Notes throw light on this:

Horizontal paradox can be unified with intelligent reasoning, but vertical paradox requires penetration into the depths beyond the reach of thoughts. We sat pondering the mirage image of a lake in the desert with the brilliant sun reflecting into our ajna chakra, our third eye. We invoked several "gateway ideas" to take us to the edge of silence: Who or what is this 'I'? Is it only a false image constructed out of nothingness, destined to dissolve? And if so, are we it? Does who we are go away with it, or does it persist? Is our core of certitude equally as false as

its immersion in outer appearances? If everything is the Absolute, how did it come to be housed in an individual body that imagines itself to be limited? What does it *really* mean, that we are the Absolute?

Another excerpt from Moni in the old notes throws light on this:

Moni agreed she was only a mirage, and that when she died the mirage would be gone. Then later she told a story of something that caused her to feel regret over and worry about: if we think “I am a mirage,” it is no different than saying “I am such and such,” or “I am me.” You can even say “I am nothing.” All are equally assertions, statements of an ego-mirage attempting to define itself. To get the point of where this is taking us, we have to relinquish all self-descriptions.

The relinquishment of all self-descriptions is where the unmanifesting process participates, and it actually furthers our evolution. Susan thought this was a perfect entrée to share a poem she brought, *The Worm’s Waking*, by Rumi:

*This is how a human being can change.
There is a worm
addicted to eating grape leaves.*

*Suddenly, he wakes up,
call it grace, whatever, something
wakes him, and he is no longer a worm.*

*He is the entire vineyard,
and the orchard too, the fruit, the trunks,
a growing wisdom and joy
that does not need to devour.*

The poem reminded Paul of the Upanishadic truth that knowing is a form of not knowing, and not knowing a form of knowing. So, an admission of not knowing is a more accurate form of knowing. The worm habitually eating grape leaves suddenly wakes up and finds he is a lot more than the differentiation he has adhered to. It's an example of how undifferentiation is expressed as differentiation.

The Isavasya Upanishad is one source of Paul's favorite idea, from way back:

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Into blind darkness enter they
That worship ignorance;
Into darkness greater than that, as it were, they
That delight in knowledge.

There is more about this in the Upanishad; the yogic solution it gives is to know knowledge and non-knowledge together, conjointly. And Paul's right, that pair is not far removed, if at all, from manifested/unmanifested, or differentiated/undifferentiated. Charles affirmed they are parallel: differentiated means specific.

I've been taking this sutra to be referring to horizontal and vertical pairs. Regardless, it's just a scheme, though a good one. In the vertical parameter, you start out as particular seed-source, and then expand as you move vertically through time toward the universal. In the horizontal, objects are differentiated and our conscious awareness of them is essentially undifferentiated. Our identifications occur within an overarching unity of consciousness. As an example, I was looking at a thousand books in the library where I was sitting, all of them different from the next, but in my consciousness they're all one thing, all one room, so they are not differentiated in my awareness of them. I privately suspect that that roominess is where Rumi took his name....

Bill read out:

This sutra is to be taken as an a priori instruction to the aspirant. The imperiential verity of it is to be established through the disciplines given in this chapter to actualize the union of the relative with the Absolute.

Regarding the common misunderstanding that we are supposed to disappear, in a sense, in the Absolute, while doing away with the relative, and get to the place where there is no mark. It's right there: the point is to *unite* the relative with the Absolute, not to choose one over the other.

Our discussion was getting confusing, and I proposed that was a good thing in some respects. Nitya would routinely add some mind-stretching (if not mind-blowing) ideas to his talks, to shake us out of complacency. When editing his books, I was cautious in clarifying confusing passages, as I knew there was an inherent value to being baffled by what he was saying. Too much bafflement, and you walk away; too little and you think you understand when you do not. It's a delicate balance. Confusion was thus a normal part of Nitya's talks, where his books were born as lectures addressed to actual people in the room. As he spoke, there were episodes where you knew what was going on, and other times you were using every iota of your strength to hang on.

We invited Charles to talk about Nataraja Guru's style, and he reported he was very discontinuous, and would abruptly change topics. He would be saying instructive things to someone in the room—you weren't always sure who—then he would take up some abstruse point of philosophy, followed by a cartoonish joke. He was a stand-up comedian, jumping back and forth, and mixing his different personas in a way that was highly entertaining. Charles knew he didn't understand and never would, so he wasn't

interested in understanding, so much as the performance, and he felt most of the others were looking at it that way, also.

