

# Transontology

A New Consciousness-Enhancement Technology  
Derived from Vedic Transcendental Ontology

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## Foreword

### *The Background of this Work*

The deep roots of Transontology are in the ancient esoteric Vedic scriptures *Vedānta-sūtra* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and their exegetical commentaries by the great spiritual masters of our lineage. The role and power of ontology is neither well-known or well understood. Philosophy and science are commonly considered to be the highest realms of thought; but both science and philosophy are firmly based on ontology. Without ontology they would have no context, and thus no meaning. But the connection of science and philosophy with ontology is not appreciated in the West, which is more interested in practical applications and effects than in deep causes or the possible existential development of consciousness.

The only thing that makes a work such as this possible is that at last Western thought has developed to the degree where highly abstract subjects such as ontology can be discussed conveniently at all. This is a very new development; until very recently there was no commonly agreed-upon formal scientific language for representing ontological relationships. An ontology is not fuzzy or imprecise, but a system of relationships of meaning as clear and scientific as, for example, Boolean or Aristotelian logic. The ontology underlying a sophisticated science, such as Quantum Mechanics, may have many layers and dimensions of meaning, both mathematically expressible and experimentally quantifiable.

Who would guess that such a sophisticated system of thought would be found in a 5,000-year-old esoteric scripture? My spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

“The human society, at the present moment, is not in the darkness of oblivion. It has made rapid progress in the field of material comforts of life, education and economic development of the entire world. But it suffers a pin-prick somewhere in the social body at large and therefore there is large scale quarrel even on less important issues. Therefore there is the want of the clue as to how they can become one in peace, friendship and prosperity by the common cause. **Srimad Bhagwatam [sic] will fill up this gap by ontological aspect of human education.** It is therefore a cultural presentation for re-spiritualisation of the entire human society.” [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Preface, original 1962 Delhi edition]

Our research into the origin of our esoteric lineage reveals an interest in ontological matters going all the way back to its founders, more than 5,000 years ago in what is now called 'India'. I am not going to belabor the reader with a formal exposition on the meaning and practice of ontology, a question that can be satisfied with a quick web search or a lifetime of intense study and apprenticeship, depending on the level of one's intelligence and interest. Our interest here is in the appropriateness of ontology as ideal material for bridging modern Western and traditional Vedic thought.

Ontology in essence is about the meaning of meaning, and there is no meaning to our existence until and unless our language and science develop a transcendental dimension. In Relativity Theory, Quantum Mechanics and allied fields we approach this level of thought because of Einstein's assertion that each conscious observer has an independent coordinate system. We may never know whether he intended this to imply the transcendental nature of consciousness, yet it certainly does; and we also know that Einstein read and appreciated *Bhagavad-gītā*, and perhaps other Vedic works that discuss the subject.

Quantum Mechanics took this independence of the observer and elevated it to the status of an absolute, the full scope and implications of which are still being debated. But it is worthy to note that the fundamentals of neither Relativity or Quantum Mechanics have been falsified by experimental data. So in these advanced fields of Western thought, we finally have a platform for discussing consciousness as a transcendental object with absolute properties; and this is also the view of *Vedānta-sūtra* and allied Vedic works.

While attempting to express the ontology of the Vedic literature in formal scientific terms, I saw an opportunity to build a bridge between the *Vedas* and Western sciences of consciousness in the OWL language, which allows the formal expression of an ontology in computer-readable symbols. I will not bore the reader with a detailed exposition of this symbolic language, but mention it because of its potential in communicating the subtleties of Vedic transcendental ontology to the mathematically-inclined reader.

My investigation of the Vedic ontology of consciousness using OWL (Ontological Web Language) also allowed me to reach certain esoteric conclusions that advanced my personal practical understanding and realization of my conscious spiritual nature and qualities that were very useful in my personal spiritual life and

advancement. So for those with the insatiable curiosity and spirit of adventure required to comprehend such deep mysteries, I leave this discussion with a reference to my website [transontology.org](http://transontology.org), where this background work has been recorded in detail.

The general reader will find much herein that is usually considered the realm of arcane specialists in religion, science, philosophy, psychology and the human-potential movement (or whatever it is called this year). Transontology is such a broad subject that it touches on all these subjects, and not superficially but to their common core. Indeed, the division of human knowledge into specialties and sub-specialties will tend to obscure the insights of a high-level subject like Transontology. Each specialty tends to treat its subject in isolation; yet in reality, no subject can have meaning without a basis in ontology—just as without consciousness, nothing else matters.

Ontology and consciousness are intimately related; in fact, it can be shown that it is very difficult to be conscious of an object that does not have a place in one's ontology. For example, encountering an unfamiliar or misdefined word while reading can produce symptoms of unconsciousness and even somatic reactions. This happens to people all the time, but because they are unfamiliar with ontology and related fields such as General Semantics, they are often unconscious even of their unconsciousness. Not understanding the cause-and-effect relationship between meaning and consciousness, they ignore the experience, or rationalize it away as something that does fit into their limited model of reality.

So ontology and related subjects are of great practical value and importance, because the quality and acuity of our consciousness are principal factors of the quality of our life experience. It is not impossible, knowing what we know now, to assert that a deep knowledge of transcendental ontology can lead to a general solution for all human problems by the development of a state of consciousness in which that solution is obvious. We would like to share this powerful insight with the reader, and hope that this little book can spark his curiosity and provoke a deeper exploration of the science of transcendental ontology and the mysteries of the Vedic Esoteric Teaching.

David Bruce Hughes (Gaurahari Dāsānudās Babāji),  
Santiago, Chile 12/12/2008

## **Preface**

### ***What is Transontology?***

Transontology is a new technology of consciousness enhancement based on the ancient Esoteric Teaching of the Sanskrit *Vedas*. Formerly it was carefully handed down for over 5,000 years as a secretive religious teaching. Transontology demystifies and open-sources this powerful technology so that interested professionals can develop new problem-solving applications in their areas of interest and expertise, and everyone can benefit from it.

Previous versions of the Vedic Esoteric Teaching available in the West have been cripple-ware: deliberately distorted and incomplete copies of the original. The original source code and more powerful methods have been kept secret by esoteric traditions. Transontology provides the original, complete source code and an integrated development environment to the public for the first time.

Like any software environment, Transontology has two aspects: as a tool for development of new applications, and as the applications themselves. The development tool is suited for psychologists and holistic health professionals, and the applications are for their clients to use and benefit from.

What does Transontology do? Like any programming language or software environment, it facilitates the development of applications. What kind of applications? That is an open question, limited only by the imagination and ingenuity of the developer. Mental therapy and problem-solving are only limited aspects of the possibilities inherent in Transontology. Increasing the human potential for happiness, creativity and productivity is an unlimited field. It will be interesting to see what kind of applications imaginative people create, once they have access to the tools to enhance their consciousness in effective and novel ways without the use of drugs or other artificial methods.

The traditional model for esoteric religious and spiritual technologies has been closed and proprietary. The most powerful technologies have been kept secret, limited to an initiated priesthood or inner circle. Development of new applications is prohibited or heavily controlled.

But recent trends in computer software and publishing have shown that the value of a technology increases dramatically when it is shared openly among a network of users or consumers. This increase of value multiplies exponentially when development tools and source code are also shared widely. Open-source distribution enables many contributors to enhance the value of the technology and develop new applications, often beyond the vision of the technology's originators.

Transontology applies the open-source distribution and development model to an ancient spiritual technology for the first time. By making the source code, development tools and applications available freely to everyone, we open the ancient esoteric teachings to a much wider audience and increase their value to society through community participation.

Everyone needs ontology. An ontology is simply a reality map: a conceptual guide to categories of being or reality. Ontologies usually take the form of a collection of data and stories that help us model life, the universe and everything. We all use ontologies to evaluate the meaning of our experience.

Ontology saves time and effort. By providing a collection of ready-made evaluations we can apply to common experiences, ontologies save us the trouble of reconsidering and reinterpreting the meaning of everything each time we encounter it. Without ontology we would have to evaluate each experience as if seeing it for the first time.

Familiar examples of ontologies are dictionaries and encyclopedias, religions and cultures, arts and sciences, languages and other systems of meaning and value, representation and communication. Everyone needs, has and uses ontologies, whether they realize it or not.

Ontologies are valuable in practical matters. If we are playing music, for example, we can think in the language or ontology of music. Thus, instead of having to reinvent the laws of harmony, scales and rhythm each time we play, we simply reference the ontology of the particular style of music we are playing. Using the ontology of the dictionary, grammar and syntax, we communicate in words without having to reinvent language each time.

Transcendental ontology or transontology is a special type of ontology that describes transcendental objects and phenomena. Are

you conscious? Then you are a transcendental entity, and as such, to understand yourself requires transontology.

Ordinary materialistic ontology and logic cannot account for transcendental phenomena such as consciousness, individuality, personality, desire, choice, intention, initiative, imagination, creativity, love and other human qualities we experience every day.

Transontology is rare because most ontologies are developed to support materialistic ways of looking at the world. Transontology helps us correctly evaluate the immanence of spirit, consciousness and the inner life of the soul.

Transontology is important because it is the only way of giving appropriate meaning to the transcendental aspects of human consciousness, experience and life.

To understand ourselves as spiritual beings, make tangible advancement in spiritual life and develop our consciousness, we need to learn transontology and apply it in our lives.

