

## CREATIVITY AND ITS CRITERIA

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### 1. Introduction :

There seems to be no consensus among creativity researchers about the exact nature of creativity, nevertheless, they seem to agree upon certain salient features of a creative product. In fact, creativity is a capacity of human mind to generate *significant* cognitive-constructs or products. The cognitive-constructs are concepts, ideas or well-defined mental structures or sequences of mental structures while the products are physical manifestations of these cognitive-constructs in the form of works of art, scientific theories or artifact. The creative cognitive-constructs or products have qualitative significance as compared to the normal ideas or products. The significance of these cognitive-constructs or products lies in their certain qualities, such as novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity in terms of their distinctness, historicity, function and aesthetic significance respectively. Highly acclaimed works of art and science possess the above-mentioned qualities. These qualities may be considered as the defining characteristics or criteria of creative product in terms of which a creative product can be evaluated.

However, for any such scheme of criteria a foundational framework is needed. The current philosophical thinking lacks such a framework. The present paper attempts to develop a framework to provide the required foundation to these criteria. Initially, the notions of novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity are briefly introduced and then the required foundational framework called *collective-cognition* is developed. Subsequently, the nature of this framework is elaborated in detail. Lastly, how to evaluate a given creative product using the proposed criteria within the framework of collective-cognition is explained.

## 2. Novelty, Originality, Functionality and Aestheticity :

Traditionally, though the terms novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity were often used in reference to creative products, these were not applied in a rigorous sense. It would be highly rewarding to characterize them more rigorously. We may initiate the discussion with the notion of novelty. Novelty in a product may be defined in terms of a contrastingly distinguishable quality of the product in relation to other products of the same kind. Apparently, for any novel product, a background is essential to contrast it. Discussing the issues of background and novelty, Briskman<sup>1</sup> suggests that what is novel against one background may not be novel in relation to another background. Moreover, the notion of absolute novelty is incoherent; we can judge the novelty in a product only by comparing it with previous products which constitute the background. However, it is not always the case that novelty is attained in a new product, an idea or a solution of a problem, automatically out of the background. Often, the ideas have to be borrowed from other available sources resulting in the creation of new ideas.

There are two different ways in which a new product comes into being. First, the new product may be a welcome addition to the existing domain by having some special feature. The second and the more significant way of generating novelty is opened up when the domain is saturated. The new product necessitates the modification of the background itself though not beyond recognition. In both the cases novelty does not result in a complete break from its background; a nominal relationship is always preserved. Therefore, it may be asserted that the distinctness of the quality of novelty of a product lies in its significant *deviation* from the background without losing its identity. This means that a new product differs from the background in a highly selective way. Thus, the novelty of a product can be evaluated in terms of a particular feature or a group of features and their contrasting distinctiveness as compared to the other features of the background. Thus the quality of novelty can be understood in relativistic terms.

Our second notion is the originality. The quality of originality can also be understood in relativistic terms, in a significantly different manner. Originality is a quality of the product that signifies the historically established primacy and welldefined source-specific genesis of the occurrence of a product. The minimum

condition for originality would be that the generated idea or the product may be reproducible or imitable, but the idea or the product under analysis itself should not be a reproduction or an imitation of any existing idea or a product and its source should be unambiguously definable.

To decide upon the originality of a product is a crucial task. It may happen that two different people in two different parts of the world may come up with the same idea simultaneously which are not reproductions, repetitions or imitations of each other. This happens when two or more scientists work independently on the same problem in the same field and come up with comparable results. The classic example is the simultaneous development of calculus by Newton and Leibniz.<sup>2</sup> In such cases both the ideas stand to qualify as original and to choose one of them is next to impossible.

In this context Margaret Boden's view is instructive. She suggests that normally the term creativity is used in two different senses. One sense is psychological which she calls 'P-creative' and the other is historical which she calls 'H-creative'. Elaborating on this, she says :

The psychological sense concerns ideas (whether in science, needle-work, music, painting, literature ...) that are fundamentally novel with respect to *the whole of human history*.<sup>3</sup>

Note that every individual can be called 'P-creative according to Boden, but the 'H-creativity' still remains an unresolved issue. Since, originality involves source-specificity, in the cases of simultaneous discoveries mentioned above, both the ideas should be treated as equally original. But when it is the matter of historicity of the product, the issue stands unresolved. However, in the section to follow we shall see how the collective- cognition plays a decisive role in this regard.

The historicity of a product is important in deciding whether the product is a repetition or an imitation. Mass-produced artifacts cannot be called original creations as their prototype precedes them historically. In the case of imitations the product that is being imitated precedes historically all its copies. Therefore, deciding originality in terms of historicity is relatively less problematic except in the case of simultaneous creations. However, in respect of source-specificity, a product is called original when it is recognized in terms of its relationship

with its source : may be a person, a system and associated mechanisms. When Picasso's works are said to be original, we mean that these are source-specifically original. For instance, Picasso's style of thinking, his skill of painting etc. are characteristically reflected in his work. Here the dynamics of the genesis of Picasso's works, mechanisms and relevant properties of the particular source, i.e., Picasso himself, are closely linked with the product and in a way seem inseparable. Thus, the quality of originality depends upon both the factors : historical primacy of a product and its characteristic source-specificity.

The first two concepts that we have dealt with namely, novelty and originality are relatively easier notions to understand in comparison to the remaining two notions of functionality and aestheticity. We shall now discuss these one by one.