To try and rescue the sutra's meaning from the murk, I mentioned that in both our previous classes we hadn't gotten around to the central point: Patanjali is relating these polarities to the three gunas. Only prakriti is made up of gunas, not purusha. The gunas are aspects of the prakriti in us, and each has these four qualities, and in that sense they don't attain the Absolute. That's left up to the purusha.

Starting with the simplest interpretation, the sutra posits that each guna has a particular and a universal aspect. Looking at each guna in turn, we humans exist in a sea of tamas, of ignorance, where paranoia and fear are amplified by media to propel rampages and stifle expression. Whenever I give in to it, it is a particular instance of the universal tamas. I might be fearful, anxious, paralyzed. I might long for the "good old days" that never were. I might imagine I could kill off the problem with gunfire. It is easier to fall into tamas when it can be seen everywhere.

We live in a rajasic time, when busyness dominates. I join up with it during my busy times of day, when I "get a lot done." Whether I do anything or not, the world is roaring along, maniacally, and sometimes harmoniously, dragging me with it.

Our weekly gathering to explore unifying ideas is a sattvic instance where we join the vast sattvic human history of meeting to share knowledge and wisdom, of investigating truth and supporting each other to actualize higher values of all kinds.

My sense is that Patanjali is cautioning us to not bring our guna-predilections to our study of his supremely pure yoga. There are tamasic types of spirituality, meant to close down and hide out, well-defended. Holier-than-thou. Rajasic religious people work hard to actualize the "kingdom of heaven" on earth, and sattvic types isolate themselves within their deep learning. None of these are what Patanjali et al have in mind. If we are trying to avoid

going off on tangents, we should ask ourselves whether we harbor any of those kinds of exaggerations.

Our spiritual fantasies are diversions from the wisdom of the gurus, and I publicly touched on some of my embarrassingly naïve attitudes that gradually gave way to a more balanced contemplative life. The most basic excuses for not applying yoga in a serious manner, that I can think of, are:

Sattva: I already know this, I'm already on my way.

Rajas: I'm too busy.

Tamas: I could never attain enlightenment.

Paul had jury duty on class day, and he was irritated the jury pool had been forced to watch a film to prepare them for being jurors. It presented how all people were in possession of an unconscious bias, and even if you don't think you have it, you do, as much as anyone. Paul wondered how, when we speak of the conditioned self and the way our conditioning being the filter through which we interpret the world and select our values, the perception of the undifferentiated is even possible? Much less its management. When just the act of thinking about something shows the limitations we have, what can we do about it? Jan, our lawyer, agreed how hard it is to work for justice, with those unavoidable unconsciousness biases or tendencies.

I asked Paul if he thought the film made a difference. My thought was if people couldn't change their prejudices, it was pointless to try. Yet the basis of justice is something you have to work for and you strive for, and ideally you take your limitations into consideration. In a tamasic setting, prejudices are amplified as "your right" and "expressing freedom," yet they are the exact opposite. We can make changes in our prejudices, even as we know we are bound to retain some of them without realizing it. I proposed it is actually easier to change our unconscious prejudices

than our conscious ones, because we hang on most doggedly to the ones we believe we have chosen using our intelligence.

Paul persisted that there isn't a way to rid yourself of an unconscious bias, and it is an automatic way of viewing the world, but he agreed the awareness of the fact that we all have biases means you can question yourself. We can be aware of things that would affect our judgment. In viewing the Absolute, we may differentiate it, making it something else, but being aware that we differentiate it helps us know better. It's like being the worm waking up: not being dependent on your sensual equipment, you take a step beyond.

Moni encounters unconscious bias in her work also, and shared that any experience we have a memory of, may be taken by tamas and added onto our previous experience, adding another samskara. Then the tamas, in the causal stage, will bring in all this biased information, making it hard to choose the right action to take for the context. She is convinced all horizontal experience is like that.

Jan was busy visualizing the figure-eight movement of consciousness rotating through the coordinate axes, how we work with those parts of ourselves and trying to dip into the unity, where what isn't manifesting is attuned with the Absolute. Our awareness is a constant motion process.

Jan was drawn to Nitya's idea, "there is no thick line between the manifested and unmanifested," how sometimes we can sense something coming up from the unconscious, and we try to quiet ourselves so that can happen more. It helps if we don't prejudge it, and don't rely too much on horizontal influences.