# Introduction

## *Quantum Physics and Vedic Metaphysics*

Consciousness is the primary issue in human life. Indeed, in the absence of consciousness, there *are* no other issues. Consciousness and its corollaries are fundamental to every thought, word and action. Yet how strange it is that no universally accepted, comprehensive theory of consciousness exists in Western science. The reason for this is clear: until recently, science intentionally restricted its domain to empirical investigations of the manifest objective world, while consciousness is intrinsically subjective and immanent.

However, without a practical theory of consciousness, science cannot adequately explain the world in which we live. Consciousness is the most basic experiential fact of existence. Without a theory of consciousness, Quantum Mechanics in particular has nowhere to turn but to mathematical theories of probability and chance to explain its observations. Einstein famously expressed his discomfort with this by saying, "God does not play dice with the Universe." Quantum Mechanics cannot predict the behavior of a quantum system until a macroscopic conscious entity interferes with it, decohering the indeterminate superposition of the quantum wave function into a definite classical result by the process of measurement and observation.

Clearly, Quantum Mechanics is missing something; just as clearly, what is missing is a workable theory of consciousness. The sometimes bizarre concepts and calculations of quantum theory all depend on the existence and actions of an observer. Any observer must be conscious, and therefore the consciousness of the observer, though often only tacitly assumed, is critical to the outcome of any quantum or relativity experiment. However, so far Quantum Mechanics still treats the observer's consciousness as a 'black box,' as if consciousness were proscribed from serious scientific inquiry. Whether this is a consequence of Western science's origins as a weapon against the intellectual repression of the Church, or because of materialistic empirical bias of theorists and researchers, is not the issue here. The intent of this work is to present and explore an extant theory of consciousness from an ancient tradition of vital, living importance to hundreds of millions of adherents and practitioners

all over the world, and to evaluate its potential value to modern science.

## **Translating *Vedānta***

With recent developments in Quantum Mechanics and the philosophy of science, the dialogue of Western scientific thought has advanced to the point where its cutting edge exposes many issues equivalent to those discussed in *Vedānta*. Now that this has occurred, the timeless principles of *Vedānta* can be expressed in the technical language of Quantum Mechanics and the philosophy of science, with little or no attenuation of meaning. Quantum physics and *Vedānta* address the same philosophical object: the inconceivable, immeasurable and immanent nature of Absolute Reality, of which the observable phenomenological cosmos is but a tiny subset. The two disciplines approach the subject from widely divergent points of view and use vastly different language to treat it. Nevertheless, the commonality of subject between Western science and *Vedānta* makes it possible to reconcile them without diminishing the importance or subtlety of either through the bridge of transcendental ontology. Transontology is the first attempt to translate the enduring wisdom of *Vedānta* into the new scientific language of Quantum Physics.

The insights of *Vedānta* philosophy and practice provide tremendous theoretical and practical advantages over a strictly Western scientific approach to the mysteries of life and existence. The keys to these advantages are that *Vedānta* recognizes the transcendental nature of consciousness, and the practical ability of directed consciousness to act, in effect, as co-creator of the universe to realize its full potential. Vedāntic consciousness theory provides a workable interface between the individual and the Universal Quantum Wave Function, which contains all possibilities of all possible universes. Through this interface, one can enter into a direct personal relationship with the Infinite and engage in an eternal, ecstatic dance of mutual reciprocation. Translating the recondite philosophy and practical methods of *Vedānta* into accessible Western scientific language opens profound possibilities of expanded consciousness to millions of scientific-minded people all over the world.

## What is *Vedānta*?

The term *Vedānta* is a compound of *veda* + *anta*. *Veda* can refer to the Vedas, the sacred *sanātana-dharma* tradition of Bhārata (India), or in a more general sense it simply means true knowledge. *Anta* means the conclusion or end. So *Vedānta* can be interpreted either literally, as the ultimate conclusion of the voluminous literature of the Vedic tradition; or more figuratively, as the ultimate knowledge, once knowing which, there is nothing further to be known. *Vedānta* appears herein in both meanings, but chiefly in the latter sense. In other words, *Vedānta* is the highest knowledge of the Vedic tradition, exactly as Quantum Mechanics and allied fields are the most advanced subjects in Western science.

While Westerners usually think of *Vedānta* as a religious work, its tone is actually closer to a terse mathematical or scientific analysis. *Vedānta* examines evidence, asserts hypotheses, quotes established authorities both pro and con its thesis, and closely reasons its way to a well-substantiated conclusion. That *Vedānta* is available in the West primarily through religious interpreters has perhaps skewed our evaluation of its relevance to scientific concerns.

Certainly, *Vedānta-sūtra* requires substantial exegesis to be intelligible to those uninitiated in its arcane mysteries. It is essentially the class lecture notes of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, a great teacher of Vedic philosophy about 50 centuries ago in Bhārata (India). Various schools of interpretation exist, muddying the clear original meaning of the work. This is quite unnecessary, since the author himself explains the meaning of *Vedānta-sūtra* elaborately in his epic work *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The following statement of *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, one of the oldest *Purāṇas* (Vedic histories), confirms that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*:

*artho 'yam brahma-sūtrānām*

*"Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the commentary on Vedānta-sūtra."*

In researching and preparing *Transontology*, we made extensive reference to the *Govinda-bhāṣya* of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a great author and interpreter of Vedic works, well-situated in the direct lineage of both *Vedānta-sūtra* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

## Differing interpretations

*Vedānta* is chiefly known in the West as a vehicle for the theory of impersonalism: that the Ultimate Reality is somehow devoid of all qualities, energies and activity, and that self-realization consists of merging one's existence with Brahman. In other words, self-realization equals self-annihilation. However, this interpretation is not supported by *Vedānta-sūtra* itself, or by its author in his commentary. Śrīla Vyāsadeva confirms the personal nature of the Absolute and His potencies in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.7.4-6] in the following words:

*bhakti-yogena manasi samyak praṇihite 'male  
apaśyat puruṣaṁ pūrṇaṁ māyāṁ ca tad-apāśrayam*

“Thus he fixed his mind, perfectly engaging it by linking it in directed consciousness [*bhakti-yoga*] without any tinge of materialism, and thus he saw the Absolute Personality of Brahman along with His external illusory energy, which was under full control.”

*yayā sammohito jīva ātmānaṁ tri-guṇātmakam  
paro 'pi manute 'narthaṁ tat-kṛtaṁ cābhipadyate*

“Due to this external energy, the living entity, although transcendental to the three modes of material nature, thinks of himself as a material product and thus undergoes unwanted reactions of material miseries.”

*anarthopaśamaṁ sakṣād bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje  
lokasyājānato vidvāṁś cakre sātva-ta-saṁhitāṁ*

“The unwanted material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of directed consciousness. But the mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyāsadeva compiled this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is in relation to *Vedānta-sūtra*.”

We will also see in our scientific analysis that, in order for the Vedāntic practices of directed consciousness to be effective, one must conceive of a personal interface to the Absolute. Even if the Absolute actually is ultimately impersonal (which is impossible to know by traditional empirical methods because the Absolute is unobservable by the senses in both Quantum Mechanics and *Vedānta*), we must

relate to the Absolute as a person simply because we are persons. Since all possible qualities and states of existence and energy are contained within the Universal Quantum Wave Function in unlimited potential, this is not a theoretical problem. It is a well-substantiated observation that the impersonal practice of transcendental consciousness is much more difficult, and its followers seldom achieve the success they desire. This very important issue will be discussed elaborately in the text.

## **Expressing *Vedānta* in scientific language**

Those who approach *Vedānta* from a spiritual or religious viewpoint should not be dismayed by this work. *Vedānta* and Quantum Mechanics describe the same subject—ultimate reality—from two widely divergent points of view. Since the subject in both cases is identical, there is scope to demonstrate many parallels between the two disciplines. While this book is written chiefly for Western readers trained in scientific thought, it is equally valuable to students and teachers of the Vedic tradition, for it shows how the timeless Vedic tradition remains relevant, and easily can be expressed in terms of contemporary scientific concepts or any sufficiently sophisticated frame of reference.

My Vedic *guru* Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda often spoke of *Vedānta* as a great science, global in scale and application, and encouraged his students to speak and write about it to the scientific community. He wrote,

*“Vedānta is the medium of philosophical interpretations, and thus Vedānta cannot be the absolute property of any particular class of philosopher. A sincere seeker of the Absolute Truth is called a Vedantist. Veda means ‘knowledge.’ Any department of knowledge is a part of Vedic knowledge, and Vedānta means the ultimate conclusion of all branches of knowledge. As philosophy is called the science of all sciences, Vedānta is the ultimate philosophy of all philosophical speculations.”*

He would be delighted to see this work, as would his predecessor Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who wrote the inspired *Govinda-bhāṣya Vedānta* commentary on which much of this book is based.

Mysticism generally is troublesome to the Western mind, which makes great efforts to avoid it. However, the findings of Quantum Mechanics, and philosophical theories such as the Anthropic

Principle, highlight the central role of consciousness in the human existential situation, opening the door to a constructive dialogue between Eastern and Western modes of thought. This book is not meant to be the last word on the subject, and the future contributions of thoughtful and intelligent readers—from both Vedic and scientific perspectives—will certainly enrich the dialogue begun here.