Apart from novelty and originality a product fulfills certain functional requirements in a definite way. In the case of scientific discoveries or inventions the functional requirements are well defined. Most of the time a new theory resolves the perplexing problem or corrects the anomaly existing in the current theory or current paradigm in an elegant and parsimonious way. Its consequences and implications in the specific field can be estimated. For instance, an invention of a new equipment always has a specific utility : telephone, television and radio, each of them have specific function to fulfill. And if the functions are performed in an *elegant* and *parsimonious* manner then such inventions are called functionally unique creations.

The notion of functionality is relatively easy to understand. However to grasp the notion of aestheticity there needs a radical approach, since aestheticity is traditionally considered as the domain of subjective experience. An attempt is made here to explicate aestheticity from an objective perspective. It is granted that the subjective sense of the notion of aestheticity has certain metaphysical overtone, and such a notion does not seem to contribute much in advancing objective perspective. Without taking recourse to subjective understanding of the notion of aestheticity, in the present paper an attempt is made to characterize the notion of aestheticity objectively.

The attribution of the term aestheticity to a product would be justified only if the product in question has some aesthetic attributes. The product may be remarkable or it may be aesthetically valuable as it may evoke an aesthetic

emotion or something quite similar. In brief, the product must have some definite significance that can be described by the term 'aestheticity' apart from the subjective experience one would have. Therefore, there is a need to understand the special nature of this significance, in the most objective way:

The creative products possess aesthetic qualities such as *symmetry* and *proportion* that make these creations appealing. The aesthetic uniqueness of this type, though well-recognized, is less explored, an ideal example where the aesthetic qualities are conspicuously present is that of Einstein's theory of relativity since it is considered to be the most beautiful theory ever developed. Besides the application and explanatory powers of this theory, its uniqueness lies in the aesthetic dimension of the theory.

The famous equation from Einstein's theory of relativity :  $e = mc^2$ , is a unique formulation not only because it gives correct results but because of its compactness and parsimonious conceptual form. The equation consists of three concepts : energy, mass and velocity of light of which the last one is a constant. Such a compact equation unravels the greatest mystery of the universe. It is not only a parsimonious formulation, it brings together previously unrelated concepts. The aesthetic quality of the theory of relativity lies in this virtue. The theory of relativity is full of such marvels as S. Chandrasekhar once wrote :

That the general theory of relativity has some strangeness in proportion, in the Baconian sense, is manifest. It consists primarily in relating, in juxtaposition, two fundamental concepts which had, till then, been considered as entirely independent : the concepts of space and time, on the one hand and the concepts of matter and motion, on the other hand'.<sup>4</sup>

It may be asserted that the aestheticity of creative ideas such as the theory of relativity lies in its conformity with the aesthetic factors such as *simplicity*, *proportion*, *elegance* etc. In general, the scientific creations are considered significant because they are functionally significant while artistic creations are called significant because mostly they adhere to the aesthetic criteria. All the great artistic creations such as Monalisa, Taj Mahal, Guernica possess significance due to their adherence to aesthetic criteria. It is instructive to note that the *functional significance* of creative products lies in the principles such as *significance*, *parsimony*, *elegance*; and *aesthetic significance* depends on principles such as *proportion*, *symmetry* and *balance* etc. An aesthetic creation

can be governed by functionally important principles in addition to their being governed by aesthetically important principles. In the field of arts these principles are rigorously adhered to. However, in the field of science only, a select few such as Einstein, Dirac and Weinberg have realized the importance of these principles. In brief, it may be said that the significance of a creative idea or a product depends upon the functional and aesthetic factors, and these factors can be understood in terms of the principles such as simplicity, parsimony, balance, proportion, symmetry and the like.

Thus, novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity can be defined and treated as the criteria of creativity. However, to understand their exact nature, in view of their application, it is necessary to know the proper framework within which these can become operational. In what follows, we shall discuss collective-cognition which serves as the framework in question.

### 3. The Collective-Cognition :

While deciding about the creativeness of a product or imparting a judgement upon a product in terms of novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity scholars have implicit framework at the back of their minds. Occasionally, this framework happens to be highly subjective. Such cases of subjective framework would hinder the objective evaluation of a creative idea or a product. Apart from the subjective factors of the framework, there exist certain other factors of this framework which are mainly responsible for making an objective judgement about the product. This paper concentrates on the discussion of the objective factors of the framework. Important virtue of these factors is that these help in evaluating a product in a *definite* way. To designate these factors in the framework aptly, a new phrase 'collective-cognition' may be introduced.

By 'collective-cognition' we refer to that aspect of shared knowledge which is used as the background in assessing, recognizing and evaluating a creative product. There is a growing feeling among historians and philosophers of science that although a creative product is generated by an individual its evaluation, justification and recognition is a lengthy process of hard work and negotiation within a set of complex social network. Influential social groups

have to value an idea if it is to be recognized, preserved and communicated<sup>5</sup>. These groups should be capable of cognizing novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity of the product in question. Without being adversely influenced by individuals and subjective opinions, these groups based on certain objective criteria, forms an opinion collectively. The phenomenon is quite complex to be described fully here since it involves wide range of factors. This judgement involves a consideration of large number of interacting complex informal systems such as societies with their cultures and long standing traditions. The people who have the decisive role to play on the matter are often situated within such a complex web of factors. This informal (and some times formal) collectivity has to evaluate various aspects of the product before taking a decision. These decisions are taken by the collectivity on the basis of certain factors which are here termed as *collective-cognition*. This neologism may need some explanation.

