

11/19/14  
Verse 84

As modifications of earth are known, it is said they exist—  
this is untrue when considered; what exists is earth;  
the countless entities remaining without foundation  
are all innate forms of nature existing in knowledge.

Free translation:

From the mere fact that one perceives the transformation of forms,  
it cannot be maintained that the modifications, such as of clay, are  
real. When critically considered, clay alone is and the form is  
unreal. The very many entities that are seeming to be so are only  
nature's modalities transforming knowledge.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

Because of cognition, if one should say there is  
Earthiness as a reality, that is not true; what there is, is sod.  
Without stable content all the limitless entities that stand  
Are but Nature, configurations abiding within awareness.

It might have been the cozy fire, the first of the season during  
class, but we came up with one of the most democratic and focused  
discussions in the history of the Portland Gurukula. The  
importance of this rather cryptic and difficult verse became clear to  
everyone, giving us, among other things, a practical sense of the  
immense value of discrimination, along with a detailed overview  
of what it means. We are fortunate that Nitya emphasizes its  
importance with keen clarity:

The whole purpose of a spiritual pursuit is to learn to  
discriminate between truth and falsehood, so that what you

consider to be happiness is not an illusion but a reality. Thus, discrimination becomes the most important part of the search.

Discrimination is to be made on at least three levels. One is to distinguish between illusion and transactional validity.

Another is to discriminate between transactional validity and absolute or transcendental validity. And of course we need to distinguish between illusory and absolute validity.

Vedanta uses many analogies to help us differentiate between the transactional and the transcendental. Narayana Guru has put the distinction in terms of earth here. Earth in itself is real enough, but everything we make of it, all our interpretations, are unreal in the sense of being provisional or partial. It's fair to say that each person has their own different take on earth (and everything else), but their opinions do not affect what it is in the least. Their opinions do motivate them to behave in certain ways, however, some constructive and some destructive. So what we think definitely matters, but only within transactional parameters.

Nitya makes unusual use of the word *extension* in his commentary, presenting it as the dialectical counterpart of *intention*. It's almost the opposite of normal usage, where extension refers to the extrapolations that emerge from a seed state. Here the intention is the transactional extrapolation and the seedbed is the transcendental extension. This is because our intention is an evolute of our limited grasp of the subject.

In the traditional metaphor of clay and pot from which the earth idea is derived, the universal substance or clay is the extension, while the specific pot is the intention. Narayana Guru uses "earth" here in the same sense, and you might have noticed that Nitya actually uses the word clay in his free translation. While this clarifies the mystery to a degree, it is likely Narayana Guru used earth instead of clay at least in part because it is such an overused metaphor in Vedanta. Clay and pot, like the gold that is the core reality of ornaments, and the earth as it is used here, are all analogies for how the Absolute, whether as spirit or subatomic

particles, takes temporary form as manifested beings. As we have often talked about, there is nothing wrong with temporary forms per se, in fact we wouldn't have a universe without them. It's only when we become so rapt by the temporary forms we forget their interconnectedness that we get into trouble. The critical consideration Narayana Guru is asking us to undertake enlarges our outlook beyond such endless empty specifying.

We are building toward verse 88, which begins, "Everything is real in itself; one who grasps the basic truth will understand all this as one." This is a radical notion in a world where the norm is to believe that everything that exists is an insult to the purity of the Beyond. For a spiritually-minded contemplative there is much work to be done to redress the schism we have been marinated in since birth, that reality is somewhere else, something better than we are. Only great men are enlightened, but we are not. Learning to befriend ourselves first means discerning how we are trained to be dissatisfied with who we are, noticing the pervasiveness of those false beliefs, and trying to imagine a perspective that does not rely on them. As Andy maintained, virtually everything we think is already part of the transactional dimension, so there's a mystical element involved in slipping out from under its influence.