### Terminology and definitions

In view of the many parallels between *Vedānta* and Quantum Mechanics, we find many pairs of terms with equivalent meanings. We consider these terms synonyms, and use them as appropriate to the context. That is, when explaining Vedāntic texts we generally use the Vedic terms, and when discussing parallel scientific issues we use Western terms. The following table lists the principal synonymous terms used in this work (additional technical terms and definitions are listed in the Glossary):

Vedic Term	Scientific Term	Functional Definition
<i>Satyam param</i>	Absolute, Absolute Truth	The unconditioned, infinite, immanent and unknowable source and context of everything; the ground against which everything exists, is measured, and finds its destiny.
<i>Avatāra</i>	Personification of the Absolute	A terminal self-manifested by the Universal Quantum Wave Function to facilitate communication with humans.
<i>Brahman</i>	Universal Quantum Wave Function	The unobservable, immanent, immeasurably potent origin and reservoir of all possibilities, energies, space-time continua, universes, beings, consciousness etc. (See Absolute)
<i>Ātmā</i>	Conscious individual living entity	A fundamental atomic particle of consciousness found in all living bodies; the individual person or soul.

<i>Dhyāna</i>	Directed consciousness	The science and art of concentrating the attention, mind and consciousness on a single transcendental object.
<i>Paramātmā</i>	Superconscious individual living entity	The all-pervading, all-cognizant form of Brahman, the sum total of all consciousness.
<i>Bhagavān</i>	Personality of Brahman	The personal form of Brahman preferred by the practicing Vedantist to communicate with, and influence the decoherence of, the Universal Quantum Wave Function. (see <i>Avatāra</i> )
<i>Sūtra</i>	Aphorism	A short, telegraphic statement implying a much larger context and significance.

## **The problem of existence**

One day we awaken to find that we are born into a strange and often uncomfortable world. If we desired or asked to take birth here, we certainly don't remember doing so. A few of us are born into relatively benign circumstances, while most have to cope with difficulty and privation from the start. In any event, as soon as we are able, we begin to develop theories about why life is the way it is. Theories are useful because they often give us insights into how to make our lives better. They also reassure us that we have some small measure of control over our existence, and give us hope that we can make our future better than our past.

While our research and inquiries enrich us with insight and help us explain the world to ourselves, they also force us to confront the stark limits of our ability to control our fate. No one can avoid being born, growing old, or dying. We are thrust into this world without our consent, forced by circumstances to participate in various activities and struggle for survival, watch helplessly as the years pass by, our body withers and sickens, and at last we go the way of our ancestors unto death.

Our precious knowledge and security are surrounded on all sides by impenetrable mysteries: Where did this astonishing universe come from? How is it constructed and maintained? Why the amazing

variety and complexity of life? Is there life on other planets? What are time, life and consciousness, and why do we have to die? What will happen in the future? We know a little about these things, but the explanations we have are incomplete and unsatisfying, because they seem little help in controlling our fate.

Nevertheless, the insoluble problems of life drive us to perfect our knowledge, even against seemingly insuperable odds, and we have had some small success in doing so. We can point to our success in economic development and technology, our knowledge of the atom and the universe, global travel by jet planes, ever-faster computers and genuinely useful software, instant worldwide communications and so on. These rewards are enough to encourage us to continue to invest substantial human time and energy in scientific research and technological development, including theoretical and philosophical speculations that may not be immediately useful, but whose value we may realize in some future we cannot yet glimpse.

In fact, our collective wisdom places great value on ideas and concepts: "The pen is mightier than the sword." For we have seen how concepts that seem far out or impossible today often become harbingers of great power and prosperity when their time finally arrives. The gleam in some visionary theorist's eye may become tomorrow's better energy source or gigantic global industry. These visions of the future encourage us to stay the course of progress, and advance the cause of understanding toward a future of greater knowledge and felicity.

Emboldened by success, every so often scientists try to tackle the really big questions of life: Where do we come from? What is life? How did it begin? How did the universe come into existence? Why is the universe designed the way it is? What is consciousness and what role does it play in the physical world? Scientific method's insistence on empirical proof for any theory means that these kinds of questions will always be more philosophical than scientific in the strictest interpretation of the terms. However, that will not stop people from asking them; it just makes us less certain of the answers we have for them.

However, it is much harder to prove a theory than to disprove it. In scientific method, a single observation or experimental result can falsify an existing theory and spark the search for a new and better explanation of the facts. Through many iterations, this scientific

method of observation, hypothesis, prediction and experimentation results in constantly improving theories and resulting applications.

There is a certain amount of faith involved in accepting any theory that cannot be conclusively demonstrated by experiment. Barring the invention of time travel, theories of the origin of the universe, of life or of the human species must remain just intriguing possibilities. However, even an unproven theory can have an important role as a catalyst for innovation. A new theory that lets us see familiar phenomena in fresh ways can open previously inaccessible possibilities in engineering or applied science, even if the theory is unconfirmed or unprovable. So even unprovable theories can be profitable by expanding our conception of what is possible.

The reader should approach Transontology with this mindset. Experienced practitioners of *Vedānta* assert that the proof of its theories of consciousness and reality is in the experience of its practice. This may well be, but not every reader will have the time or inclination to personally test and confirm them. Those who do will be better served by taking the traditional path of initiation and discipleship. Then the best value of this work may be to convince the scientific reader that *Vedānta* is more than philosophy or mythology: the authors and practitioners of the Vedāntic tradition have experienced something subjective and intuitive, though real, that can profoundly expand our knowledge of the world of consciousness, and more accurately map its relation to physical reality and our understanding of the design of the universe.

## **The Theory of Everything**

According to the ‘many worlds’ interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, all possible states and outcomes of the Universal Quantum Wave Function have equal probabilities of existence. Thus by the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, there are a very large—possibly infinite—number of worlds, all slightly different, coexisting simultaneously in the same possibility space. Following Schrödinger’s famous paradox, the many possible worlds are reduced to one actual world by quantum decoherence when viewed by a conscious observer.

According to the Strong Anthropic Principle, we observe the universe as it is because it is the only universe that can produce us exactly the way we are. If the structure and parameters of the

universe were substantially different, we human beings would not exist to observe it. It follows, by the Self-Selection Assumption, that of all possible universes, we live in the one best suited to our needs. If it seems that the parameters of this universe are fine-tuned to the needs of human beings, it is precisely because the nature of our senses and consciousness decrees that we will bring exactly that kind of universe into manifestation from the ‘quantum soup’ of all possible manifestations of the primordial Universal Quantum Wave Function.

The role of consciousness is thus central and pivotal. We see how observers in every field tend to emphasize data that confirms their expectations, and ignore data that contradict them. Anyone who has sat through a morning in court can understand that no two witnesses see an event in the same way. Each conscious observer gets the universe that he or she creates by causing the decoherence of the indeterminate Quantum Wave Function of all possible worlds by contacting, observing and measuring it with the mind and senses. If the universe we observe seems tailor-made for us, it is because the universe we observe is the one that we bring out of the universal wave function by our very nature and state of consciousness.

Consciousness is absolute, thus each conscious observer observes himself or herself at the center of the universe, and tends to interpret everything in the observed universe in relation to, or in terms of, the meaning it acquires for that observer. This is why consciousness is not an observable in the empirical universe—it has to be outside the universe because it selects the observed universe from the infinitude of possible universes contained in the Universal Quantum Wave Function.

## **The Immanence of Absolute Reality**

We see that all comprehensive theories of reality, both religious and scientific, require the existence of an unobservable factor. *Vedānta* has Brahman, and Western science has the Universal Quantum Wave Function. This common unobservable factor is due to the certainty that limited human consciousness is incapable of universal awareness. Indeed, another common factor of all-embracing theories is the quest for simplicity; as Einstein said,

“[Theories] should be made as simple as possible—but no simpler.”

The unobservable singularity is also an artifact of all ontological and semantic systems, since they all rest on certain assumptions that are unprovable because they are outside the domain of the system.

Even a relatively small amount of information—the contents of the telephone directory, for example—overwhelms the human mind. In this age of the Internet, we suffer from information overload and complain of email burnout. Even if we had immediate access to all the information in the universe, there is no way we could assimilate it. We must accept that the capacity of the human mind and consciousness is finite and limited.

Yet we still desire to know all about life, the world and everything, because we intuitively understand that it will improve our life to do so. This intuition and the resulting thirst for knowledge constantly drives us to learn everything we can about the questions that interest us. If we find that knowing everything is impossible, then we look for a theory that packages an equivalent understanding into a symbolic form that we can digest. Thus cosmological theory becomes the ontological background, the set of unproved and unprovable assumptions against which we perceive and evaluate the foreground of our everyday experiences and actions.

Some early and largely inadequate theories of the cosmos invoke an all-powerful God or Goddess to explain away the vast excess of information and complexity embodied by the real world. Later theories call upon unknown, but mechanical natural laws; still later ones blame chance for inexplicable observations. All these are simply different names for an unknown, unobservable and unknowable infinite reality that transcends our limited ability to perceive, process and understand information.

The great value of *Vedānta* philosophy is that it also posits an immanent, unobservable Absolute Reality—Brahman—but also asserts that it is possible to establish a channel of communication with Brahman. *Vedānta* refers to ancient histories, the *Purāṇas*, that recount occasions when Brahman chose to appear as a person, the better to communicate with humans. These personifications of Brahman are communication terminals called *avatāras* that make it possible to communicate with Brahman directly, even today. A vast assortment of mental disciplines, collectively known as *yoga* (linking) details the practice of transcendental communication with the immanent Brahman, or the Universal Quantum Wave Function.