Our development/evolution begins in a potential, unmanifested state, like a seed. In spiritual life we try not to inhibit it, so basically we are trying to reduce the dissipation into irrelevancy and toward things that aren't supporting that

development. It's similar to striving for justice. Our dharma needs justice in order to fulfill its destiny.

There is no point in divvying the vertical up into gunas. On our journey from being born to being buried, if you are paralyzed by the world, you're going to miss the show, and you will regret you failed to take your opportunities because you were mesmerized by stuff. So sad. Patanjali and Nitya are lending us hands to avoid missing out.

The old notes offer a fine closing meditation, knitting the topics together:

The story of our life is to proceed over time from pure ignorance or pure potential, up the vertical axis toward wisdom, or total knowledge. Along the way, at every interval a horizontal world is spread out around us in three dimensions, initially very small but continually expanding as our mind expands. The scheme we're using constrains us to visualize our world as a flat image, but it is better contemplated as something like an hourglass on its side, with our vantage point in the middle: the objective world surrounds us on all sides and we are centered in a narrow transition zone of sensory input, which connects it with an equally vast, though virtual, inner world. However we think of it, it is very important to not be content with any schematic drawing, but to translate it into the actuality of the world as we experience it.

Part II

7/27/12

I like Isha's family policy to shield the young and old from shocks. If there is nothing to be gained from it, why do it? One facet of the modern mentality is to be blunt and harsh about so-called "facts," and it can have a decidedly negative impact. An

appreciation of ananda or value in life would include considering the consequences of sharing information, and sculpting the facts to have as high a value as possible. In Japan, doctors even have the right to withhold bad health news if they feel it will damage their patients. If the doctor was wise enough, I'd agree, but this type of thing calls for wise judgment. After all, propaganda is the self-interested crafting of information, and it is seldom beneficial.

The text for this lesson is a difficult and wide-ranging commentary. Nitya seemingly brings the whole science of consciousness to bear on the subject. At the same time, the gunas barely put in an appearance, as far as I can tell. I guess they are lumped together as nature, so the meaning is "Nature consists of the particular, the universal, the differentiated, and the undifferentiated." That's succinct enough. The Isa Upanishad reminds us to always take these polarities as aspects of an underlying unity. The mistake we make is to focus on only the manifest, because we can see it; or else imagine that only the unmanifest is important, because the manifest is filled with problems that breed suffering. Yet only the dialectical integration of them leads to "immortality," or the state of fearlessness, however transient the immortal state may be in the long run.

I see the gist of Nitya's efforts as being in this paragraph:

The consolidation of personality (asmitā) that gives maturation to the individual takes place in the final state of absorption, corresponding to the fourth limb of pranava. The transcendental state is permeated with silence. As the psyches of most people are frequently disturbed, they hardly experience any absorption. Hence, the formation of the personality happens at the level of causal consciousness and the mutation caused by the pain/pleasure principle affixes characteristic love/hate attitudes to personality. (217)

In other words, our personality is constructed out of our attractions and repulsions, without any intervening peace from deeper down.

The implication is if we incorporate the unmanifest in our development, it will be more sublime than if we base it only on manifest concepts and percepts. The manifest leads us into endless contractual relationships, a tit for tat mentality that is actually quite degrading. Including the unmanifest, turiya, in our mental state lifts us out of contractual limitations to a much freer condition. We act out of inspiration and compassion, rather than in expectation of a specific return on our investment, which is liberating in any number of ways. It sounds like mighty good advice to me.

It's truly amazing how our class focus in the Portland Gurukula—not to mention our everyday experiences—parallels our assignments in this study group. We have just finished Isa Upanishad 12-14, about the dialectical integration of the manifest and the unmanifest. It turns out I've been accidentally doing my homework for this sutra, which compares the particular with the universal and the differentiated with the undifferentiated, two other ways of basically saying the same thing.

This week I have also had a “hands on” training exercise in maintaining balance in the midst of chaos, but it's not something I can write about specifically. Suffice to say that life does not run short of vivid ideas for the education of fools like me. Putting Patanjali's principles into practice at times resembles hanging onto a strong post in a violent windstorm. Nothing dignified about it, but it works!

