

TOWARDS A META INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY: MYSTICISM IN THE PHILOSOPHIES OF BHASKAR, PANIKKAR AND WILBER.

ABSTRACT: In this presentation, I will discuss the central role which mysticism plays in the philosophies of integral philosophers, Bhaskar, Panikkar and Wilber. These three philosophers have greatly enlarged my understanding of mysticism,. They all have broadly trinitarian philosophies of mysticism at the heart of and as driving energies within their philosophies. I will discuss the central role which mysticism plays in the philosophies of each.

All three have forms of participative, co-creative enaction built into their understandings of the evolutionary significance of mysticism. Each sees a comprehensive, holistic, philosophical vision energised by emerging mystical experiences with collective social and cultural dimensions as vital for the future of humanity and the cosmos.

Roy Bhaskar

In Bhaskar's "Philosophy of metaReality", he discusses metaReality as the dependence and encompassing of the world of duality by non-duality. For him, this non-duality doesn't depend on any kind of religious belief or faith but is the necessary condition for our daily states and acts. It is a kind of everyday mysticism. It is a form of spirituality which is secular and consistent with any or no faiths.

He argues that the non-dual sustains the world of duality in three ways: First, as ground-state (and through the connectivity of ground-states in what he has called the cosmic envelope), it is the ultimate ingredient in all other states of being, activity and consciousness. These

ground-state qualities of human beings include our potential for creativity, unbounded love, capacity for right action and for the fulfilment of our intentionality in the world. Secondly, certain features of transcendence are essential to the constitution and reproduction of everyday life. Thirdly, non-duality constitutes the fine structure or the deep interior of any moment or aspect of being or consciousness, with qualities such as bliss, emptiness, suchness, love

Transcendence in metaReality involves identification or unification or unity within an overall context, extending to the whole cosmos. This is what distinguishes the philosophy of metaReality from critical realism, which Bhaskar still sees as the best account of the realm of duality. Non-duality underpins and sustains the latter.

He describes three mechanisms of non-duality, relations of transcendental identification, reciprocity and co-presence. Co-presence is where some other thing is enfolded or implicit in a being. His claim is that all other beings are enfolded within myself, and I am enfolded within all other beings also. It is important because it is the ultimate ontological basis of our possibilities of transcendental identification and the laws of reciprocity, including karma. When generalised, it also explains why we subjectively feel and experience a commitment to the project of universal self-realization, the fulfilment and flourishing of all beings in the universe.

He speaks of three realms of reality: absolute reality, relative reality, and demi-reality. Underneath the relative world of duality, with all its conflicts, oppositions and alienations, is always its non-dual ground and mode of constitution. Demi-reality and relative reality depend always on the creativity, loving compassion and capacity for right action of human beings,, coming from their ground-states

He recognises that relative reality is the world of becoming, which includes absence, negativity, change, differences, process, evolution, and development. For him, metaReality goes beyond thinking being into being being – the ground and truth of reality.

His strongest claim in his philosophy of metaReality is that one's objectives in life must be consistent with one's ground-state, in which there is nothing in one's being, one's embodied personality, which is inconsistent with this, and that one's objectives will eventually lead one to a path of self-realisation and ultimately universal self-realisation and emancipation.

He links his principle of self-referentiality with practical mysticism. The former means that we can only act in, through and from ourselves as our point of agency. The latter means that being a non-dual being, or close to it, or as clear and focused as we can, is consistent with being engaged practically and actively in the world, through material embodiment and social transformation towards universal self-realisation. He talks about how transcendental identification and agency are necessary for communication and action in the world. He shows that oppressive alienated social activities and structures are sustained and underpinned by ground-state qualities of love, creativity, co-operation etc

He argues that non-dual states and phases of our being in which we show our free, loving nature, are underlying conditions of our dual world of alienation, domination and oppression. The latter is only able to survive because of the virtuous qualities of non-duality which sustain it. He thinks that we only need to recognise and release this alienated world in order to solve our contemporary crises

Bhaskar describes love is the expanding, developing, evolving, unifying healing force in the universe, The philosophy of metaReality is one of love, which connects all the elements of the cosmos into a whole, through the cosmic envelope. It embodies a mystical drive to

totality, which ultimately must include loving the totality of all beings, although in ways specific to each relationship

.Bhaskar asserts that the more one is in one's ground-state, the more successful one's actions will be, expressing one's uniquely embodied personality, effortlessly, spontaneously, and joyously, which will also have a transformative effect on the world

He argues that both secular and religious emancipation projects lead to a commitment to individual and universal self-realization.. He see enlightenment as part of a continuously unfolding evolutionary process. He characterises the path as one of love, coherence, clarity and emptiness.