Someone may object, "Come now. How is it possible to communicate with the Universal Quantum Wave Function? Even if it were possible, certainly some scientists would have noticed by now." I reply: "We are constantly immersed in, and penetrated by, the Universal Quantum Wave Function. Can a fish communicate with the ocean? A better question might be to ask, 'How is it possible that anyone could avoid communication with the Universal Quantum Wave Function?' "

When the Universal Quantum Wave Function is posited as an unobservable, that means although it is an objective, empirically accessible phenomenon, it is simply, by definition, outside of our semantic and ontological framework. The only obstacle to our interacting with it in a subjective framework is our own disbelief that such a thing is possible. If our mental constructs and the semantic structures of our theories do not allow us to conceive of such a possibility, then we will not be aware of it even if it is going on all around us all the time. For example, no one was aware of cosmic rays, even though they penetrate us constantly, until 1912 when Victor Hess noticed certain anomalous behavior in the discharge of an electroscope, and took the trouble to hypothesize their existence and search for them.

Thus belief in the existence of a possibility is often prerequisite to realizing it. For example, if I do not believe that I can learn French, no one can teach it to me with any amount of time and effort. In fact, we interact with the Universal Quantum Wave Function at all times; *Vedānta* simply provides a theoretical framework that allows us to observe this interaction, albeit subjectively. We request the reader to keep an open mind on this point.

It is easy to lose sight of the fact that theories are metaphors. For example, electrons exhibit wave behavior under certain circumstances, and particle behaviors under other circumstances. This does not mean that electrons are either waves or particles, but that their behavior can be described by equations similar to those describing waves and particles. We do not have to believe that electrons are waves or particles to use the wave or particle equations to calculate their behavior. Wave-like behavior and particle-like behavior are both simply metaphors that help us predict the behavior of electrons. Similarly, we do not have to believe that the Universal Quantum Wave Function is a person to use the theories of *Vedānta* as metaphors to understand, design experiments or predict its behavior as a person. We can use any theory or metaphor to

advantage, simply by suspending our disbelief in it long enough to understand and apply it properly.

The tremendous advantage of the Vedāntic theory of communication with Brahman is that through this relationship we can directly influence the local decoherence of the Universal Quantum Wave Function in much more powerful ways. This makes it possible to address certain classes of formerly inaccessible and insoluble problems, such as the purpose of existence, the directed evolution of consciousness, the mechanism of intuition, the condition and destination of consciousness after death, the mechanism of the Anthropic Principle and many others. The potential power of the new theoretical possibilities opened by *Vedānta*—whether immediately experimentally verifiable or not—alone makes its theory a worthwhile field for scientific study. The purpose of this work is to facilitate this study by exploring the connections of *Vedānta* with existing scientific theory.

## **The Role of Consciousness**

Consciousness is the central fact of existence. The attempt of materialistic science to restrict the domain of human inquiry to so-called 'objective' phenomena is more or less a cheating process, since without consciousness all observations, and thus the process of empiricism itself, are impossible. Just as consciousness is a precondition of empirical investigation, so is an ontology or semantic domain. Reductionism has tried to eliminate subjectivity from the domain of scientific semantics, although the symbology of mathematics and the philosophy of science, concepts of truth and untruth, logical proof and so on are highly subjective because they rest on meaning and context, and thus on ontology and ultimately on consciousness.

Every working scientist or philosopher, if he is honest, will have to admit that the actual process of scientific advancement occurs in intuitive leaps that transcend the dry process of formal logic. Solutions to intractable problems, such as James Watson's discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA, often come in dreams or intuitive visions. Many great scientists have had luminous moment of transcendent insight, such as Albert Hoffman's youthful vision of the interconnectedness of nature, consciousness and God.

Consciousness itself is transcendental, immanent and subjective, therefore being conscious is itself a spiritual experience. But because most of us subscribe to a materialistic explanation of the world and phenomena, we miss this profound dimension of our own experience because of a crippled ontological background. Thus the quality of our consciousness, and thus the quality of our experience of life, is predicated on our ontological commitment, because in general, people do not see what they do not acknowledge to exist.

A famous historical example of this was when the first European colonists arrived in what is now South America, the local inhabitants literally could not see their sailing ships moored just off the coast, because after all, sailing across the ocean on a rickety bucket made of fragile wood is impossible. In a related and even more tragic example, the entire Incan army, hundreds of thousands of men, were defeated by a few hundred Spanish cavalry at Mexico City because the Incans had never before seen mounted soldiers. Thus they regarded them as undefeatable divine manifestations, panicked and fled.

Similarly, although we are used to magical appliances such as television and computers, we cannot understand the immense possibilities of our own consciousness simply because our world view, whether by accident or design, excludes subjectivity from the domain of reality. Many people even deny that consciousness exists except as an epiphenomenon of brain electrochemistry. Thus they denigrate the most important and vital part of their own self to the status of an illusion, focusing obsessively on the material body as the only reality.

We refuse to accept such a crippling view. Our own experience confirms that consciousness can change, and that the quality of our consciousness determines the quality of our experience of life. Real happiness or fulfillment is impossible in the limited, conditional consciousness provided by the reductionistic ontology; to attain the optimum state of being and full enjoyment of life requires full acceptance of our qualitative identity with Brahman, the transcendental source of all energies. Changing our consciousness requires opening our minds to the higher, more abstract and inclusive ontology derived from Vedic sources. When we accept this Vedāntic ontology and begin to work with it, our empirical investigations take on a new dimension, the dimension of transcendental consciousness. This changes everything, because it changes how we look at the world and ourselves.

## Changing Consciousness

Changing our consciousness requires, first of all, accepting that it is possible. The next necessity is knowledge of consciousness: the characteristics, qualities, functions and potential of individual consciousness within the context of consciousness in general. Then we need practical methods of changing our consciousness in predictable, beneficial ways. Finally there must be some stable criterion of the optimal state of consciousness to serve as a goal. All this and more is provided by the *Vedānta* philosophy and ancillary works.

The methodology for changing our consciousness is also given in the literature of *Vedānta*: it is constant engagement of the attention and awareness in subjects of transcendental quality. Constantly hearing, repeating, remembering and serving the *Vedānta* philosophy itself and the sacred subjects in relation to it is the prime methodology for advancing in the transcendental science. Therefore *Vedānta* is supremely self-referential, another quality that we would expect from a truly transcendental science; it does not require any knowledge outside of itself for its complete implementation and realization.

But actually changing our consciousness requires more than just theoretical knowledge, belief in an alternate Vedic cosmology or even a transcendental methodology; it also requires personal discipline and training by an experienced teacher who has already made the journey from conditioned to absolute consciousness, and can impart guidance from his own experience. This practical apprenticeship is commonly accepted as a requirement for professional performance in many less demanding fields, for example medicine, law or even blacksmithing; how much more it must be true in the esoteric realm of consciousness enhancement.

Yet we see that most ostensible students of transcendental philosophy and *Vedānta* remain unwilling to take this final and actually, most important step. But it is precisely this total commitment that distinguishes the armchair speculator from the successful aspirant. It is a consistent observation over many years' experience that those who are unwilling to give up their so-called independence and subject themselves to the discipline of a Master Teacher are unable to make any tangible advancement in the actual science of *Vedānta*.

## **The Laboratory of Consciousness**

To properly understand the profound subject of *Vedānta*, then, requires a paradigmatic shift from the context of reductionistic materialism to that of Vedic transcendentalism. Otherwise accurate understanding and complete realization of the profound benefits of *Vedānta* will remain elusive. Any treatise, no matter how extensive, is only words. In and of itself, it cannot change our consciousness or lead to liberation from the existential suffering of material existence. We can describe the qualities and characteristics of *Vedānta* from now to the end of the universe; but unless one puts its principles and methods into practice in his life, he cannot taste the results. Certainly, knowledge and study are required; but so are good character and integrity. The glib student who recites his lessons perfectly but cannot apply them in practice will not find favor in the esoteric school of *Vedānta*.

*Vedānta* is a laboratory science, but the laboratory is our own mind and consciousness. Those who make superficial external changes in their lives, but who remain fixed in materialistic viewpoints will find little success, as will those whose studies remain theoretical and cannot bring themselves to practice. Each *sūtra*, each item of the doctrine of *Vedānta* has a corresponding practice and realization. So considering these caveats, anyone who applies themselves well to the discipleship of *Vedānta* can make significant progress in mitigating the sufferings of life.

## ***Vedānta* as a state of absolute consciousness**

This work, while inspired by Baladeva Vidyabhūṣana's *Govinda-bhāṣya*, is not a formal commentary on *Vedānta*. We have published that work for our advanced students under a separate title. There are many works in that genre already extant, but in our experience they do little to help the readers address the real problems of life. After all, in today's world very few people care about the esoteric interpretations of the Vedic *Upaniṣads*. Rather, this work is an attempt to apply the principles of Vedāntic thought to the universal questions of life, in the same way that *Vedānta-sūtra* applies them to the recondite mysteries of the *Upaniṣads*.

The essence of *Vedānta* is not so much a particular philosophical or theological interpretation of some obscure ancient scriptures, but a fresh and living approach to solving the real problems of life for everyone's practical benefit. We therefore abstract the principles of Vedāntic exegesis and apply them to subjects of paramount concern to everyone: the problems of suffering and death.

This introductory section addresses the questions posed in the **Preface**, and chalks out the broad lines of their answers. It introduces the reader to topics in ontology, cosmology and theology as contextual prerequisites to the arguments contained in the body of the text.

### ***Vedānta*: the end of knowledge**

Is there a conclusion of knowledge, an ultimate Truth, a final Answer? The well-known Sanskrit term *Vedānta*, literally 'the end of knowledge,' strongly implies that there is. Our own nature also contains signs of the existence of such an Absolute Truth. All intelligent men constantly are driven by an inner urge for perfection, to surpass lesser species of truth and lower levels of realization in a quest for perfect knowledge.