The collective-cognition is thus made up of the quanta of information possessed by the collectivity composed of the social group mentioned above. It includes intelligentsia, experts and their knowledge along with the knowledge in the form of books, encyclopedias, myths, folklore, traditions and history. This collective cognition appears to be partially unstructured owing to diverse knowledge. However, at the operational level, there emerges an order in the form of a consensus view on every controversial creative piece. Certain views are finally consolidated and onwards take a stable form. For instance, scientific methodology and the principles of design are well-established in the society over a period of time. When a creative idea is generated by a person, it is evaluated against collective-cognition and eventually accepted or rejected. However, this process of evaluation is a multi-staged process and it involves very many factors which cannot be fully covered here. However, the relevant dynamics of evaluation is briefly presented in the following section.

#### 4. Evaluation of Creative product

Within the framework of collective-cognition the earlier defined criteria of *novelty*, *originality*, *functionality* and *aestheticity* can be applied to evaluate a creative product. Here the term 'criterion' is used in the Wittgenstein sense i.e., as 'defining criterion'.<sup>6</sup> According to this view, 'X is a criterion of Y' means that it is true in virtue of a definition, convention, or a rule of language

that if  $X$  then  $Y$ . Thus the presence of the criterion is linked to the thing of which the criterion is a criterion *via* a convention, definition, or rule of language. In this sense criteria can be used to determine that something is the case or they can be used to identify something or used in making of judgments.; A criterion is a sufficient condition and not a necessary condition.

Speaking of games, Wittgenstein opines that there is no one feature that is present in all the games. Card games have some features common with board games, and board games have some features common with ball games and so on. Thus, a set of conditions forms a sufficient condition to call an activity a game, but this set does not remain the same for other games. Thus, it is interesting to note that a criterion is a sufficient condition, but not a necessary condition since it need not have to be invariably satisfied for the use of the term in question.

In the light of this view, the terms novelty, originality, functionality and aestheticity are considered as characterizing or defining criteria of creativity and can be used for evaluating a creative product, or making judgement about a creative product. These criteria are the principles or conventions evolved in the collective-cognition where the collective-cognition acts as a background as well as a foundation of these criteria to distinguish between a normal product and a creative product. These criteria being the sufficient conditions of creativity and not being the necessary conditions of certivity, the presence or absence of any particular criterion does not drastically affect the judgement about the creativeness of a product. If any one or more of these criteria are satisfied then the product sufficiently qualifies itself to be classified as a creative product.

From this discussion two senses of creativity emerge : the *weaker* sense of creativity and the *stronger* sense of creativity. That is the creativeness of a product may be understood in a *weaker sense* if it fails to satisfy all the criteria of creativity. On the other hand, the product may be termed as creative in the *stronger sense* if all the criteria are satisfied by the product. Therefore, the first instances of newly generated ideas or products may be termed as creative in the weaker sense since they possess the qualities of novelty and originality, though they may not possess the qualities of functionality and aestheticity. Similarly, in some cases only one of these criteria is applicable, for instance, a discovery of a new planet is called as instance of creativity because of the element of



novelty, though its originality cannot be traced. All the instances of accidental and surreptitious discovery are creative in the weaker sense because they possess the lone element of novelty. However, the theoretical formulations related to these findings having novelty also possess the quality of originality in terms of source-specificity and in addition to that if these formulations possess functionality and aestheticity then in that case they become creative in the stronger sense. For instance, the theory of relativity is a creatoin in a stronger sense since it adheres to all the four criteria. All the first instances of inventions and innovations normally possess the qualities of novelty and originality and therefore, these should be considered as created in the weaker sense. However, if they also conform to functionality and aestheticity then these become creative in a stronger sense.

No doubt, the process of evaluation is highly complex. As noted earlier, a product is accepted as creative product if it possesses the qualities of originality, novelty, functionality and aestheticity. The collective-cognition has a crucial role to play in deciding upon the novelty of a product as the novelty of a product is judged in terms of contrasting fractures of the product against the existing and past products of the same kind. For this, the repertoire of the existing products has to be referred to, scanned through and various features of the earlier products have to be compared with. Similarly, the originality of the product, as already discussed, is tested in terms of its historical primacy over other products of the same kind and its source- specificity. In this activity of testing, the collective-cognition and specially the stored or frozen cognition plays a decisive role. In the case of checking whether the product is original with regard to its source-specificity, the collective-cognition provides relevant information regarding the relationship between the product and its source in an unambiguous manner, functionality and aestheticity of product is judged on the basis of certain principles as already discussed which are established in the collective-cognition. Especially the domain- specific interpretations of these principles functional as well as aesthetic, are essential in this regard. For instance, Picasso's cubist paintings were radically different from the prevalent styles of his generation. Initially, critics were not even prepared to consider them as work of art. However, at such crucial juncture, specialized application of these principles in the domain of visual arts rescued them. Although, his paintings possessed the non-conventional elements in terms of novelty and originality, they could qualify

as works of art because they were in conformity with the principles of visual composition, balance, proportion and so on. Therefore, it is evident that the collective cognition has definite role to play in evaluative activity.

