

Chapter Twelve, The All is Inscrutable to Us. Of the Book, God is No-thing. The Apophatic Assertion. Copyright Rodger Ricketts Psy.D.,2020. All rights reserved. Protected by international copyright conventions. No part of this chapter may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever, or stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, without express permission of the Author-publisher, except in case of brief quotations with due acknowledgement. Published through CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

The All is Inscrutable to Us

The Apophatic tradition is associated with the perspective that humans cannot logically and analytically comprehend ‘divine’ Reality, or Actuality. Instead, the negative way emphasizes the unknowability of (God) in such a way that nothing can be said about Actuality because (X) is beyond the human capacity to rationally know and describe. As St Augustine wrote, *‘If you understand, it is not God.’* The ‘Mysterious’ is immanent, and also transcendent of the human realm of ordinary perception and language.

While it is not absolutely unknowable, we can never adequately analytically or rationally define it. In this chapter we will explore how scientific understanding of our human physical and cognitive limitations make the apophatic proposition of unknowability reasonable and sufficient.

The typical Cataphatic Anthropomorphism, or describing God by physical or emotional human characteristics, and egocentrism, or that humans are the center of God’s attention and favor, separate from the rest of nature, simply are fantasy and mythology.

There is the intrinsic impossibility of comprehending ‘Actuality’ through our sense and cognitive abilities. As highlighted before, what I call Actuality is the divine immanence and physical source of Being and it is from what we ultimately base our subjective and conjectural

interpretation of reality, which is the fruit of a conceptualization processes.

The Buddha and other apophatic leaders, understanding all the shortcomings inherent in conceptualization, did not try to describe Awakening or Emptiness and, in fact, they discourage speculation about the ontology of the external world. Their message is that we should rest in our pure awareness of our life here and now.

In this chapter we will be describing the All or Actuality with conceptualizations, with which we are already cautious, nevertheless, a Right View can be acquired through learning and fortified through reflection.

This fortified view inspires us to take up correct practice, with moral discipline, concentration, and wisdom. When our bhavana training matures, the eye of wisdom opens by itself, penetrating the truths and freeing the mind from confusion and ignorance. We develop confidence and finally comprehension of what the Apophatic teachers want us to understand- the interdependence, interconnectedness, and intuitive Unity of a living cosmology.

Construction of Reality: cognition and its limits

Since the Buddha and others emphasized the crucial role of the construction of our reality by our senses and cognitive apparatus, was he or were other mystics teaching a model of *metaphysical idealism* – a model in which no material things exist independently of the mind? The answer is, clearly, no; the Buddha's teachings can be better described as a form of transcendental idealism.

The crucial feature of transcendental idealism is its assertion that, while our world of experience is subjectively created and the 'real' lies beyond most of the ordinary range of our perception and

conceptualization of what can be experienced, we have our personal experience only because there is the transcendently real or the actual. According to researcher Henri Salles¹ “*Human thinking can only imagine reality, just as a portrait represents a person. And as a portrait is not ‘the person’ it represents, likewise any theory is not ‘the reality’ it describes. We then must humbly recognize that our minds’ coherence and logic do not necessarily match the consistency of reality. And that also entails that reality does ‘occur’ and that we cannot conclude it is an ‘illusion of our minds’ simply because we cannot make sense of it.*”

The Buddha taught that, through our psychophysical experiences, there is a vital and clear link between the sense organs and what the sense datum is; this is not an idealistic assertion. There is a substantial ‘environment’ with which we interact and to which we respond.

So, for the Buddha, there was no denial of the existence of an external world as there is in Idealism. Rather, the Buddha taught that our illusion is the ordinary, pre-enlightened, dualistic representational cognitive understanding and experience of our world. We process what we sense and then create subjective representations at the reflective phase of experience; we mistake our interpretations of the world for the world itself – we take our mental constructions to be the world. Ignorance is ‘seeing’ and believing the world as consisting of discrete, static entities, both internal and external and then creating ego syntonic mythologies.

Expressed in another way, Professor of Philosophy Thomas Metzinger, in his book, *The Ego Tunnel*⁴, uses a metaphor to explain that our conscious experience is like a tunnel and, indeed, modern neuroscience has demonstrated that the content of our conscious experience is not only an internal representation but also an

extremely selective way of representing information – hence the tunnel metaphor.

What we see, hear, feel, smell and taste, is only a very small sampling of what ‘exists’, because our sensory organs are necessarily limited and embedded as they evolved the organism’s survival. Our conscious model of reality is an inadequate projection of the inconceivably richer immanent and sustaining Actuality. Therefore, the ongoing process of conscious experience cannot be an actual image of ‘reality’. *“The universe is not only stranger than we suppose, but stranger than we can suppose.”* J.B.S. Haldane²