Therefore the universal engagement and essential purpose of all people everywhere is to inquire into ultimate Truth. This inquiry may assume many forms and comprise many different subjects, but certainly the motivation behind this search for Truth is the desire for perfect knowledge. While the average man on the street may not be consciously aware that he is engaged in a search for perfect

knowledge, certainly the original ideal and fundamental intent of philosophy, theology and science, and the civilizing force behind all human society, is nothing but this same inborn concept of attaining the ultimate Absolute Truth.

Even if we are unfamiliar with the Vedic tradition of *Vedānta*, we are certainly familiar enough with the idea and the ideal behind it, since the urge for perfect Truth is a human drive common to all of us. Thus the progressive search for ultimate knowledge has always been a major concern of mankind. This instinctive inquiry into the final conclusion of all knowledge is called *dhārma*, the esoteric meaning of which is ‘that essential quality which cannot be separated from the living being.’

The gnawing doubts of incomplete, imperfect knowledge have sparked so many breakthroughs in human knowledge and understanding that benefit us today. The noble ideal of the Absolute Truth, the Philosopher’s Stone or magic Touchstone of spiritual cognition that transforms our plodding mundane existence into a soaring flight of luminous ecstasy, has inspired so many great thinkers throughout history. Our purpose herein is to assist the reader in bringing this great quest, spanning many lives and all topics of knowledge, to its transcendent conclusion.

## **The Need for Absolute Truth**

Why would we possess this appetite for final conclusive knowledge if there were no corresponding nourishment to assuage it? In nature, we observe that all created beings have their appropriate source of food. More specifically, each sense organ in every living body has a corresponding set of sense objects. For example, the nose has odors, the tongue has food and drink, the eyes have light, color and form, and so forth. There is no sense organ devoid of a corresponding object.

But the senses do not end with the gross body. We can view the more subtle functions of the human mind in the same way. Thus the natural objects of the mind are thoughts, memories and ideas, the object of the aesthetic sense is beauty, of reason is logic, and so forth.

In this way we can understand that the natural object of the sense of intelligence is truth. Our intelligence craves truth just as our other senses crave their specific forms of nourishment. And if any of our subtle senses are denied their natural food, we suffer from

deprivation just as certainly as if we were denied food and drink. Similarly, if our intelligence is denied its ration of truth, we feel withdrawal symptoms of disappointment, anxiety and doubt.

Ordinary food is of lesser or greater quality, more or less tasty or nourishing, according to its ingredients and manner of preparation. Similarly, the subtle food of the mental senses also varies greatly in its quality and degree of nourishment. As our intelligence develops, it needs ever more sophisticated, pure and satisfying input, or we begin to experience an ennui akin to severe anomie.

Unless we are supplied regularly with intellectual nourishment that allows us continually to reach ever higher on the scale of understanding, we begin to question the very reason for our existence—a pitiable condition indeed. What person endowed with searching intelligence has not felt the pinch of this inner malaise, this longing in separation from the Truth? It is this same innate hunger that spurs the universal human search for ultimate understanding, and in our experience, the transcendental Absolute Truths of *Vedānta* philosophy provide the best and most satisfying nourishment for the mature intelligence.

### **Qualities and Grades of Truth**

As we grow in understanding and intelligence, we require a higher and higher quality of truth to feel intellectually satisfied. While the value of truth may be qualified in many different ways, the qualities of truth most important to intellectual satisfaction are generality and stability. While the ordinary man may be satisfied with temporary relative truth, an advanced intellect prefers truth that is independent, unchanging and of broad application.

It is easy to understand the taste for truth in terms of conditionality. Lower grades of truth are conditional; that is, they are relatively more dependent on restrictive conditions. They are also relative, or defined in comparison to another truth.

Higher grades of truth are less conditional, more independent of external conditions. The highest grade of truth, then, would be perfectly unconditional or absolute, and it follows that this grade of truth would provide the greatest degree of satisfaction to the intellect. Perhaps some simple examples will help to illustrate this concept.

“It is raining” is an example of a highly conditional truth; in some times, places or situations it is true; in others, false. In any event it is a relative truth: logically, raining is defined as compared to not raining; physically, it is defined by the phenomenon of water falling from the sky. And in practice we would expect to encounter many borderline questions to this statement: is heavy dew considered raining? What about sleet? This ambiguity, conditionality and dependence on external references make such a conditional statement the intellectual equivalent of junk food.

“Objects with mass tend to fall toward a mutual center of gravity” is an example of a less conditional grade of truth. The applicability of this truth is certainly very broad. In fact, insofar as our material experience and knowledge are concerned, it seems to be universally true. This statement may be untrue under very special conditions in this universe (such as on the subatomic or pan-galactic scale, at the center of a star or within the event horizon of a black hole), in other universes, or at remote times in the past or future of our present universe, but it is a much more stable, unconditional and therefore intellectually satisfying truth than the previous example.

“The Supreme Being is omnipresent” is an example of Absolute Truth. This statement or its equivalent in any language or form of representation is eternally true under any conditions, for any being in any universe or dimension. Although the two previous statements were examples of gradations of relative truths, this statement exemplifies the quality of Absolute Truth because its truthfulness and applicability are not subject to time, place, the identity of the speaker and hearer, or any other external conditions.

Unconditional, independent Absolute Truth offers the ultimate in intellectual satisfaction to the discriminating intellect. It is the most nourishing and fulfilling food for our subtle appetite. (On this same scale of nourishment, an untruth would be the equivalent of poison.) Absolute Truth also has many other interesting, unique attributes that we will present as we expand the topics of this discussion. We humbly request the reader to bear with us as we continue to introduce and develop the themes of this literary fugue.

## ***Vedānta***

Vedānta literally means ‘the end of knowledge.’ By Vedānta we may indicate the Vedic literature Vedānta-sūtra, the final philosophical

conclusion of the Vedic literature, any or all of the various interpretations of *Vedānta-sūtra* by different schools, or the actual personal practice and realization of the end or perfection of knowledge. In this book we use all these meanings in different contexts, but the one we want to stress is the final one: the personal human experience of Absolute Truth. Nevertheless, it is important for the reader to have some acquaintance with the other, more commonly used definitions of *Vedānta*.

The *Vedānta-sūtra* is a set of short, concise notes (*sūtras*) on the ultimate meaning of the *Vedas* by the author of the *Vedas*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva. The *Vedas* are standard books of spiritual knowledge that come down to us from time immemorial by disciplic succession. Actually the *Vedas* are eternal, since they originate from the breathing of Viṣṇu before the creation of the material universes and the beginning of time.

The Vedic tradition consists of many works of deep spiritual import based on the authoritative *Vedas*. But the ultimate purpose and meaning of the *Vedas* are mysteries, open to interpretation. Unfortunately many unauthorized commentators have misused the *Vedas* to justify philosophies and practices opposed to their real purpose. Therefore Śrīla Vyāsadeva wrote *Vedānta-sūtra* to reveal the actual reason he compiled the *Vedas*.

The *Upaniṣads* are a class of Vedic literature derived from the original *Vedas*. *Upaniṣad* means ‘inquiry,’ and each *Upaniṣad* is a set of questions and answers on a specific topic. For example, *Śrī Iṣopaniṣad* deals with our relationship to the source of everything, *Kalīsantāraṇa Upaniṣad* discusses religious duties in the age of Kali (the present historical age), and so forth. The *Upaniṣads* are very important in the Vedic philosophical tradition, because they demonstrate the process of inquiry from the self-realized teacher.

*Vedānta-sūtra* analyzes the specific statements of various *Upaniṣads* to show how they reveal Absolute Truth. *Vedānta-sūtra* defeats certain common misconceptions about Absolute Truth: specifically, the fallacy that Absolute Truth can be insentient or impersonal. The conclusion that Absolute Truth is conscious and personal is supported in the original commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* by its author Śrīla Vyāsadeva: the *Bhagavata Purāṇa* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Nevertheless, some scholars and commentators insist on twisting *Vedānta-sūtra* to support their impersonal conception. The impersonalist school is called the *Māyāvādīs*, and the personalist

school is called the Vaiṣṇavas. We will treat this topic extensively in the body of the text.

## **The Purpose of *Vedānta***

Those whose knowledge is limited to relative truth may find it difficult to conceive of an end to knowledge. Yet all of us would welcome relief from the tiresome treadmill of filling our minds with facts, only to have them superseded by a new set of facts as human knowledge 'evolves' over time.

Intelligent people spend many years acquiring an education, only to have to constantly re-educate themselves in their chosen field or fall behind the pace of new discoveries and applications. The world map is a constantly changing mosaic of nationalities, alliances and national borders. The world history our grandparents learned is a far different body of knowledge than the history taught in today's schools.

The same is true of all other relative subjects. This constant change is a corollary of relative knowledge. Relative truth is unstable; it is always subject to change and adjustment. The more relative the quality of a truth, the more limited and conditional its applicability, and the faster it becomes obsolete.

Yet our intelligence craves stability and universality. We value peace of mind. Therefore the greatest thinkers always dwell on eternal truths of cosmic significance. Consider the almost universal attraction of astronomy and music. Both fields are based on fundamental principles that change very slowly, if at all, over time. Theology and religious practice are also favorite pastimes of great minds, for they lead to ultimate considerations of the quality of Absolute Truth.

The real purpose of *Vedānta* is not mere relative intellectual or exegetical exercise, but to educate us in the qualities of Absolute Truth so we can recognize its fragrance and taste its flavor in all things. This practice is open to anyone, but it requires special philosophical understanding and expert practical training to reach success. By filling our intelligence with Absolute Truth derived from sensing the presence of the Absolute within the ordinary objects of our perception, we can experience deep satisfaction unobtainable in any other way.