Consumer culture depends on dissatisfaction, the belief that what we have now or are now is not enough, so society has a tremendous stake in convincing us of our inadequacy. As an example, I believe the real reason that psychedelics were made illegal was they undermined consumerism. They irrefutably demonstrated how everything was complete and beautiful in itself, so the need for most artificial products simply melted away. There's nothing more subversive than that! The rishis have enshrined that attitude of contentment in their philosophy, insisting that happiness resides in us and not in objects of interest, so their ideas are equally subversive if taken seriously.

The class was invited to investigate how exactly we can distinguish the transactional from the transcendental, in hopes that by doing so we will also gain insight into the illusory component

of our thought patterns and make our way toward enlightened understanding. This is the moment of truth, as they say. Have we gained anything from our study? With such a dynamic shift in orientation as presented here, coupled with a welter of new ideas, it is almost certain we will be somewhat vague and confused about a number of things. Now that we're entering the final stretch, it will be helpful to gather up a few pieces of what we've learned into our conscious awareness. Nitya urges us:

Most of us make our lives miserable by taking the illusory as transactional and by not seeing a way out of the transactional into the transcendental. If the transactional is binding and you do not see a way out, then you are fully committed to it. But it should not be binding. There are any number of so-called transactional commitments which are unnecessary. You can free yourself from them. You don't have to perpetuate misery by keeping yourself obliged in so many situations.

Obligation implies contracts. One distinction that is easy to perceive between the transactional and the transcendental is that the transactional is based on contracts. We do something in expectation of getting something in return, and when the contract is violated, as it often is, we feel let down. If we pin our happiness to contractual matters it will become an endangered species. It might already be on the critical list.

Many of our expectations are lodged deep in our subconscious, below the obvious ones like getting paid for the work we perform. Do we ever do anything simply for the joy of it, for the pleasure of being alive? Rarely. To make that possible we have to rediscover our dharma, our authentic nature.

Our contracts are not universal: many of our expectations of other people are not shared by them or for that matter known to them, so they may not be even aware of our disappointment. Likewise we rarely glimpse the expectations others are laying on us, and are often baffled by their frustration at what we're doing.

Many relational problems can be alleviated by clear communication about expectations, including realizing that our contracts were not ever agreed to by the other parties. In other words, the contract was a private illusion, and each had their own illusory version. This is part of what Nitya means when he says, “When the subject and object intermix, if you do not recognize the subjective aspect of the picture but treat it as an objective factor, you are making an important mistake.”

Awareness of this leads us to a simple exercise, to sit in meditation and ponder our unacknowledged expectations. Doing it in the abstract is rather difficult, but life is kind enough to supply us with plenty of conflicts to readily highlight our shortsightedness. We can ask ourselves why a certain person bothers us or is angry with us, and then, instead of the endless displacement of blaming them for it, turn it around and look for our own violated expectations. The uncomfortable truth is the process of discarding contractual expectations will lead deep down into the psyche, with precious little room left over for freedom. Our world turns out to be a confection of constructs. The artistic urge in us is a call for freedom, but it routinely gets weighed down with contractual baggage on its convoluted route into expression. That’s why we see so many imitators and so few originals. Could we dare to liberate our own individuality? It isn’t as simple as we might wish. Nitya tells us:

What you should understand from all this is that this is a very tricky area. What you call the empirical world is not entirely empirical. As you mainly depend on your gestalt, and it is up to you to put the rich imagination of your fancy into each situation to make it interesting, the objectivity of it is minimal. Is there anything really objective?

The requisite meditation is also spelled out by the guru:

In this verse, Narayana Guru wants us to know pure knowledge, and that the three dynamics—what he calls the modifications of earth [sattva, rajas and tamas]—operate within the frame of reference of this pure knowledge. In their operation they produce endless specific modifications, which range from the illusory through the transactional to the transcendental. In this range are many degrees of difference, and these are very important to differentiate. Simply saying they are all modifications does not help you. You have to see in each piecemeal experience what kind of modification has come, what its essential nature is, and how you can see through it. This means a transparency of vision is to be cultivated, by which you can neutrally assess a situation that is superficially dismal or cheerful.