This scheme of evaluation of creations can be extended to artificial creations as well. Human creations can be evaluated with the help of the above framework since their background as well as their source is traceable in an unambiguous manner in most of the cases. However, it may pose some difficulty in the evaluation of artificial creations. AI (Artificial Intelligence) researchers are engaged in developing computer programs that claim to exhibit creativity. The Programs like BACON<sup>7</sup> and AM<sup>8</sup> have re-discovered *Boyle's Law* and *Set Theory* respectively, but if their output is compared with the human discoveries in respective fields, then it appears no more novel or original. It stands as mere re-discovery having no historical significance. However, in the case of the programs like AARON,<sup>9</sup> which generates artistic drawings; its output does possess novelty and originality even though these are compared with human creations and evaluated against the collective-cognition. Therefore, it may be firmly asserted that with respect to the above-mentioned framework of collective-cognition; even computer output can be called creative in the weaker as well as in the stronger sense.

### NOTES

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## DISCUSSION

### PHILOSOPHY AS THE PERCEPTION OF TRUTH - A COMMENT ON "EPISTEMOLOGY OF J. KRISHNAMURTI"

G. VEDAPARAYANA

This paper refers to Arundhati Sardesai's "Epistemology of J. Krishnamurti" published in this Journal (*Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 and 4 July - October, 1996.) Sardesai's paper is a good attempt at introducing a sporadic thinker like Krishnamurti to the academic community. It certainly generates a scholarly interest in Krishnamurti's philosophy. It is exhaustive as well as critical. At the same time the paper is provocative in that it gives rise to doubts about some fundamental philosophical issues like philosophy, epistemology, knowledge, truth, reality, mysticism, insight, method and eclecticism relating to J. Krishnamurti. The author has in my opinion, misconstrued Krishnamurti's comprehension of these issues. Her views on them are not only incomplete but also sometimes misleading. In this paper I propose to clarify what Krishnamurti has to say about them.

The author has begun the article by raising the issue "whether Krishnamurti was at all a philosopher or not" (p. 455). She has pointed out that there are two schools viewing the issue in different ways. One school has held that Krishnamurti (K, henceforth) is not a philosopher in the correct sense of the term, since he does not lay claim to either system building or propounding a particular doctrine. The other school has viewed K as a philosopher who has developed a well rounded philosophy encompassing a metaphysics, an epistemology, a pedagogy and an ethics (p. 455). But the author has not done well in explaining as to which of the two views is correct and why. In fact, the

former school gives a right estimate of K as a philosopher because he categorically rejected system building and propounding doctrines. He was not a philosopher of ideas, concepts and ideals. He was averse to a theoretical speculation. To him Truth is beyond speculative theories or doctrines. Truth cannot be comprehended through a system. It overflows the straight jacket of the conceptual frameworks conceived by the intellect or thought. It is therefore wrong to hold, as held by the latter school, that K developed a well-rounded philosophy comprising metaphysics, an epistemology etc. The author has not stated K's philosophy in precise terms. She has not clarified the exact sense in which K uses the term "philosophy". To K, philosophy means love or Truth or Life. Love means the direct perception. Truth is the nothingness of the mind. It is what is happening 'now', this moment. Philosophy is the art of being nothing and living life directly. It is taking the very first step in the right direction of living in the 'present'. K says, "This is not a philosophy, a series of theories. It is exactly what the word philosophy means - the love of truth, the love of life. It is not something you go to the university to learn. We are learning the art of living in our daily life".<sup>1</sup> Although K uses the term "philosophy" in its etymological sense, his philosophy does not conform to the Western conception of philosophy. In Western philosophy, love is a constant quest. Wisdom is knowledge which is never final. Philosophy is a pursuit after a more and more reasonable knowledge. It involves a series of theories about conceptual problems. It stands for a free intellectual life, the mind's capacity for openness and infinite correction. Western philosophy, like science, is a quest for truth and not its conquest. It is truth-seeking and not its attainment. "It is", as T. M. Jones puts it, "the eternal search for truth, a search which inevitably fails and yet is never defeated; which continually eludes us, but which always guides us".<sup>2</sup> There is no place for absolute Truth in Western philosophy. Its answers to the seminal questions of life are not definite. As Russell puts it, "Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of definite answers to its questions, since no definite answer can as a rule be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves".<sup>3</sup> Thus Western philosophy emphasizes knowledge based on intellect. It seeks to sharpen reason or thought which is incomplete. The Western mind with its Greek background has never realised the significance of going beyond the intellect by understanding its limitations. K holds that Truth in the

sense of the ending of knowledge is alien to Western philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

To K, philosophy is not the knowledge but the 'perception' of Truth in the sense of 'being' it. It is the actual realization of Truth which is beyond thought. A true philosopher is not a knower of Truth but Truth itself. "He may think certain things which would be reality, but he 'is' truth".<sup>5</sup> In this sense K's philosophy is very much akin to Indian *darśana* which means the direct perception or seeing of the ultimate Truth. *Darśana*, as Radhakrishnan defines, "is the insight of the real revealed to the *soul sense*"<sup>6</sup> (italics mine). But, at the same time, K's philosophy cannot be called a *darśana* since *darśana* also means a philosophical system comprising a logic, an epistemology etc. *Darśana* here refers not only to the soteriological systems like the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the Vedānta, Buddhism and Jainism but also to the predominantly logical and epistemological system like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. It refers even to the anti-soteriological and materialistic school like the Carvaka. *Darśana* in this secondary sense stands for the hermeneutic of the philosophical texts. It is the interpretation of the elastic 'tradition' for new meaning. *Darśanas* are the intellectual approaches to life. They give more importance to building systems around Truth than to its direct perception. They are concerned more with the consistency of their ideas than with the actual man and the society. K decries all such theoretical philosophies, Western as well as Eastern. He says, "These philosophies have enslaved man. They have invented what society should be and sacrificed man to their concepts; the ideas of the so-called thinkers have dehumanized man".<sup>7</sup>