This satisfaction may be intellectual at the outset, but it gradually spreads throughout our minds until it permeates our entire consciousness at every moment. In this advanced stage of practice there is a complete cessation of the material suffering, desire and regret concomitant with the relative state of consciousness, and a spontaneous arousal of detachment, transcendent knowledge and causeless bliss. This recondite spiritual pleasure is the transcendental equivalent of fine wine; it must be tasted to be fully appreciated.

This state of self-realization, self-manifest in the minds of those who know Absolute Truth, is a satisfaction so profound that one who experiences it ceases to desire anything else. Yet rather than dull one's sense of enjoyment, paradoxically, the experience of Absolute Truth sharpens all the other senses and gives one causeless zest for living and a fearlessness that conquers all obstacles, even death.

This exalted state of consciousness is called *mokṣa*, or liberation. And it is attainable by anyone who learns the science of Absolute Truth and applies its principles in his life. This is the actual aim of *Vedānta* and the ultimate purpose of *yoga* and meditation.

## **Principles of Vedānta**

The principles of Vedāntic thought, as Absolute Truth, are not limited to interpreting the *Upaniṣads*; they may be applied to any body of truth. The *Vedānta-sūtra* applies these principles to the body of the Vedic literature, especially the *Upaniṣads*. The commentaries on *Vedānta-sūtra* represent the application of the principles of *Vedānta* to the various philosophical and religious schools of thought of the commentators.

In this work we introduce the reader to the principles of *Vedānta* as an abstract, flexible mode of thinking that one can apply to the present contents of one's mind and to the impressions of his current environment, leading to the continuous living experience of *Vedānta* as Absolute Truth. This experience is practical self-realization, characterized by the complete removal of ignorance, the conquest of all suffering and the attainment of unconditional consciousness and existence.

We have already demonstrated that there are different grades or qualities of truth, from conditional, relative truth up to Absolute Truth. We want to develop this understanding in the direction that *Vedānta* or Absolute Truth is not a particular set of words, a

philosophy or doctrine, but a state of consciousness that produces a species of understanding possessing total unconditionality and independence, and that this state of consciousness also imparts other desirable benefits including eternal existence, complete knowledge and unconditional bliss.

Understanding is more than mere parroting of words or symbols; it is a dynamic, intelligent duplication of a truth. Once a truth has been understood, it may serve as raw material for further reasoning and the generation of other truths. In general, if both the understanding and reasoning are correct, the result will also be true. The experiential test of understanding Absolute Truth is that further truths generated from this understanding also have the quality of Absolute Truth. In this work, we open this experience to the reader by introducing the understandings and practices that create it.

### **The experience of *Vedānta***

And what is this experience? We can only give a hint at this stage of the discussion. Later after proper definition of terms and discussion of principles, we will present a more detailed description.

Students of meditation find that the mind possesses strikingly different qualities and functions in different states of consciousness. For example, as the mind is removed from external distractions in the *pratyāhara* stage and concentrated in the *dhāraṇa* stage of meditation, it acquires qualities, such as insight and luminosity, which it does not possess in the ordinary extroverted stage of sensory awareness.

Similarly, successful practitioners of *Vedānta* have observed that the mind displays different qualities and functions depending upon the quality of impressions it receives, especially the quality of truth perceived by the intellect. When the intellect is filled with Absolute Truth, it manifests unprecedented qualities and functions quite unobserved when it is filled with ordinary relative truth. It is this observation, rather than any doctrinaire consideration, that leads us to stress the value of Absolute Truth as a practice.

While these symptoms are discussed in the literature and commentaries on *Vedānta*, most scholars and other students of *Vedānta* misunderstand them because of a lack of background in the personal practice of *Vedānta*. Without the actual experience of the exalted states of consciousness attainable by these esoteric practices,

it is impossible to properly understand the coded expressions of Absolute Truth contained in *Vedānta-sūtra* in the sense of understanding as defined above.

Both academic and traditional commentators on *Vedānta-sūtra* tend to focus on explicating the literal meaning of the rather terse and oblique aphorisms composing its text. It is uncommon to encounter works instructing the reader how to attain the inner experience of one who executes the aims and attains the purpose of *Vedānta*. Therefore, it is rare to find an actual practitioner of the principles of *Vedānta*.

One possible reason for this is that while the philosophy of *Vedānta* is discussed in the *Upaniṣads* and *Vedānta-sūtra*, the practices of *Vedānta* are detailed in the *sattvic Purāṇas* and *Tantras* and their commentaries. The philosophy of *Vedānta* is certainly important, but it is the lifestyle of the dedicated practitioner that leads to the extraordinary results discussed herein.

Note: The *Purāṇas* and *Tantras* are divided into three according to their intended audience. The *tamasik Purāṇas* and *Tantras* are for people in the mode of ignorance, *tamo-guna*, and the *rajasik* are for those in the mode of passion, *rajo-guna*. Only the practices given in the *Purāṇas* and *Tantras* in the mode of goodness, *sattva-guna*, are compatible with the aims of *Vedānta*. The *Bhagavata-purāṇa* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu* are the most important of these Vedāntic literatures. For a detailed explanation of the *gunas* or modes of material nature and their symptoms please see *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapters 14-18.

## **The practice of *Vedānta***

The practice of *Vedānta* begins from understanding the philosophical principles of *Vedānta-sūtra*. It grows from studying *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* by the original author, Śrīla Vyāsadeva. It matures through the practices of *mantra*, *sattvik tantra* and meditation on Absolute Truth under the personal direction of a self-realized teacher. And it reaches perfection in the student's attainment of complete self-realization, or direct personal perception of Absolute Truth or Brahman.

The existence of the quality of Absolute Truth and the prospect of its realization imply that it is possible for a human being to know, or at least have access to, all that is knowable. We are conditioned by the

idea that we can never reach the end of knowledge, but this idea comes from our experience with relative truth.

No matter how much relative truth we amass, we can never become satisfied, because relative truth can change at any moment. This leads to constant mental agitation as we are forced to examine the current state of our knowledge and absorb new information to update our system of thought. In relative terms, people who do not regularly update their thinking are considered backward and ignorant.

Absolute Truth is also an unlimited field of knowledge, but since it is universal and unchanging, there is never any need to exchange what we have already learned for new knowledge. Whatever impressions of Absolute Truth we absorb are unconditionally true for all eternity and for all beings, in any place, condition or situation.

Therefore once we have saturated our minds with Absolute Truth, our satiation is complete. We do not need to seek any additional knowledge, unless we either forget some of the Absolute Truth we have absorbed, or increase our appetite and capacity for Absolute Truth. Both of these are possible, since the human mind is both fallible and flexible. But even so, our necessity then comes from our own imperfection or change, and not that of the Absolute Truth we have absorbed. In either case our satisfaction remains complete as long as we stay connected with the source of Absolute Truth.

## **The Theory of Illusion**

In our ordinary state of waking consciousness, we perceive our environment through the bodily senses. However, the image of the world provided by the physical senses is limited, imperfect and incomplete. Therefore we tend to ascribe qualities—such as permanency, independence, causality and completeness—to relative existence that it does not, in fact, possess. This is one kind of illusion, the illusion of misperception.

If we try to infer the nature of reality or extrapolate various theories of existence from our limited and imperfect sensory perceptions, we encounter another kind of illusion. All conceptions of reality based on illusory perceptions are necessarily illusory themselves. Therefore all so-called scientific conceptions of the universe are in error, because they are based on empirical investigation. The scientists themselves admit this, and are always busy refining their

observations. Nevertheless they regularly encounter new phenomena their theories did not predict. This is the illusion of misunderstanding.

No sensory observation of the universe can be complete, and no theory of the universe can be perfect. Is it any wonder then, that when we try to reason using our imperfect, incomplete knowledge, our conclusions are also less than perfect? Logic always involves many a priori assumptions, both explicit and implicit. Since the number of factors influencing any process in the universe is literally infinite, no logical process can take all of them into account. Therefore our feeble attempts to deduce truths by logical reasoning always result in some mistake. This is the illusion of error.

Finally, although every experienced, thoughtful and sober man knows the above types of illusion to be a fact, people still try to represent themselves as infallible authorities and defend their observations, theories, reasoning and conclusions as if they were perfect. Amazingly enough, some other people believe them, accepting their assertions at face value. This is the illusion of the cheaters and the cheated.

All relative truth is more or less contaminated by the four types of illusion described above. Only Absolute Truth is free from all illusion, misunderstanding, errors and cheating. This is because the source of Absolute Truth is transcendental to this relative world.

## **Absolute Consciousness**

The human being in the relative world is immersed in an ocean of illusion. However, there is one aspect of our existence that possesses absolute qualities: consciousness. Consciousness is causeless, although it is the cause of awareness, the mind, the life force, identity, personality, individuality, cognition, initiative, creativity, emotion, aesthetics and many other associated phenomena. It cannot be created or destroyed by any material conditions. It is completely subjective, having no direct objective or relative manifestation. Although the material scientists speculate that consciousness is caused by some combination of chemical elements or biological structures, since they have no way to measure the presence or quality of consciousness, by their own standards of empirical verification there can be no proof of this theory.

In relative states of consciousness, the consciousness identifies with the body, thinking that whatever happens to the body happens to the self. Self-realization occurs when consciousness becomes self-conscious, understanding its own true nature. The quality of consciousness is absolute; it is not an effect of any relative phenomenon. When we realize this, we are at the doorstep of Absolute Truth.