Philosophically speaking, the conflict may be nothing more than modulations of consciousness, but it is not permissible to tune them out. Friends and family are attached to their positions, and these have to be faced up to. While doing so, we strive to simultaneously maintain a calm, unmanifested “eye” of the storm as a partial refuge, so we don't get completely blasted away. Those

hurricane winds can blow mighty hard! They blow even harder if we appear to be merely witnessing, instead of being as upset as everyone else. That really seems to make people mad! I can see how it would be infuriating, and I remember feeling that way myself as a misunderstood child whose parents didn't realize the importance of my misery. By Guru's grace or some other miracle, I seem to have gotten over it, but I don't know how. Anyway, it's a tough one.

I wrote a lot about this sutra when our class covered it a couple of years back, so if you're bored it does have something to contribute to the present subject. I'll clip in one piece that seems worthwhile. Manifest and unmanifest are often called the horizontal and vertical in the Gurukula scheme:

One helpful way to conceive of this is that the horizontal represents space and the vertical, time. Time and space go together; one without the other is incomprehensible to us. Our spiritual heart pulses at the point of intersection of the coordinates, meaning that space and time, the here and the now, meet precisely there.

The story of our life is to proceed over time from pure ignorance or pure potential, up the vertical axis toward wisdom, or total knowledge. Along the way, at every interval a horizontal world is spread out around us in three dimensions, initially very small but continually expanding as our mind expands. The scheme we're using constrains us to visualize our world as a flat image, but it is better contemplated as something like an hourglass on its side, with our vantage point in the middle: the objective world surrounds us on all sides and we are centered in a narrow transition zone of sensory input, which connects it with an equally vast, though virtual, inner world. However we think of it, it is very important to not be content

with any schematic drawing, but to translate it into the actuality of the world as we experience it.

The accuracy of the correspondence between the objective world and its conceptual images is critically important. If we wander from our center, we become eccentric. But it isn't as easy as it sounds to remain grounded at the intersection point of the horizontal and vertical. In a world where objective demands for the basic necessities of life are predominant, there is fast feedback if our dreams don't match our needs. But the modern world has freed us from much drudgery, so we can live in imaginary worlds of our own construction without immediate conflict. What we may not realize is that by losing touch with the objective world we are also moving off our center. An inner discontent sets in, and we may not even know what causes it or how to cure it. We are likely to move farther off center, searching blindly, exaggerating the preferences that led us astray in the first place. When we thoroughly lose touch with our vertical spirit, we enter a state of depression.

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10/12/10

Sutra II:19

The stages of the triple modalities of nature are the particular, the universal, the differentiated, and the undifferentiated.

The primary focus of the class was examining the differentiated versus the undifferentiated. Moni recalled a talk by Nitya where he stood at a white board, which represented the unconscious. Then he made a small vertical stroke, like the number 1. That was the conscious. If his mark had bisected the whole board, it would have also defined duality, by creating the perception of two sides.

This reveals a key idea of our continued progress in the Yoga Shastra. We have been dealing with bringing about a balance between what we might call the left and right sides of the board, which is a horizontal duality. Our class has developed expertise in that kind of balanced thinking. But there is also a vertical duality: that between the mark (line), and the unmarked (the white board). This is a tougher nut to crack.

My favorite elucidation is that what the ancient scientists intuited and we now understand more concretely is that there is a more or less undifferentiated universe of particles in which everything takes place. If you only perceive that, it is like an ocean in which everything is made up of the same few elements. The wall, the air, and the people in the room are quite uniform, and it's almost impossible to differentiate them on this level. But our brains perform a magical feat. They convert impressions of this vibratory universe into a coherent four-dimensional image in which each part is distinct. In the theater of our mind's eye, people, walls, and the space around them become discernible, they take on names and forms. This is by no means a bad thing! It enables us to interact, to play with each other and work together.

The supreme achievement is that an Absolute which is everything can veil itself from itself in order to take on the appearance of limitation and separation. That aint easy! Almost seems a shame to work so hard to undo that seemingly impossible feat.

Curiously, our mental images are like the mirage analogy that every Vedantin is familiar with, and which Nitya employs here beautifully. The world we see is formed out of nothing, or a sea of not very much, and yet it is so convincing, much more convincing than the undifferentiated "grains of sand" on which it is projected. This is yet another impossible feat.