K's teachings - talks and writings - are not a theory or a system about the Truth. They are not a conceptual play around the Truth. They are the embodiment, the quintessence of the mind which is Truth itself. They are the verbalization of the perceptions of the mind which is absolutely 'nothing' or 'empty'. The teachings are the spontaneous and direct commentaries on life. Communication of Truth is their sole purpose. To communicate Truth is to make it 'common', to help others to perceive it. K maintains that a complete and an undivided listening or studying of his speeches or writings brings about an instantaneous and radical change in the mind. A choiceless approach without resistance, justification, condemnation, is absolutely essential for understanding his teachings. They have the energy to liberate man if they are listened to without

the operation of thought, the source of words, concepts, symbols and systems.

The author has committed a category mistake in dubbing K an epistemologist. She has made a misleading picture of K's philosophy by reading epistemology into it. She writes, "In the field of epistemology, J. Krishnamurti has taken an approach which is novel and fresh. Possessed of a very keen desire to search for Truth and Freedom, and having experimented with various traditional methods to know Truth, he rejects them all" (p. 456). In this, the author has given an impression that K is concerned with the search for an epistemological truth. In fact, the Truth that K is concerned with is not the truth with which the epistemologists - the idealists, the pragmatists, the realists and the positivists - are concerned. The epistemological truth belongs to beliefs, ideas or propositions. The idealists hold that a judgment is true if its predicate coheres with its subject and false otherwise. The judgment 'milk is white' is true whereas 'milk is black' is false. The one creates harmony in thought while the other discord. A judgement is true if it is coherent in a system and more true if it is so in a wider system. No judgement is absolutely true or false since a thing is internally related with other things.<sup>8</sup> For pragmatists, an idea is true if its consequences are serviceable or have the utility of effecting a concrete difference in one's life. A belief in God or the judgement that 'God exists' is true if it is expedient regardless of God's actual existence.<sup>9</sup> Truth, according to the realists, is the correspondence between a belief and a fact. Russell says, "A belief is true when it has an appropriate relation to one or more facts and is false when it does not have such a relation".<sup>10</sup> The proposition 'Today is Sunday' is true when one believes or states it on a Sunday and false on other days. Truth is also the correspondence between visual memory and the perception that verifies it. The memory 'A is to the left of B' is true if in actual perception A is left to B and false otherwise.<sup>11</sup> The realists like the Nyayayikas treat truth or valid knowledge (*pramā*) as the correspondence of an idea with its object. Truth is the apprehension of an object as it is - rope as rope.<sup>12</sup> To the positivist, a proposition is true only when it is verifiable in experience, actual or possible. A statement which has a factual content alone is true.<sup>13</sup>

The epistemological truth as considered above is empirical and circumstantial. It is one of knowledge and not of Wisdom or Truth. It belongs to the world of the 'known' or the phenomena. It is always of something. It is relative and incomplete, for knowledge is incomplete and relative to ignorance.



It is known by the means of sense perception, inference, comparison, and testimony involving reason or thought. Whereas the Truth with which K is concerned is totally outside the field of epistemology. It is the unknown', the 'nothing'. It is neither something nor of something. In Truth there is nothing to know. The 'nothingness' of Truth is not to be mistaken for something. K says, "All that I can say, there is 'nothing', which means there is not a thing ... not a single movement of thought".<sup>14</sup> The Truth that K realized and urged others to realize is transcendental and absolute. It is not relative to error or ignorance. It is not conceptual or intellectual in character. Accumulation of knowledge is not its concern. Its purpose is not the recognition and naming of the phenomena. It is not even similar to the scientific truth of the world of matter, the atom. It is not concerned with the materialistic advancement of life. Its purpose is of higher order i.e., the ending of the fundamental problem of the sorrow of man. It resolves the crises of the world - poverty, pollution, exploitation, war - by resolving the crisis in consciousness. So also, the methods which K rejects are not the epistemological ones like rationalism of Descartes et al, empiricism of Locke et al and transcendentalism of Kant. It is not the methods of coherence, pragmatism, correspondence and verification that K denounces. It is not sense perception, inference etc., that he decries. Indeed, the methods that he attacks are the intellectual analyses, the psychoanalytic techniques, the ritualistic and the meditative practices (*sādhana*s) which are prescribed as the means of bringing about psychological and spiritual changes. He rejected them all since they involve time. Truth is timeless. It is a contradiction to comprehend it through time.

Again the author says, "The epistemological position of K rests upon his denial of intellect and thought as the means to knowledge of the Real" (p. 461). No doubt, K holds that intellect can never realize the Truth. But to call this position of K as epistemological is a mistake. In denying intellect as a means of realizing Truth, K is not disputing any epistemological position. He is not vying with the epistemologists either. He is not trying to establish his own epistemological method of knowing his own brand of epistemological truth. Instead, K's only concern is to discover the Truth which transcends knowledge through the Insight. K's understanding of Truth and Insight are non-epistemological through and through. They are beyond the knower and the known dichotomy. Therefore seeing epistemology in K's philosophy is to see it out of context. Trying to understand K within an epistemological framework is

to misunderstand him. K's philosophy is philosophy of life or Truth which is non-conceptual and wholistic. It cannot be compartmentalized as an epistemology, a metaphysics etc. It enables us to perceive Truth directly if our approach to it is undivided and non-conceptual. Approach to K's philosophy is not different from the approach to Truth. Understanding K's philosophy is understanding Truth itself. There is hardly any difference between K's philosophy and the Truth it embodies.