Absolute Truth is defined in *Vedānta-sūtra* as the source of all emanations. Because of the illusory nature of the relative world and the senses, we cannot observe the source of the material universe. Therefore it appears absolute to our illusioned senses. However, this limitation does not apply to consciousness, because consciousness is absolute. When consciousness realizes its own source, full self-realization occurs and the illusory state of relative existence is fully revealed.

## **The End of Illusion**

Our limited human consciousness is a direct emanation from Absolute Truth, which is infinite consciousness. Since we are conscious and consciousness, and consciousness is a phenomenon of the Absolute, all of our conceptions of identity in terms of relative existence are false. Our identification with the body, its qualities, attachments and extensions is illusory. Therefore, it is not that the body and the relative world are illusory, but our false conception of the body as the self, and the relative world as possessing absolute qualities, is the grand illusion under which we labor.

The fundamental principle of Vedāntic thought is to change our conception of ourselves and the world in which we live from illusion to reality. This conceptual change alone is sufficient to effect complete self-realization. The illusory material identity, or false ego, has to be removed to experience our real identity as living consciousness.

However, to struggle with the false ego is a mistake, because any effort to uproot the ego merely strengthens it. Actual self-realization occurs when we simply understand that the false ego is an illusion, like the water in the distance on a hot day in the desert. Actually the water is not there at all; it just seems to exist in relation to the body. We see the illusory mirage with our eyes, but our intelligence

reminds us of the reality. So we don't waste our time and energy running after illusory water that we can never reach.

Similarly, our material identity in the relative world is illusory; it never really existed. So there is no need to artificially struggle against false ego. False ego is automatically revealed to be an illusion when we use Vedāntic intelligence to understand our actual identity as consciousness in eternal relationship with Absolute Truth. In this consciousness, although we are still aware of the illusory relative existence, we clearly see its illusory status. So we don't waste our time and energy running after the illusory pleasures of the relative world and becoming entangled in their reactions.

If we examine our troubles and analyze the cause of our suffering, we can understand that all lamentation, desire, difficulty and distress exist in relation to the material illusory identity. Once we cease to identify with the relative existence, we also let go of the suffering concomitant with an absolute entity (consciousness) trying to operate in a relative environment (the body and material world). In other words, as soon as we attain self-realization all our troubles are over, all our sufferings assuaged.

The experience of contact with the infinite Source of consciousness is unspeakably beautiful. All our ignorance is immediately destroyed. We become perfectly cognizant of the self-revelation of all-pervading Absolute Truth, the source of all energies and the reservoir of all qualities. We become ecstatically aware of our eternal existence in the absolute world, which is our real home, never again to fall into the illusion of relative existence. And we become devoted to the eternal adoration of that self-existent, independent Absolute Truth who emanates all other absolute and relative energies and existences. This is the real aim and purpose of Vedānta, the pinnacle of self-realization, the solution of all problems and the end of all knowledge.

### **Critical Mass of Absolute Truth**

When one's intelligence reaches a 'critical mass' of Absolute Truth, he becomes capable of generating new truths that share the infallible, unconditional quality of Absolute Truth. At that point he becomes a source of Absolute Truth equal to the original, as one candle may light many others of equal brilliance. This is a very advanced stage of realization of Absolute Truth. Nevertheless, we

have to understand it to explain the broad influence and extraordinary manifestations of the great beings who appear at various times and places to reveal and explain Absolute Truth to a hungry, suffering humanity.

From the first spark of inquiry into Absolute Truth to the perfection of its realization is a long and arduous path with many pitfalls and setbacks. Nevertheless, the aspiring student can easily traverse this path in a single lifetime if he applies himself diligently according to the instructions of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the author of *Vedānta-sūtra* and its natural commentary *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the contemporary representative of his disciplic lineage, the fully self-realized spiritual master.

Without the personal instruction of a self-realized soul who possesses a critical mass of Absolute Truth, advanced realization of Absolute Truth is impossible. We therefore dedicate this work to our personal spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, whose infallible blessings have enabled us to reveal the recondite truths of *Vedānta* with the confidence born of true insight. It is he only who opened the door to Absolute Truth to the misguided West, which was wallowing in the trough of relative material knowledge, impersonalism and voidism. Therefore in gratitude and bliss, I offer my humble obeisances unto him again and again.

## Domain and Nomenclature of Absolute Truth

*athāto brahma-jijñāsā*

“Now, therefore, one should inquire about Brahman.”  
[*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.1]

The first principle of *Vedānta* is to inquire into Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth, for the purpose of this discussion, is defined as the source from which everything emanates, or Brahman.

The domain of inquiry into Absolute Truth of *Vedānta* is therefore, in the broadest sense, the field of ontology or the study of origins. Absolute Truth corresponds to absolute existence, which is the source of the relative existence described by relative truth. Since Absolute Truth is eternal, it exists *a priori* and *a posteriori* relative, limited, temporary existence and relative truth.

Relative truth describes relative existence as a thing in itself, without reference to Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth describes absolute existence, and can also describe relative existence in the context of its proper relation to absolute existence. Absolute Truth therefore is unconditional, all-inclusive and self-referential, whereas relative truth is exclusive, conditional, and dependent for its meaning on the constantly changing conditions of relative existence.

Everything we experience in relative existence has its source in Absolute Truth. Therefore although Absolute Truth is by definition unary and undifferentiated, one without a second, it also contains all attributes of relative existence, including multiplicity, illusion, emanation, energy, form, activity, individuality, personality, identity, desire, consciousness, perception, variety, cause and effect, and paradoxically, also contains all the opposite qualities.

All qualities originate in Absolute Truth, which has no qualities and all qualities simultaneously. After all, the source of everything must contain the qualities and substance of all that emanates from it, and at the same time is beyond all such qualitative and quantitative distinctions. This is certainly paradoxical. Yet in Absolute Truth, these attributes are eternal and unchanging, while in relative existence they are temporary and always in a state of flux.

Absolute Truth is often called ‘spiritual,’ in contradistinction to relative material existence. But this label is itself relative since it is

defined in terms of relative, material existence. Therefore we use the term Absolute Truth to refer to the eternal source from which everything emanates.

Material science, speculative philosophy and ordinary theology limit their scope of inquiry to varying degrees of relative truth. Only *Vedānta* actually treats the science of Absolute Truth in detail. *Vedānta* is therefore beyond the limitations of the domains of mundane science, philosophy and sectarian theology, for it deals with Absolute Truth on its own level, rather than attempting to extrapolate from relative truth, which of course can only generate more relative truth.

Material science is especially limited in its ability to describe consciousness; since consciousness is an absolute factor, the language of mathematics has no way to quantify it except for zero and infinity. Philosophy and psychology attempt to deal with consciousness indirectly by analyzing it in terms of mental phenomena or systems of morality and ethical values. None of these relative disciplines makes any real attempt to embrace the paradoxes of Absolute Truth, or treat consciousness as a fundamental substance. Therefore anyone who wants to understand consciousness, the most primary and fundamental fact of our existence, must approach Absolute Truth through the study of *Vedānta*.

### **Qualifications of the Student**

*Vedānta* begins from the assumption that the student is in a position to inquire into the domain of Absolute Truth. This does presuppose certain conditions. The student should be intelligent and sincere, well-versed in the literature of ontological inquiry in general, and Vedic lore in particular. He should be moral and ethical in the ordinarily accepted meaning of the terms, and be inclined by nature to goodness, truthfulness and appreciation of the ontological and aesthetic value of Absolute Truth.

The successful aspirant should also possess purity of mind and heart. This means he should be free from the desire for material gain, and have transcended lust, greed, anger, pride, envy and the desire for dominating others. He should be a pure vegetarian, free from intoxication, illicit sexual habits and gambling. We have seen over

many years of experience that one who does not meet these qualifications cannot understand this teaching.

While mundane scholars and theologians scoff at these requirements for purity, they cannot follow them; nor can they properly understand or explain *Vedānta* or Absolute Truth, let alone realize it within themselves. The standards of purity are requisites for spiritual initiation into the Vedic *guru*-disciple lineage, precisely because they prepare one to realize Absolute Truth. In practice, no one can maintain such high standards of purity without the personal instruction of a self-realized soul.

Therefore the most important qualification is that the aspiring student of *Vedānta* must be in association with a pure soul who has realized Absolute Truth himself, who can initiate and instruct the student by example in the practices and lifestyle required to realize Absolute Truth. Since such realization requires complete concentration of purpose and energy, one must be ready to renounce all activities motivated by relative gain and material enjoyment, and devote oneself fully to *Vedānta* for the duration of the apprenticeship.

The student must understand that working in the relative conception of life, including study of religious literature, and even ordinary academic or theological study of *Vedānta*, will not lead him to the desired goal of self-realization and unlimited happiness attainable through proper study of *Vedānta*. In fact, without the esoteric practices of the Absolute Truth, no one can realize *Vedānta*. The *Vedānta* philosophy only provides a transcendental contextual framework in which to hold and evaluate the experiences of direct practice of Absolute Truth.