With metaReality, he goes beyond modernism, post-modernity and critical realism by showing that concrete singulars are united at the level of their ground-states on the cosmic envelope, which provides a base for the emancipatory potential of critical realism.

He summarises the goal of this emancipatory philosophy of metaReality as being to find that the ultimate perspective is the awareness of the totality or the whole, including the cosmic envelope, which is implicitly enfolded within one. This will embody the reflexive unity of theory and practice, as theory situates and sustains itself within the larger whole, which is the guiding criterion of philosophy for him

He is very strong about the need to get rid of oppressions and alienations which interfere with our ground-states, not only those within our personalities but also within systems and social structures. He advocates disconnecting with them and then clearing their residues. He sees that the only sustainable solution for the future of humanity and the planet is for duality to be rolled back from blocking the non-dual realms. He sees here the crucial importance of

philosophical ideas, individual agency and social solidarity working together. He sees this as being made easier by recognising that everything we do in life is sustained by non-duality.

Raimon Panikkar.

He sees mysticism as the experiential awareness of the whole, the ultimate experience of reality and/or the study of it

He speaks of the three eyes of sensual, rational and spiritual experience. Only a mutual and harmonious interplay between these three will yield a satisfying experience of reality. Man is a triad of senses, reason and spirit, which correlate with matter, thought and freedom. At times he includes the mystical among these forms of knowledge. At a deeper level, it is the realm of silence and emptiness.

Mystical experience needs to be discerned and validated in some way eg “through a tradition, spiritual teacher, guru, mentor, or community of some sort, whether that of love, friendship, church, temple, synagogue, mosque, sangha, which serves as a point of reference”. The three eyes, including the testimony of the senses and the demands of the mind, are indispensable to discern whether the experience is authentic, as to whether its fruits are good or bad. He considers it important to hear the affirmations of many traditions and to be open to understanding the testimony of many people to the most intimate personal experience of humanity in the face of the groundless abyss.

His most significant insight is his cosmotheandric principle, that the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic are constitutive dimensions of reality, interconnected, interrelated, each independent in an inter-in-dependent way. This for him is the Rhythm of Being, which cannot be grasped by reason but only through an advaitic (non-dual) experience using the

third eye of spirit. He sees that human beings have the freedom and responsibility to play our roles in the destiny of Being, along with the Divine and the Cosmic

He characterises the symbol of the Divine as having three features: emptiness, freedom, infinitude, which correspond to the Trinitarian paradigm of Father or Silence, Son or Logos, and Spirit or Love, reflecting a real inter-in-dependence

He asserts that God can be experienced mainly by silence, by being, because Being is silent. If we are able to perceive the silent dimension of things we shall be able to become aware of the Divine, not only because the Divine is hidden in silence, but because the Divine is Silence, beyond Being and Non-Being. He is concerned about the human ways of opening up to that experience eg through the practice of the presence of God. This is for him is a discovery of the divine dimension in the act in which we are engaged, God's transcendence visible in the immanent

For Panikkar, our only adequate approach to the mystery of the Divine is the silence of all our faculties, body, mind and will, in an experience of the Emptiness of the Divine .

However, there is an awareness of the Divine which allows us to "speak" of it when our logos is not separated from the pneuma (or spirit).

The apophatic negative approach to the Divine takes the Absolute absolutely, by dissolving all its kataphatic, affirmative assertions in utter silence and discovering the very Emptiness of the Absolute.

He sees the necessity for combining the apophatic with the kataphatic approaches to the Divine., as neither on its own is convincing. There is a co-experience and positive symbiosis between the two which relativises both in a non-dualistic way..