The author's views on K's understanding of knowledge are not clear cut but conflicting and confusing. She writes, "K defines knowledge as an undivided whole in flowing movement, an ongoing process, an inseparable part of our overall reality. K holds that no knowledge which is mental or intellectual can take us to Reality, as it is based on the dualism of knower and the known" (p. 456). It is utterly baseless to say that K defines knowledge as an undivided whole. He never meant that there is non-mental knowledge which can take us to Reality. To K, no knowledge is wholistic and non-intellectual. All knowledge, including the knowledge of transcendental Truth, is mental and divided. K refuses to equate knowledge, however sacred it may be, with Truth which alone is wholistic and beyond intellect. Truth is a state of non-knowing. Knowledge and Truth are exclusive. One is when the other is not. K says "Truth and knowledge do not go together",<sup>15</sup> The author adds to confusion by juxtaposing knowledge and Duration. By treating knowledge and Duration as alternatives to each other she baffles the reader. She says, "...the message of Truth e.g., that of knowledge or Duration" (p.457). One is at a loss as to what the author means by Duration. Probably, here she has in mind Bergson's notion of Duration. It appears that she is equating it with K's notion of Truth which she mistakenly treats as knowledge. But K's Truth is far from Bergson's Duration. Duration (*durée*) or genuine time, according to Bergson, is the intense experience of the basic Reality, the vital force (*élan vital*) of the existence. It belongs to the states of consciousness like deep melancholy or violent love which reveal our basic nature. Duration, unlike K's notion of Truth, involves an endless movement of the past into the future. There is in it the preservation and not the ending of the past. As Bergson puts it, "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation",<sup>16</sup> Whereas Truth, according

to K, is the total denudation of the past. It is the 'now', the movement of timeless energy in emptiness. K says, "In that emptiness there is a movement of timeless energy",<sup>17</sup>

The terms "Truth" and "reality" have distinct meanings in K's philosophy. But the author has used them synonymously. She writes, "All knowledge, that we receive from sense-experience... incapable of revealing the Truth or Reality..." (p. 457). It is a fact that K used these terms interchangeably in his early writings. But later, he has made a fundamental distinction between the two. Reality according to K, is thought. Thought is a material process in the sense that it is a repetition of the past which is dead. It is dependent on an object or an idea. Independent thought is a contradiction in terms. Reality is all that which thought abstracts. It comprises the factual and well-reasoned knowledge. It includes the irrational and fictitious knowledge as well. Reality, as K observes, is "anything that thought thinks about, whether unreasonably or reasonably... It may be distorted or reasoned clearly, it is still a reality. That reality, I say, has nothing to do with truth"<sup>18</sup>. Truth is beyond and totally different from reality. It is the mind which is free from thought and knowledge. As it has already been mentioned Truth is the emptiness of the mind. Truth is when the reality is not. The relation between them is one-sided. That is, reality cannot touch Truth. But Truth can have contact with reality. It can keep reality within its limits and prevent it from going berserk. Truth, as K says, "operates in the field of reality with intelligence"<sup>19</sup>. Thus Truth and reality are the key terms in K's philosophy. One cannot be mistaken for the other. No doubt K changed words and phrases in the course of the seventy years of his teaching. At times he has also made contradictory statements. But the change and contradiction are not due to lack of understanding but due to the difficulty in expressing the inexpressible. Truth is elusive and paradoxical. So K explained it in different ways, at times bordering on contradiction. He continually chose better words to communicate what he actually realized. K said, "The more I 'think' of what I have realized, the clearer I can put it and help to build a bridge but that takes time and continual change of phrases, so as to give true meaning"<sup>20</sup>. It is therefore necessary to study K's teachings as a whole. A piecemeal approach to K lands us in confusion.

The author seems to be hasty in concluding that K's views on Truth echo

the mysticism of the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism (p. 462). Here she is oblivious of the fact that K has categorically refused to call 'his' Truth mystical. To him, Truth is not abstract and other-worldly. Neither is it mysterious nor complicated. K said, "It is not some mystic, occult stuff but it is simple"<sup>21</sup>. Its understanding is not the privilege of a few. It does not require accumulation of knowledge or practice of a path exclusive of daily life. Truth is life itself. It is (in) the immediate present. It can be perceived instantaneously. Truth may appear to be mysterious to the mind which is burdened with knowledge. But it ceases to be so the moment the mind drops knowledge and perceives Truth actually. K contends that Truth would be worthless if it were to be mystical and accessible only to a few. So reducing K's philosophy to mysticism is ignoring its simplicity, universality and social relevance. Of course, it is necessary to distinguish between the sacred and profane types of mysticism before identifying a thinker to be a mystic.