Paul brought up the essential problem here: are we then to turn away from our differentiated world and attend to the

undifferentiated, or is there something beyond them both that is the true reality? The Gita's Chapter XV addresses this ultimate conundrum, that has plagued philosophers forever. In it, Krishna explains there is a manifested Absolute and an unmanifested Absolute, but beyond these is a transcendental Absolute that is the ultimate, Paramount Person. Three Absolutes that are all absolute. It is a lot like the Holy Trinity, where the One is really Three, and all are the same and yet different. Impossible. And yet, irrefutable. That's paradox for you.

Speaking of paradoxes, I learned an amazing thing this very week, despite having paid attention most of my life. Catholics don't believe that Protestants are Christians, and Protestants insist that Catholics are not Christians; therefore, according to Christians there are no Christians, and thus no such thing as Christianity! What a relief to finally find this out!

We can deconstruct all our reality that way, and it lifts us out of the morass of insisting we are right and everyone else wrong, or vice versa.

Jan noted how being able to realize that what we see, and even what we know, is provisional and therefore not the whole story, has helped her so much in being able to let go and not get overly upset by events. At the same time, she is *more* able to appreciate the beauty and wonder of those same events, not to mention the whole game. Talk about a paradox! And yet it's true. Being utterly convinced that appearance is reality—as even eminent scientists continue to assert, as if they were no wiser than religious nutcases—regularly deludes us into falling on our face, because appearance and reality are only minimally related. Having at least a sneaking suspicion that what we are perceiving might be an impeccably staged passion play in our mind permits us to remain upright even in the midst of a raging storm. Upright is a better position for enjoying the storm than cowering from it in terror.

Lately Deb has been drawn to the classic Vedantic image of two birds on a tree branch, one eating the fruit and one watching, symbolizing the duality of actor and witness. Nataraja Guru writes about this in *Unitive Philosophy*, pages 145-46, and includes the original quote from the Svetasvatara Upanishad (IV.6). For those interested in delving a little deeper, Nataraja Guru's chapter *Favourite Examples in Vedanta* deconstructs several analogies of what he there calls appearance and reality. In terms of our present study, appearances are how we view the world with our mental imagery, and the reality is the ocean of particulate building blocks. Or, can the building blocks be part of the mental imagery, and the ocean a true zero, an O-Shan of consciousness?

Moni agreed she was only a mirage, and that when she died the mirage would be gone. Then later she told a story of something that caused her to feel regret over and worry about. So, if we think "I am a mirage," it is no different than saying "I am such and such," or "I am me." You can even say "I am nothing." All are equally assertions, statements of an ego-mirage attempting to define itself. To get the point of where this is taking us, we have to relinquish all self-descriptions.

Neither Nitya nor the class discussed the relationship between the modalities and their universal or particular states, which is after all what the sutra asks us to do. For a definitive discussion, see *That Alone*, verse 88, especially pages 623-5. The gist is that sattva, rajas and tamas are the manifested (differentiated) aspects of sat, chit and ananda, which are more like an unmanifested template. Sat and sattva, even as words, are very similar. Chit and rajas are thought and what carries out thoughts, still close. The widest divergence is between tamas and ananda. Being caught in the manifestation of appearances, instead of preserving our joy as we hope it will, is more likely to kill it. And there's the rub.

Horizontal paradox can be unified with intelligent reasoning, but vertical paradox requires penetration into the depths beyond the reach of thoughts. We sat pondering the mirage image of a lake in the desert with the brilliant sun reflecting into our ajna chakra, our third eye. We invoked several “gateway ideas” to take us to the edge of silence: Who or what is this ‘I’? Is it only a false image constructed out of nothingness, destined to dissolve? And if so, are we it? Does who we are go away with it, or does it persist? Is our core of certitude equally as false as its immersion in outer appearances? If everything is the Absolute, how did it come to be housed in an individual body that imagines itself to be limited? What does it *really* mean, that we are the Absolute?

We sat immersed in samadhi for a long time, gently letting go of all intrusive thoughts, beyond perhaps the eternal question Who am I? to bounce us back into emptiness. It was clear that we are not our physical or mental characteristics. What we are is indefinable, but we could sit in it, together. It was; it was... so....

10/17/10

Sutra II:19 continued

The second part of the Sutra deals with the scheme of aum, which is familiar to all Gurukula students. The commentary is dense, but if read with the scheme in mind it becomes more readily comprehensible.

Paul admitted to being somewhat confused around the horizontal/vertical duality and how that squared with non-duality, so that was our major area of discussion. The subtleties are not immediately obvious, and this is a very good time to get these core ideas squared away in our heads, as we approach the grand finale of Patanjali’s yoga. First off, it is important to realize that non-duality takes duality into account, that it is a resolution of perceived duality into unity. Without duality there can be no non-

duality. That is different than pure unity, which can hold no shade of anything but itself.