He sees monotheism not as an absolute truth but as a human reaction in the face of the Divine mystery. He sees the Trinity as a way of speaking about the unspeakable in that there is the silence or emptiness of the Father and the love or activity of the Spirit, which if they speak at all, do so through the Logos

Panikkar takes a survey through many religious and philosophical traditions to produce evidence that reality as a whole has a trinitarian structure.

Panikkar extends the notion of the Divine Trinity to include the whole of reality, as Divine, Human and Cosmic . He sees that this broader idea of the Trinity, with its homeomorphic correlations in other religions may open the door to a fuller Christianity in the third millennium as well as assist in the encounter between Christianity and other religions and cultures. Panikkar sees interreligious and intercultural dialogues as forms of mutual fecundation, which requires us as far as possible to stand within the horizons of our dialogue partners

Christ is the Christian symbol for the whole of Reality, as God, Humanity and Cosmos which Panikkar sees as a christic adventure. Panikkar also calls him the cosmotheandric Christ, in and through whom the whole universe is called to share the Trinitarian perichoresis.

He regards contemplation as an essential element in all religions because it corresponds to a fundamental trait of humanity, which unifies one's life.

His cosmovision has clear sociopolitical, environmental, economic as well as spiritual implications. He urges us to participate in the love and care of the earth and the difficulties of humanity, especially the poorest, most disadvantaged and marginalised, to assume our responsibilities so that the common effort will lead to greater justice and freedom, transforming the cosmos through co-operation with the Divine.

He proposes a new kosmology, story and mythos based on the cosmotheandric insight which situates humanity within its proper place in reality, with its unique role and dignity along with God and the Kosmos, which contains the treasures from human traditions as well as being a dynamic force which weaves together old and new into something we cannot foresee. He has also called this, radical trinity, radical relativity, sacred secularity and advaita. It sees the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic as essential dimensions of a holistic view of reality, in which “everything is related to everything but without monistic identity or dualistic separation”.

Ken Wilber

His project has been to develop an integral, holistic world philosophy for a holistic Kosmos which is one, undivided, whole and related to itself in every way.

His AQAL map can be used in many fields including, religion, spirituality and mysticism to help to make sure that all bases are touched.

States of consciousness include the major natural ones, such as waking, dreaming and deep sleep, as well as meditative and mystical states, including the gross, subtle, causal or formless, and non-dual.

Levels or stages represent the major milestones of growth and development, which are permanent once acquired. For Wilber, they are: archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, , integral and beyond, including illuminative mind, intuitive mind, overmind and supermind.

He simplifies his 4 quadrants into "I", "we", and 'it", which he sometimes refers to as the Big Three, the Beautiful, , the Good and the True, which can also refer for him to art, religion and science. The quadrants can also refer to self, culture and nature and the levels are body, mind and spirit. So, the Integral model involves the cultivation of body, mind and spirit in self, culture and nature.

For him, the big 3 (I, You/We, It) go all the way down and all the way up. As soon, as Spirit starts to manifest in existence, there is Spirit in 1st person, Spirit in 2nd person,, and Spirit

in 3rd person. Mysticism can be seen as experience of God or Spirit in one or more of these persons: in 1st person as the great I AM , the Supreme Identity, the ultimate Absolute witnessing Emptiness; in 2nd person as the great You, or Thou, the Divine Lover, the all-loving God, to whom I can relate in love and devotion and surrender ; in 3rd person as the Great It, or Great System, or Great Web of Life, the Kosmos, as a whole, the great perfection of existence itself, the Is-ness and Suchness of this and every moment

He speaks of mysticism as having an ultimate peak experience in and of the major natural states, in which a person is one with the phenomena in that realm. “To experience a oneness with all phenomena in the gross-waking state is a typical nature mysticism. In the subtle dream state, it is deity mysticism: in the causal un-manifest state it is formless mysticism. To experience a oneness with all phenomena arising in gross, subtle and causal states, is a typical non-dual mysticism.” One can have a non-dual state experience at virtually any stage, including magic and mythic, which do not contain phenomena from the higher stages.