The author's views on K's understanding of Insight are questionable. To K, insight is wholistic perception beyond intellect. It is the ending of thought and experience which is past. But the author has wrongly interpreted it as "the expansion or deepening of intellect or thought... the accumulation of experience" (p. 463). The author has also tried to equate K's notion of Insight with that of Bergson. No doubt the Western thinkers have regarded intuition (Schopenhauer and Bergson), insight or instinct (Bradley) as the methods of revealing the Reality. But the Insight as we find in K cannot be said to be the same as the intuition, insight or instinct of the western thinkers. The Truth it entails is entirely different from the Reality which the Western intuition implies. The profound implications the former has for actual life are not found in the latter. The sense of freedom, responsibility, intelligence and love associated with the former are absent in the latter. K holds that insight brings about a change in the brain-cells themselves. He says, "There is this perception of insight and the brain-cells themselves change"<sup>22</sup>. K's notion of insight may be likened to the Mādhyamika's insight (*prajñā*) which entails the essencelessness, the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or the truth (*tattva*) of all existence. To both insight is beyond the structure of thought and word and devoid of the world of plurality (*prapañca śūnya*). To K perception or insight of Truth is itself philosophy. Similarly, to the Mādhyamika like Nāgārjuna, insight which is beyond thought (*Prajñā pāramitā*) is itself philosophy par excellence.<sup>23</sup>

In the following remarks the author raises an objection against K which cannot be sustained. "He (K) does not recognise that the Truth... is grasped by different people in different ways... which may not be totally true but is not untrue either" (p. 465). It is true that K denies that the Truth is grasped by different people in different ways. He denies because Truth cannot be different to different people. It does not vary according to space and time. Truth is impersonal. It cannot have different paths invented by our idiosyncrasies. K therefore repudiates all paths which involve time and thought. K said, "Truth is a pathless land. Man cannot come to it through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique... not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection"<sup>24</sup>. Truth is one. The way to it must also be one. Since the Truth is timeless, the way to it must equally be timeless. To K, Insight is the only way, the only true way to Truth. Like Truth insight alone is timeless and absolute. Insight is not a path, for it is not the product of time. Everyone has to realize the Truth through Insight only. There is no other way to it. The truths brought about by other ways are half-truths. The half-truths may not be totally untrue. But they are surely not the Truth which K aims at. As it has been mentioned earlier, K is not concerned with the relative and partial truth. So the author's accusation that K does not recognize the plurality of truths and paths thereof is not only unjustified but also misplaced.

The author has leveled yet another unfounded charge against K in the following observation : "he (K) has negated the conditioned human existence without making any allowance for the fact that conditioned human existence has a reality and value, although limited..." (p. 465). K never dismissed the reality and value of the conditioned part of human mind and existence. To K, factual knowledge constitutes the conditioned part of the mind. Though limited he admits of its importance insofar as our biological life is concerned. He acknowledges the conditioning of the mind by the well-reasoned and fictitious knowledge which is necessary for our day-do-day living. What K rejects is the psychological conditioning of the mind by the irrational and fictitious knowledge. In saying that the conditioned reality, viz., thought must end for the Truth to be, K did not include "such thought or memory as was necessary for every day living"<sup>25</sup>.

The author's charge that K is an eclectic and that he has borrowed ideas from others is untenable. The author says, "he (K) is an eclectic" (p. 456). "From Sankara, he (K) takes the concept of non-dual Reality, from Buddhism he borrows the idea of non-soul theory and theory of momentariness"; (p. 465). Eclecticism is a conglomeration of ideas. An eclectic adopts ideas from others and has hardly anything new to say. But K is out and out an original and a free thinker. He had no philosophical background. He renounced the theosophical tradition that groomed him. He did not have philosophical predecessors. Yet he offered an entirely new and fresh teaching. His teaching is not the result of the study of books but the offspring of his observation of what was happening 'within' and 'without'. It is the outcome of his actual transformation, direct perception of Truth. Referring to his teaching, K said "It is like revelation. It happens all the time when I am talking".<sup>26</sup> There was absolutely no need for him to study books and borrow ideas. It is impossible for a realised mind to be eclectic. The similarity, if any, between K's and other philosophies is accidental. The echo is incidental and not intended. K abhors borrowing, for Truth cannot be borrowed. Borrowing means repetition. Truth when repeated becomes falsity. What is repeated is an idea and not Truth. An idea about Truth is not Truth. An idea may be borrowed and repeated whereas Truth has to be realized from moment to moment. As one who has realized Truth, K is totally an independent thinker. He is not an eclectic but an iconoclast in the profound sense. He sets aside all ideas and symbols, the barriers to Truth. His philosophy, like Truth, is beyond all labels and identification. As the author herself has pointed out, K's philosophy surpasses all systems of philosophy, including the Vedānta with which he is often identified. K held that his philosophy goes beyond the Vedānta for the Vedāntins have mistaken the accumulation of knowledge for the realization of Truth. Like the scientists, they have regarded knowledge as the solution of sorrow.<sup>27</sup>

To conclude, Arundhati Sardesai has to be congratulated for a fairly comprehensive attempt at presenting a complex thinker like K. But her paper would have been more intelligible and enlightening had she taken care to avoid the statements I have tried to clarify. The perceptive and fresh thinkers like K have to be dealt with great concern. K's philosophy is still pristime. It has not yet been adulterated. One has to be diligent in understanding it and hesitant in

commenting on it. One should not only be sceptical and critical but also be insightful in estimating K and his philosophy. One should take heed of K's last wish, "Let the teaching not be corrupt".

### NOTES

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**OBITUARY**


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**PROF. LEWIS WHITE BECK**

We deeply mourn the death of Prof. Lewis White Beck, Burbank Professor Emeritus of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy University of Rochester, which occurred in Rochester (N. Y.), USA on 7th June, 1997. He was 83. To everyone who came in contact with him, he was friend, philosopher and guide. He combined in him rare wit and wisdom and some of the finest qualities of human character.