Even though we may diminish the power of our own expectations, most of those around us labor under their full weight and often impose them on us. Transparency of vision allows us to discern the reasons behind the imposition, even when the instigator is unaware of their own motivation. Instead of taking attacks personally, we can be available to mitigate problems, which are otherwise going to make us feel unreasonably happy or sad.

It is heartening to see how class members have made significant strides in precisely this area. *That Alone* is such a delight to read and think about that we actually do manage to change for the better, despite the tricky barriers. Jan talked about her relationship with her teenage son, how turbulent it is at times, but how much more quickly she can regain her balance because of her more generous perspective. She can step back from the immediacy of the conflict, and that gives her a calmness that speaks volumes to everyone involved. Because of this she has maintained a good communication with her son through all the challenges. He intuitively knows he can trust her.

Moni also is a fine example of how to maintain a transcendent attitude in the midst of the storms of daily life. Her

clients expect her to solve all their problems, many of which are huge. The State of Oregon, her employer, only allows her to take the edge off their suffering, if that. Most of the time she can only throw a cup of water on their flames. So she regularly has to convince people that she can't live up to their expectations, but she is nonetheless doing everything possible to help them. Because of her attitude, many hostile clients become more sympathetic, but there is still a lot of heavy weight for her to bear. Moni said it takes the full weekend sometimes for her to recover her balance, burdened as she is all week with transactional dilemmas.

One of the most persistent contractual suppositions is that we shouldn't allow ourselves to experience negative states, because they make us negative. Yet they wouldn't have such impact if we weren't tied to them in our mental structuring. The specific focus of the class was the death of loved ones. Aren't we compromising our transcendent beingness by getting upset when someone dear to us dies? Isn't that what it means that the pot is unreal, and only the underlying spirit is real? Our mother died, so she must have been unreal, and therefore I fail if I have feelings about her. From this perspective, every feeling is mired in the transactional and so is to be rejected. But as Deb explained, we are working to bring the transcendental *into* the transactional, not to split them apart. The transcendental dwells right in the midst of the transactional, so it isn't something to be sought elsewhere. We have labored long and hard to do away with this misapprehension, and I suppose it will never go away entirely. It's a mere whisper in a windstorm.

Even from a purely transactional perspective, mourning the dead is healthy, as many studies have shown. You can think of it as a way of shedding unrecognized contractual expectations, of washing them away with cleansing tears. There's no one there any more to expect anything from, so our unconscious expectations wither. In my career I was present at the moment of many tragedies, and you would be amazed to hear how many people's immediate reaction to the accidental death of a loved one was, "How can you do this to me?" or "Why do these things always

happen to me?” Their contractual defenses have been breached in the only way most of us ever give them up, and it made their pain that much worse.

People are often leery of crying not because of any actual suffering but because it touches on their guarded places. It’s another example of the “intention” we add onto the bare-bones actuality of the “extension,” the raw experience. Deb asserted she learned compassion from the immense tragedy she and her family suffered over the death of our newborn boy, Nate. Looking back, it was as though we were oblivious to so much, before, during and after! Part of it was the unquestioned expectation that his life was going to be an unmitigated triumph. Stripping that expectation away was an important element of the tragedy, which for its years of misery was a major growing experience all the same. In any case, the thought of not feeling anything never arose. There was no chance of remaining unaffected.

The commentary includes an affirmation of the sense of confidence we should be developing with our fearless explorations, which are linking us with our core reality, and introduces the normative notion, the state of mind that is truly neutral. Such neutrality connects us with our core naturally:

On the whole you should understand that you need a normative notion of the Absolute. The normative notion of the Absolute is that it is pure knowledge. Your personal self is the pure Self that shines by itself in the dark without anything else. It is self-luminous, and that light is knowledge, a pure state of knowledge. What you call the Absolute is also pure knowledge, so there is substantially no difference between the personal self and the universal Self. It is to the existence of that knowledge that you refer the existence of anything else. Thus, a conviction of validity comes from the existential reality you feel of your own self.