It is appropriate, using the Wilber-Coombs Lattice, to consider mysticism as including permanent access to these higher, transpersonal, trans-rational, third tier, stages eg illumined mind, intuitive mind, over-mind and super-mind. Wilber has described his own experiences of the higher stages as respectively, seeing wholes, feeling wholes, witnessing wholes and being the whole.

Wilber acknowledges that that people will only understand his descriptions of higher states and stages if they possess the requisite levels of consciousness and experience for them, often after disciplined training, applying injunctions and practice within communities able to verify their validity.

He defines Enlightenment, which could be considered as the fullest possible experience and expression of mysticism, as: “ the realization of oneness with all the major states and structures that are in existence at any given time in history”.

He often speaks of there being both an Absolute and a relative “side of the street” when speaking about reality as a whole. On the Absolute side of the street there is Emptiness, unchanging, unqualifiable , timeless, eternal, formless Spirit , which is Freedom, and about which little can be said , but only experienced. On the relative side of the street, the world of form is evolving and going through stages of development and growth. This is Fullness. “So for him Enlightenment is a union of both Emptiness and Form, or a union of Freedom and Fullness. “ In that sense, a fully enlightened human being alive today has a fuller enlightenment than one living 2000 years ago, although the Emptiness would be the same. His AQAL model and maps are ways of expressing and describing our relative, evolving world of form, often passionately and poetically.

Wilber discusses how a leading edge pioneer experiences higher potentials as either temporary peak experiences (or altered states) or as permanent acquisitions (or enduring trait traits or stages). In order for temporary states to become permanent traits and stages —then the pioneer must undergo some sort of learning, growth, and permanent development in those higher potentials. Theses first start out as free and creative novelty at the leading edge of development and evolution. As they are repeated by more holons, they begin slowly to settle into Kosmic habits that are then available to people following after them.

It seems that we are now at the stage where people at the leading edges of spiritual and mystical development are starting to push more into third tier, what Wilber calls “the frothy, creative edge”, with new Kosmic patterns and grooves beginning to be formed which may

eventually settle into Kosmic habits. This will require tetra-enactions through stable, self-critical collective groups, communities and sanghas , attentive to shadow issues.

Such practices and insights can assist in developing a more comprehensive understanding and practice of collective mysticism. In his latest writing, he discusses the Kosmic Address of the referents of mysticism, such as state experiences of God in a third tier world-space or structure/stage.

There are now numerous flowerings of evolutionary, collective future mysticism which reinforce Wilber's point that a transition from second tier to third tier must be enacted collectively and collaboratively as the structures for this are only just beginning to be laid down.⁵

Wilber speaks of Eros as the force of love, which drives and energises the evolutionary process from the Big Bang into our collective mystical future, as Spirit in action. He asserts that an integral vision is necessary and helpful in order to more effectively, comprehensively and inclusively meet the global challenges of our times and contribute to an evolutionary unfolding to greater dimensions of being and knowing and acting.

Conclusion

Common to the work of all three philosophers are multiple variations on patterns of the triadic structure of reality. They agree that a comprehensive philosophical vision must include non-dual mysticism, contemplation and spirit. For each, beyond what can be said about reality is Silence, Mystery, Emptiness, the unqualifiable Absolute. They also agree

that this must be experienced and integrated within the relative realities of our daily lives.

This vision must include Spirit along with human and cosmic evolutionary development or Becoming, into emancipating our fullest potential. Each exemplifies bodhisattvic commitments and objectives of agapic liberating service to and solidarity with humanity, all sentient beings and the Kosmos.

Meta Integral Philosophy is meta integral in that it allows room for pluralistic integral philosophies, such as these, to dialogue, engage and interact with each other. Mysticism shows us the deepest and highest levels and structures of reality within each thought system, as well as pointing to the Absolute Emptiness beyond all thought systems. Meta Integral Philosophy is a meta-philosophy because it goes beyond philosophy, supporting and facilitating mystical development, while still grounded within philosophical and cognitive structures. It encourages participative enactments across philosophies and lineages.

A Meta Integral philosophy of mysticism can provide spacious, hospitable openings for poly-amorous, co-creative, evolutionary, perichoretic, rhythmic dances of Being, non-being and Becoming. Opportunities to explore such openings further may include forums and activities such as the Foundation for Integral Religion and Spirituality.