Born in Griffin, (Ga) on 26th September, 1913, Prof. Beck received his bachelor's degree from Emroy University in 1934, his master's and doctoral degrees from Duke University in 1935 and 1937 respectively. Before he joined Philosophy Department of Rochester University in 1949, he was a Fellow at the University of Berlin (1937-38), an Instructor at Emroy University (1938-41), Assisant Professor at the University of Delaware (1941-46) and Professor at Lehigh University (1946-49). Professor Beck was appointed Burbank Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy in 1962. He guided the activities of the Department for over 30 years and even after retirement in 1979, he continued to work in the Department till he breathed his last. It was under his guidance that the University of Rochester's doctoral programme gained international recognition. He was chairman of the Department from 1949 to 1966.

He was a renowned scholar of Immanuel Kant's Philosophy. His contributions are varied; views, lucidly expressed and argued out succinctly and carefully. His writings are historically informative and hermeneutically sensitive. Analytic minded he was, but also sharply critical of the recent analytical movements in philosophy. Amongst his publications, we mention *Philosophic Inquiry* (1952, and 1968 revised), *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (1960), *Studies in the Philosophy of Kant* (1963), *Six Sectacular Philosophers* (1966), *Early German Philosophy* (1969), *The Actor and the Spectator* (1975), *Essays in Kant and Hume* (1978). He has to his credit several

articles published in international journals. The translations made of Kant's *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, with his very scholarly and erudite introduction are widely used. He also translated and published around 1950, Kant's *Perpetual Peace*.

Naturally because of his contributions as a scholar and a dedicated teacher, Prof. Beck was recipient of several honours and awards. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1957-58, Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies in 1964-65 and also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Science (1970-78). He was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Academy last mentioned. Professor Beck served on the Council of National Endowment for the Humanities in the years 1970-75. In 1971, he was President of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. He also served as the Chairman of the APA's Board of officers from 1974 to 1977.

In him, the Philosophic Community in the world has lost a great scholar and thinker, a great academician and teacher.

### **PROF. R. SUNDARA RAJAN**

We mourn very deeply the sad and unexpected demise of our erstwhile colleague Prof. R. Sundara Rajan, which occurred on 24th of June, 1997 at Chennai. Born in November 1935 he was educated at University of Madras, Chennai, from where he got his M. A. (Phil and Econ), M. Lit. and Ph. D. Thereafter he worked as a Lecturer in Philosophy in Assam and a few other States. He joined the Philosophy Department, University of Pune as a Reader in 1974. Later he became Professor and Head of the Department for a number of years. It was under his guidance that the doctoral programme in the Philosophy Department, University of Pune got reputation and academic expansion. His academic career also flourished in the department over the last two decades and more. He retired from the Department in 1994. Thereafter he worked as a senior Research fellow in the Institute of Advanced Studies in Shimla.

His early interests in Philosophy of Science and Wittgenstein slowly but definitely were shifted towards Philosophy of Kant, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics. Many of us here in the department have witnessed Prof. Sundara Rajan's creative explorations in these unexplored terrains of intellectual enquiries. During these long years, his presence in the department proved to be helpful to a number of research scholars who were benefitted by his able guidance. Prof. Sundara Rajan's interests in the continental philosophies have widened the thrust areas of this department.

It is most unfortunate that Prof. Sundara Rajan expired at a time when he had become free from all the formal commitments and when he was going to concentrate all his time and energies on the themes of his choice. With already tremendous work to his credit, he would have at this stage, achieved further heights of creativity. Among the several works that he wrote, we mention *Structure and Change in Philosophy (1973)*, *Innovative Competence and Social Change (1986)*, *Towards the Critique of Cultural Reason (1987)*, *Studies in Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (1991)*, *The Primacy of the Political (1991)*, and *Transformations of Transcendental Philosophy (1994)*.

In Prof. Sundara Rajan not only the Philosophy Department of University of Pune but the entire Philosophical community of India has lost a scholar of eminence.

### **PROF. RAM CHANDRA PANDEYA**

We deeply mourn the sad demise of Prof. Ram Chandra Pandeya, which occurred recently. Born in July 1932, he received his M. A., Ph. D. and Acharya degrees with distinction. He was Professor and Head of the Buddhist Studies in Delhi University from 1966 to 1973 and then Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department for 16 years. He guided a number of research scholars and published several papers in the journals of international repute. He was Visiting Professor at the East and West Center of Hawaii University in 1968. Earlier he was Visiting Professor at Saigaon University in 1968. Earlier he was Visiting Professor at Saigaon University, Vietnam in 1963, In recognition of his

erudite scholarship in Buddhistic Studies he was invited as Buddha Jayanti Lecturer by the Indian Philosophical Congress in 1968. He was General Secretary as also Chairman of the Indian Philosophical Congress for several years. He was invited to be the General President of the 71st session of the Indian Philosophical Congress that took place in last November at M. I. T. Pune. He could not enjoy that honour owing to illness, which seems to have proved fatal taking away from amongst us a very scholarly figure. He was 65 when he died.

Amongst the works that stand to his credit, we specially mention *The Problem of Meaning in Indian Philosophy* and *Panorama of Indian Philosophy*. He also edited *Yukti Deepikā* and *Madhyanta Vibhaga*.

\* \* \* \* \*

May these departed souls continue to inspire us in our mission.

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