Nitya closes with an affirmation that we have by now pretty much completed our survey of the self and its relation to the universal Self. Deb wondered what exactly he meant by the endearment value here:

When you come into your own in anything, you experience the same endearment value. This is the measuring rod you can use for each modification to see if it is absolutely illusory, if it belongs to the transactional world where a number of people can interact on the basis of a common consent, or if it is a universal truth.

Now you are fully supplied with all the requirements: the Self or pure knowledge as your normative notion, the three dynamics of nature as the causal factor in all experiences, the triple phases of the transcendental, the transactional and the illusory, and the method of applying the principle of discrimination to distinguish the illusory from the transactional as well as from the transcendental.

I remember on first hearing this an acute sense of discomfort. Despite many years of attentiveness, I didn't feel fully supplied with anything. It took a long time for this to sink in. But the uncertainty led me to engage with it and keep turning it over in my mind. If I'd simply thought, "okay I've got it," I might not have bothered to actually think about it. Our doubts are actually a powerful blessing in disguise, motivating us to keep up the search.

What "coming into your own" boils down to is recovering your authentic self from out of the wilderness of contractual obligations. The endearment it brings is true happiness. There is often an immense feeling of relief when the lid is finally pried off, followed by an inexplicable sense of enduring satisfaction at regaining a position that isn't based on externalities.

Prabu is a Tolstoy enthusiast, and shared a couple of examples (one was Prince Andrei from *War and Peace*) where his characters experience a similar kind of meaningful epiphany due to

transcending mundane demands. This is a perennial theme that great writers have communicated in sublime ways, proving that fiction is an ineffable source of truth. In this we can all take heart.

## Part II

### *Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:*

We see clay and we recognize it to be clay. In the same manner, we see a pot and recognize that to be a pot. So what is there that is unreal in a pot? There is a subtle distinction between the two cases of perception mentioned above. The principle of discrimination that is to be employed in either case is overlooked if we say that both perceptions are of the same order. If a potter wants to know how much clay he has used in one day, he is not interested in the many articles he has created, in fact, he will treat all his pots and pans as clay and he will enter in his cash book the purchase of a cartload of clay. The same potter, however, will not give much thought to the homogeneity of the clay which he molded into jars, pots and pans, when he is at his sales counter; there he will ask his customers to pay special attention to the tasteful display of form which distinguishes one pot from another. Thus, each occasion warrants a special emphasis on the principles of discrimination.

The pot, as was already mentioned in the previous verse, is a vikàra, or a modulation given to the shape of the clay. The ultimate reality out of which this world is modulated is pure knowledge. The dynamics of modulation is called prakriti (nature). Prakriti is constituted of three gunas, which are the attributes of knowledge (sattva), motion (rajas) and rest or inertia (tamas). The gunas are capable of fixing the individual mind's attention at any degree between absolute reality and total falsehood. If a person does not know how to discriminate between the real and the unreal, it is very likely that he will fall into snares of confusion even at the empirical level. Delighted by the splendour of light, moths fly into

the blazing fire. When an elephant rubs its forehead on a rugged rock it gets a pleasant feeling of itchiness and, believing that this delight comes from the rock, it goes on rubbing until its skin is torn and its head bleeds. The fish that mistakes bait for food is caught by the angler, and snakes, enchanted by the musician's pipe, dance their way into captivity. Man is also subject to the same kind of deluding infatuation.

The modulations that come from nature can direct an individual mind in the two opposite directions of truth and untruth. We cannot say whether our daily life is objective or subjective. We may call the same earth *dharitri*, terra firma, or *avanã*, the abode, or any other epithet that may reflect the special meaning we have in mind to suit a particular occasion. These are all conceptual or nominal images which we project on earth pure and simple. The gestalt psychologist says that we see only what we want to see; there is great truth in that.