Moreover, Patanjali is frankly dualistic, where the Gurukula's core teachings are less so. The exercise of unifying dual concepts is the essence of yoga, and it is enjoyable for the seeker because it brings an enlightened perspective into their life. When things "make sense" in a valid way, they tend to be much less threatening.

Briefly, to review the aum-scheme, we begin by visualizing a set of Cartesian coordinates. Aum's A stands for the wakeful, objective aspect of the world, and is placed on the positive side of the horizontal axis (by convention, to the right of the vertical line that bisects it). U is the dream or the conceptual complement at the horizontal negative, to the left of the vertical axis. M is the pole of deep sleep or unmanifested potential, located at the vertical minus, and the silence at the end of aum stands for the transcendental fourth state at the top.

One helpful way to conceive of this is that the horizontal represents space and the vertical, time. Time and space go together; one without the other is incomprehensible to us. Our spiritual heart pulses at the point of intersection of the coordinates, meaning that space and time, the here and the now, meet precisely there.

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virtual, inner world. However we think of it, it is very important to not be content with any schematic drawing, but to translate it into the actuality of the world as we experience it.

The accuracy of the correspondence between the objective world and its conceptual images is critically important. If we wander from our center, we become eccentric. But it isn't as easy as it sounds to remain grounded at the intersection point of the horizontal and vertical. In a world where objective demands for the basic necessities of life are predominant, there is fast feedback if our dreams don't match our needs. But the modern world has freed us from much drudgery, so we can live in imaginary worlds of our own construction without immediate conflict. What we may not realize is that by losing touch with the objective world we are also moving off our center. An inner discontent sets in, and we may not even know what causes it or how to cure it. We are likely to move farther off center, searching blindly, exaggerating the preferences that led us astray in the first place. When we thoroughly lose touch with our vertical spirit, we enter a state of depression.

Among other things, this is addictive behavior. The ego mistakes the cause of our malaise for its cure, and so repeatedly reinforces it. It's as if it wants to test how far out "on a limb" it can go. The answer, discovered by millions: very far indeed. Unfortunately, when we move out of our vertical center, the progress upwards is inhibited, and eventually can even stop or be reversed. This is why addicts who can "turn themselves around" and rejoin their center begin their development again at the mental age when they abandoned their vertical balance to enter addiction.

The example from the class doesn't require addiction, at least to any substance. Religious people often move away from "the world" and into fantasy lands, exaggerating the horizontal negative pole. Materialists and hedonists may revel in the objective world at the expense of their mental discrimination, exaggerating the horizontal positive. One says the outside world is evil and the other

says that that's all there is. Such polar opposites may drive each other to extremes, because their votaries imagine they are enemies instead of reciprocal elements of a single cosmic game. In any case, we move away from the vertical core whenever we exaggerate one side of the equation. Yoga is all about regaining our lost balance and easing back into our vertical destiny, causing us to soar upwards, exercising and refining our talents.

The horizontal realm is very complicated and full of attractions and repulsions. It can bog us down in our unfoldment no matter how well we deal with it. Happily, our system naturally epitomizes our experience as ananda, reducing it to an essential value or principle that is much more portable. To my (very limited) knowledge, the Gurukula is unique in recognizing ananda as value or meaning, rather than bliss. Bliss is static; value is dynamic. Bliss has a dual counterpart in misery; value is unitive.

This isn't to say that we should constrain our lives to mere vertical essences and shut out all horizontal "temptations"; only that our sorties into the horizontal need to maintain symmetry around the vertical, which is our true inner nature, our essence, or what have you. The objective world and our understanding of it need to be in close correspondence. When they are, learning and experiencing on the horizontal plane make us rich in knowledge and expertise and connect us with our fellow beings. When paired with the vertical urge to progress to realization and wisdom, we can see how the horizontal and vertical feed into each other and support each other. Here is where true satisfaction is to be found.