Of the three dynamics of nature none is inferior to the other. Sattva presents in a clear transparent way the exact nature of a thing in terms of knowledge; the inertia and opacities of tamas can stabilize and fix an entity into a concrete existence; and rajas is capable of mixing consciousness (*cit*) and inertia (*jada*) into different shades of translucency with varying degrees of objectivity and subjectivity. The chair and the table we use are there as solid pieces, and in that case inertia is of immense value. A physicist can prove that a solid table is only an appearance of what is in fact a mass of flying molecules and within his own frame of reference he is right. This, however, does not make the table any less solid or undependable for pragmatic utility. If we see cakes and ice cream served on a similar table on a television screen, we can only admire the sight but cannot taste the cakes. We can of course appreciate the picture on the screen more than a blank wall in a dark room. Thus, whatever modulation comes it has relative merit and demerit.

To exercise proper discrimination, one should have the normative notion of the Self as one's guiding principle. The Self is

pure knowledge, and boundless are the modulations which arise from the triple function of the attributes of nature: knowledge, flux-like motion and inertia. These functions are to be treated as the negative attributes of the otherwise attributeless Absolute.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

A subtle but common philosophical error of an epistemological and methodological order is what the Guru wishes to point out here. The point of insertion of the actual into the perceptual, conceptual or the nominal worlds of reality is a philosophical problem of the first order and importance. The Guru here puts his finger on the problem in its most pointed aspect.

We tread on the earth or the firm sod beneath our feet in everyday empirical or ontological experience. This simple and direct experience is transformed by associative, inferential or analogical activities of the mind into its pure perceptual, conceptual or nominal aspects vertically, but apart from its own horizontally virtual or actual aspects. The virtual reality is not actual, and the error here would be of the order of a child mistaking a mirror image for the original. Eidetic personalities, of whom again children may be referred to as usual examples, are prone to give living reality to a mere doll or dead model or dummy figure. This is another way of making a mistake about reality.

Besides these, there are still subtle errors of judgement when we travel towards mathematical abstractions and generalisations that deal with imaginary or irrational quantities, culminating in the notion that is much in vogue in modern electro-magnetic calculations, which is the elusive negative notion of the mathematical quantity called the square root of minus one. It is real within the world of pure mathematical knowledge but cannot be

traced to what it represents in any one particular experience of reality.

The pure and the practical worlds, like the philosophical divisions made by Kant, belong to the noumenal or to the phenomenal. One cannot jump from a map to the real ground, because the reality of the map is of a different order from that of reality. As a modern sage, Ramakrishna, put it, “by shaking a calendar showing a rainy day, one cannot make water fall.”

There are distinct philosophical planes of reality, ranging from the actual to the perceptual, conceptual and nominal, which have all to be treated separately if they have to make sense within the four walls in the general overall frame of reference. All words like earth, soil, domain, sod, terra-firma, in the English classical language, and terms like *prithvi*, *bhumi*, *dharithri*, *avani*, *urvi* etc. in Sanskrit, have their proper places in a general scheme of reality. Some refer to ontological presences, while others have an ideological implication. The conceptual significance in others would prevail over the perceptual one. In the two terms, ‘*avani-vikaram*’ (earthy mode), and ‘*urvi*’ (sod), used by the Guru to refer to the earthy; the first is more conceptual than the second, which is a universal concrete. The Guru only pleads here for not mixing up different epistemological entities having their proper structural status.

The property of impenetrability of matter that modern physics recognizes is a corollary of the principle of mutually exclusive space which is actual, as contrasted with pure space which is more perceptual. In Vedanta, *dik* represents perceptual space, while *akasa* stands for actual space. Whether space is in the mind or outside it is a question that has troubled philosophers like Locke and Berkeley, and the discussion has come down to us from the times of Aristotle. Even the sensation of colour could be subjective

within the mind, while vibrations that produce colour-effects may be said to be all that is present objectively outside.

Prof. L. Wittgenstein, late of Cambridge University, in his work called the 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus', and later in his 'Philosophical Investigations', has surveyed the whole range of errors of this kind under the title 'word games', by which he has amply revealed that methodological and epistemological errors of a subtle order may lurk behind the apparently plain meanings of words that we take for granted. In his item 4.441 of his above-mentioned work, Wittgenstein makes the statement, "there are no logical objects." Ordinarily one would think that logic deals with objects, as when we say "Socrates is mortal." But Socrates as an object is outside the scope of the logic that 'reveals itself' through the verity stated.

By using the distinction which we have tried to draw between the horizontal and the vertical aspects of truth, we could easily point out the difference that the Guru wishes to refer to in the verse under discussion. Just in the same way as Jesus said, 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's'; or as the Gita poses the problem, 'the Field' and the 'Knower of the Field' have to be distinguished (XIII. 34). In other words, the vertical aspect of truth has to be understood as distinct from the horizontal. Here the earth by itself would stand for a simple actuality, while the idea of earthiness would not fit into the scheme at all. The 'Nature-configurations' referred to in the verse are to be understood in terms of divisions in Nature, as distinguished in verse 81. Nature as the enjoyer has a pure subjective status, and whatever truth might be in it, it has no actual status in existence.

### Part III

Tom Robbins, in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, gives a fine example of discrimination, in this case regarding the impact of

unconscious human drives on the course of history (includes some indelicate language):

Of course, [Dr. Robbins] wasn't absolutely sure that there *were* any problems. It was entirely possible that everything in the universe was perfect; that all that happened, from global warfare to a single case of athlete's foot happened because it ought to happen; and while from our perspective it would seem that something horrendous had gone wrong in the development of the human species, vis-à-vis its happy potentialities on the blue green sphere, that that was an illusion attributable to myopia, and that, in fact, development was proceeding beautifully, running right as a Tokyo train, and needing only a more cosmic overview in order for its grand perfection to obscure its momentary fits and faults.

That was a possibility all right, one that Dr. Robbins had by no means ruled out. On the other hand, if such an approach was, like religion, merely a camouflage system created to modify experience in order to make life more tolerable—another exercise in escapism festooned with mystic crêpe—then one had no choice but to conclude that mankind was a royal fuck-up. Despite our awesome potential; despite the presence among us of the most extraordinary enlightened individuals, operating with intelligence, gentleness and style; despite a plethora of achievements that no other living creatures have come within a billion light years of equaling, we were on the verge of destroying ourselves, internally and externally, and of taking the entire planet with us, crumpled in our tight little fists, as we shoot down the shit-chute into oblivion.

Now, if that be the case, one is compelled to ask what went wrong; how and when did it go wrong. The answer to that question of questions breathes on so many buds that the wimpy brain gets hay fever, its eyes puff shut, it sneezes away whole bouquets of hidden and half-guessed truths, and it probably doesn't want to know anyway. From his psychiatrist's stance, however, a stance only slightly less allergic than any other, Dr. Robbins was able to venture this far:

Most of the harm inflicted by man upon his environment, his fellows and himself is due to greed.

Most of the greed (whether it be for power, property, attention or affection) is due to insecurity.

Most of the insecurity is due to fear.

And most of the fear is, at bottom, a fear of death.

Given time, all things are possible. But time may have a stop.

Why do people fear death so? Because they realize, unconsciously at least, that their lives are mere parodies of what living should be. They ache to quit playing at living and to really live, but, alas, it takes time and trouble to piece the loose ends of their lives together and they are dogged by the notion that time is running out. (232-3)

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Jake's commentary:

Knowing what you want and being able to recognize it when it appears are fundamental conditions for doing anything volitionally. In this verse and Nitya's commentary on it, they sort out the various problems we create for ourselves as we attempt to "pursue the spiritual path" so that "what you consider to be happiness is not an illusion but a reality" (p. 592). It is our drive to know our Selves and through them the Absolute that constitutes our search for happiness, but as we do so we are isolated in our bodies and experience constant manifestation and change. It is in our capacity to discriminate, to tell the difference between what is and is not true that we hold the keys to the kingdom, so to speak.