Part II

I've been doing some heavy labor this week, and while I was whacking away at blackberry vines I realized I had left out the most important way we exaggerate the horizontal by far, that is, in relation to work. Work is all about dealing with the objective, actual world. Some religions tout continual work as the sure path

to heaven, and most political systems insist on its priority over all other concerns. Both camps have a tough time legitimizing “unproductive” thinking, lazing about, undirected meditation, and all those kinds of unmeasurable pleasures of life that do so much for our brains as well as our general well being. The only official excuse for rest is to recharge the body so it can do more work, etc. etc. Productivity is the only thing that matters, and everything else is subservient to it. So keep your nose to the grindstone and never look up from it. What an unhappy philosophy that is!

Entering the workforce is the modern equivalent of Arjuna standing on the brink of the battle of Kurukshetra. The mayhem looks impossibly threatening, and retiring to a monastery is an appealing alternative. Really, a capitalist, dog-eat-dog workplace is a lot like a battlefield, with honored winners and bitter losers, and plenty of back-stabbing and bloodshed. Fight or die! Conversely, Arjuna’s battlefield is like many jobs, in that everywhere he looks he sees friends and relatives, familiar folks all, and they are daring him to come right in and join the fray, or else. Yikes!

Krishna tells Arjuna to hold on a minute: the secret is not to either run away to a cave or become just another indistinguishable part of the slugfest, but to merge into the state of the Absolute. Don’t remain horizontalized, but integrate the horizontal and vertical to become an optimized participant in the play. And it can and does happen right in the middle of whatever you are doing.

In terms of the horizontal-vertical axes we are talking about now, work is mainly treated as a positive horizontal activity, thoroughly objective, and only having meaning in terms of material matters. The subjective component on the negative horizontal pole centers on accumulating knowledge and understanding for work. Even what you imagine has to be tied its objective justification; if it goes elsewhere, it is “wool gathering” or antisocial time wasting. Depending on the kind of work you are doing, this could lead you into a real intellectual desert, with little

or no positive impact on your spiritual development, which some very legitimate people consider the *actual* main point of life. But if your work is reasonably close to your dharma, to your calling, then aligning its requirements with your mental orientation is a key to excellence both spiritually and materially.

Work also has a vertical aspect, which is its goal orientation. The most maddening parts of work are when the horizontal activities you are asked to perform are not much related to the vertical goals of the job, or if those goals themselves are corrupt. In the fire department, where I had my career, there was lots of “make work” to “kill time.” It was boring or excruciating, a kind of mental torture. But the department did at least have a clearly defined goal orientation to save lives and protect property, and preparing for and executing those complex tasks could be exhilarating. When it wasn’t, at least it made sense.

Proponents of material life *uber alles* like to make work sound spiritual, waving the flag for it and scorning those who don’t enlist in the good fight. Sometimes work can be spiritual, but often it isn’t. That’s why Vedanta emphasizes finding your dharma, finding the right fit between what you do and where your inner light is leading you. In other words, bringing your horizontal activities—which may not always be that pleasant—into harmony with your vertical trajectory through life. Such an outlook doesn’t fit in very well to a mass-produced state of mind. A healthy political or religious system should make room for individual inclinations, but for some reason that’s an anathema. It spoils the monochrome appearance bureaucrats crave.

The scheme of aum can really throw some light here. We need to keep our horizontal life in tune with our vertical impulse, which is the really spiritual, or at least evolutionary, part of us. If we are made into hapless servants of unmitigated materialistic greed (i.e. someone else’s horizontal interests), it can suck the life

right out of us. It's important to at least know that the vertical part of us exists. We should be advocates for it, even.

It's not uncommon for people to mistake their horizontal fantasies for vertical insights, and wander off into strange tangents. The blessing of participation in practical work is that it grounds us, preventing our fantasies from tugging us off into meaninglessness, or worse. Like physical exercise, the pairing of the horizontal poles through work helps ameliorate a number of mental ills that build up when there isn't an actual outlet for our energies.

To sum up, the yogi's process is to balance and equalize the horizontal pluses and minuses—actuality and its comprehension—while remaining attuned to a value vision of a life of maximum evolution, however that might be appreciated. Often the vertical unfoldment remains on an intuitive level, only realized after a pattern is discerned in past events. If we make the vertical intentional, it becomes horizontalized. That means if we cast ourselves wholeheartedly into a meaningful lifestyle, our true nature will guide us from within, like a flower bud blossoming. We don't have to force the issue.

From my observation, the reverse is also true: attunement with the vertical leads people to suitable applications of their talents. That means if you are looking for work, paid or volunteer or simply to engage Necessity, look first to your core, your vertical interests, and all else will be added unto you.