As both the Guru and Nitya have emphasized in the previous verses, every thing is a form of that one Absolute, but because of the forms that hypnotize us that we fail to see that oneness in all manifestation. The un-manifest, writes Nitya, "belongs to the thing in itself, whereas the modification is part of the subject's



perception of the thing” (p. 589). This fundamental truth, that we cannot help being participants in everything we perceive, is beyond dispute in both the East and West (and in American culture is a core premise on which mass advertising depends). Concerning the intermixing of subject and object, Nitya goes on to point out that when we mistake the subjective for the objective we make “an important mistake,” one that advertisers count on and encourage.

This fundamental error, however, is merely the first in a series to follow, writes Nitya. In our transactional world, where everything undergoes continuous change and in which we operate by way of consensus with others in order to get anything done, we establish truths of a relative order that are transactionally valid. This dichotomy establishes, as Nitya writes, “two frames of reference”: the Absolute one and the relativistic value system of common consent, often understood as the scientific method.” But, as he goes on to point out, the consensus on which the latter is based can be completely illusory as in the case of two children agreeing to assume imaginary roles as they game-play. Their relationship is valid because they concur on its validity, however short-lived it may be. (This condition is now rampantly distorted in American culture where popular media routinely and in all seriousness show wild animals, tigers for instance, as having “families” and all the tender sensibilities assigned to the idyllic human arrangement—and where court-appointed mediators in labor disputes, especially those addressing sexual harassment charges, conclude that one party is responsible for another party’s perceptions as to how that person may have perceived some act).

Nitya continues with his excavation of the transactionally-valid by noting that those things we agree on as being *real* may be physical or psychological—and that in either case we are projecting ourselves into the arrangement. Consent itself denotes that very projection, and as a result nothing can be said to be completely “empirically so.” The world of matter certainly exists because our senses tell us so, but the world of ideas can be equally or even more real. It is when the two domains are stirred to action

that motion influences the inert (matter) or the abstract (ideas), thereby directing the change that is ever-present in the material world.

Nitya is here describing the nature of the lived world, prakriti, the manifest forms of the Absolute or Purusha. It is knowledge that trifurcates into the gunas Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Of the three, Sattva is a duplicate of the whole, or knowledge, while Tamas is inertia and Rajas is motion. A frozen landscape and a flooding river, writes Nitya, are nature's examples of these two gunas while a withdrawn paranoia and public hysteria represent instances of them in the ontological world. As nature is part of this play of Prakriti, so are our personalities which are likewise subject to those same influences.

The world and our infatuation with its forms, then, de-rail our efforts to know the Self especially if we are unable to make the necessary discriminations, and Nitya cites three fundamental ones: "between illusion and transactional validity, . . . between transactional validity and Absolute or transcendental validity, . . . and, of course, . . . between illusory and Absolute validity" (p. 592). Intellectually sorting out these distinctions is not the same as living them or *knowing* them. In order to do so, Nitya points out, we need to put ourselves in a position—as they arise "piecemeal" in our awareness—of recognizing the essential nature of that experience. This "transparency of vision" requires an ability to bracket off our overwhelming tendency to attack the situation and get carried away in the emotional force our egos have worked a lifetime to establish (p594).

Most people, writes, Nitya, "make a mess of their lives" by taking the illusory as the transactional and by not seeing a way out of the transactional into the transcendental." Anchored in a world of necessity, they are firmly attached to and suffer with the commitments they create. As Nitya has pointed out before in his commentaries, our notion of the Absolute and our being that itself, "a timeless experience of pure being," constitutes the one constant

and “is a value in itself.” It is the measure of all things—both internally and externally, individually and socially.