The esoteric school of the teacher of *Vedānta* is an extension of Absolute Truth in the relative material world. It partakes of the absolute qualities of Absolute Truth, but these qualities are only reflected, not innate. The school of *Vedānta* is the form; Absolute Truth is the essence. Without the essence, the form is useless. Without the self-realized teacher, the school is simply another relative manifestation, for the teacher is the representative of Absolute Truth. The student must be careful not to confuse the form with the essence. The great value of association with a self-realized soul is described in the following statement of *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.34]:

*tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinah*

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”

The student’s association with the teacher may be in person, or it may be through a more advanced student, or even through a medium such as a recording or a book. The potency of Absolute Truth is such that it may be transmitted through any medium without change. The important thing is the degree of realization of the teacher, since the student cannot attain any realization beyond that of his teacher.

While the qualifications for successful study of *Vedānta* may seem daunting, they are easily acquired by one who chants the Holy Name of the Lord:

*japyenaiva ca saṁsiddhyad  
brahmaṇā nātra saṁśayaḥ  
kuryād anyan na vā kuryān  
maitro brāhmaṇa ucyate*

“Whether he performs other rituals and duties or not, one who perfectly chants mantras glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be considered a perfect *brāhmaṇa*, eligible to understand the Supreme Lord.” [*Manu-saṁhitā* 2.87]

*yan-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād  
yat-prahvaṇād yat-smaraṇād api kvacit  
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate  
kutaḥ punas te bhagavaṁ nu darśanāt*

“To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face-to-face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the Holy Name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances or even remembers Him.” [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.33.6]

For a detailed explanation of the potency of the Holy Name, please see the **Preface** to our book *Śrī Viṣṇusahasranāma*.

## **Transcendental Knowledge**

The motivation of the student of *Vedānta* is crucial to proper understanding. Generally, three kinds of persons inquire into Absolute Truth: those who have performed all kinds of religious

duties faithfully, and have come to realize the limitations of institutionalized religion and ritualized spiritual practices; those who compassionately desire the greatest benefit for all living beings; and those who have tasted the bliss of meditation and want to completely renounce the activities of this world to attain full self-realization of Absolute Truth.

People who have performed all kinds of religious rituals and duties gradually come to understand that beyond the rote performance of canonical ritual, there is an inexpressible essence of Absolute Truth. Nevertheless they also experience the inability of such practices to grant more than a hint of this Truth. Therefore they embark on a search for a higher esoteric teaching, and if they are sincere, are awarded the opportunity to inquire into Absolute Truth from a realized teacher.

Those who are involved in teaching, counseling, healing, philanthropy and other forms of welfare work gradually come to understand the limitations of such relative assistance. It is said that one can give a hungry man food, and that will satisfy him today. But teach him to cook, and that will satisfy him for life. Similarly, those who perform relative welfare can see that they cannot provide permanent relief from suffering in that way. Therefore they begin to inquire into Absolute Truth to find a permanent solution to the problems of life, both for themselves and others.

Fortunate people who have attempted to experience Absolute Truth through meditation may also come to understand that without proper guidance and a rich fund of transcendental knowledge, they can make but little progress. Their hit-and-miss experiences of meditation have convinced them that there is a higher reality, but they also realize their own inability to attain steady and complete realization of it. Therefore they also begin the search for a qualified teacher to initiate them into the mysteries of Absolute Truth.

These three kinds of students indirectly understand the nature of Absolute Truth according to their own respective abilities. By their independent efforts they eventually become purified enough to attain the association of a self-realized teacher. Once they enter the esoteric school of the teacher, they can continue to make progress until they have attained full realization of Absolute Truth, and their quest is successful.

These three types of aspirants hold in common the experience that relative methods of approaching Absolute Truth are doomed to failure. While many methods of enhancing knowledge and mitigating suffering exist in the relative world, all of them are limited and temporary. All beings existentially crave the full degree of self-realization; but material welfare work, conventional religious piety and even meditation cannot provide it without transcendental knowledge, initiation into the living tradition of *Vedānta* and the personal guidance of a self-realized soul. For they do not contain the most nourishing food of Absolute Truth.

Therefore the practical study of *Vedānta* begins from transcendental knowledge. The first item of transcendental knowledge is that insufficient relative methods provide only limited and temporary results, and to obtain the perfection of Absolute Truth requires methods that are directly absolute. Therefore one should fill his intelligence with the transcendental knowledge described by the absolute nomenclature of *Vedānta*. We will discuss this point very elaborately in later sections of this book.

We remind the student again that simply comprehending the difference between the relative and the absolute, and developing the qualifications of a student of *Vedānta* as described above, are insufficient to realize Absolute Truth. However, if one attains the association of a self-realized soul and follows his instructions, then this transcendental realization, ordinarily impossible to attain, becomes easy.

## **Absolute Nomenclature**

The most important principle of the philosophy of *Vedānta* is the nomenclature of Absolute Truth. Certain verbal formulas called mantras express the transcendental potencies of Absolute Truth, and by being initiated into and practicing these mantras, one can realize the qualities of Absolute Truth within oneself.

It may be difficult for the person educated in the relative conceptions of symbology and semantics to comprehend the idea of an absolute nomenclature. In relative existence, all words and symbols are different from the phenomena they represent. For example, one can repeat the word 'water' as much as one likes, but this will not quench his thirst.

In relative consciousness, even terms intended to denote various aspects of Absolute Truth commonly are defined in terms of relative existence, and are therefore actually relative terms. For example, the Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines God as “(in esp. Christian, Jewish and Muslim belief) the being which made the universe, the Earth and its people and is believed to have an effect on all things.” Note that here God is defined entirely in terms of relative existence, i.e. the material creation.

However, there does exist a class of absolute terminology that has no referent in relative existence whatsoever, and these terms are the nomenclature of Absolute Truth. In keeping with the undifferentiated quality of absolute existence, these terms are nondifferent from the aspects of Absolute Truth they describe. Experience shows that meditating on the transcendental sounds of mantra can induce realization of Absolute Truth in properly trained practitioners.

The nomenclature of Absolute Truth is a large subject, to which we have already devoted several books. For the purposes of this discussion, the nomenclature of Absolute Truth may be understood to consist of words that have no relative referent. In later sections we will present and explain many specific examples.

## **Brahman, the Origin of Everything**

Absolute Truth is the origin of everything, both in the absolute and relative realms. The creation, maintenance and destruction of the relative world occur completely within the context of the eternal existence of Absolute Truth.

*atha kasmād ucyate brahmeti brhanto by asmin guṇāḥ*

“From Whom has this universe become manifest? From Brahman, who possesses an abundance of exalted transcendental qualities.” [*śruti-śāstra*]

Since the entire relative world is an effect, Absolute Truth alone is its cause. The first cause of the relative world cannot be found within the relative existence itself, therefore speculative theories of the origin of the universe attempt to place it in some hypothetical ancient period when conditions were, somehow, different than at present. Nevertheless, matter or energy can never be the cause of itself, since its very existence requires the pre-existence of

consciousness, intelligence, space and time, which no theory of the relative realm can explain.

The only explanation for the relative world that makes sense is that it emanates from Absolute Truth, exists within Absolute Truth and is reabsorbed into Absolute Truth at the end. Absolute Truth is described in *Vedānta* philosophy as *bhūma*, all-pervading, and *ātma*, consciousness or soul. And in the description of Absolute Truth as the source of everything, *Vedānta-sūtra* uses the word *yataḥ*, ‘from Whom.’

*janmādy asya yataḥ*

“[Brahman is] He from Whom everything emanates.”  
[*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.2]

Therefore in the ultimate issue, Absolute Truth is not only all-pervading, but also conscious and personal. Actually, it is not possible that Absolute Truth is impersonal, because Absolute Truth is the source of everything, including persons. And how can the source of persons be without the quality of personality? Of course, it is quite possible for Absolute Truth to be simultaneously personal and impersonal without any contradiction, and we will explore this paradox more fully in later sections.

Absolute Truth as the transcendental Supreme Person emanates everything, maintains the existence of everything, and reabsorbs everything relative when it becomes unmanifest. As such, Absolute Truth contains all qualities of all manifestations. *Vedānta* philosophy calls the reservoir of all qualities Brahman. In this work we use the term Brahman interchangeably with Absolute Truth.

Brahman also indicates an eternal, conscious, unconditionally existing person. *Vedānta-sūtra* uses the term Brahman to indicate the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We therefore prefer Brahman to the Western theological term ‘God’ because as described above, ‘God’ is defined in terms of the relative existence, whereas Brahman explicitly indicates Absolute Truth without any referent to relative existence.

Brahman or Absolute Truth, then, is the subject matter of *Vedānta*. Regarding the qualities of Brahman, the Vedic literature states:

*yo vai bhūma tat sukhaṁ nānyat sukham asti bhūmaiva  
sukhaṁ bhūmatveva vijijñāsītavyaḥ*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the source of genuine happiness. Nothing else can bring one actual happiness. Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead can bring one happiness. For this reason one should inquire about the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.25.1]

*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo  
nididhyāsitaḥ maitreyi*

“O Maitreyī, one should see, hear, remember, and inquire about the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.5]

*tam etaṁ vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vīvidisanti  
yajñena dānena tapasānaśanena*

“The brāhmaṇas strive to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead by Vedic study, sacrifice, charity, austerity, and fasting.” [Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.22]

*satyena labhayaḥ tapasā hy eṣa ātmā samyak  
jñānena brahmacaryeṇa nityam*

“By constant truthfulness, transcendental knowledge and austerity, one becomes eligible to associate with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.5]

Therefore we who are suffering an uncertain existence in the relative world can derive all benefit from inquiring into Brahman or Absolute Truth; for Brahman, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the reservoir of all desirable qualities, up to and including complete independence from the relative existence. These qualities are imbibed through transcendental knowledge of Absolute Truth and the esoteric practice of chanting the Holy Name.

## **The Process of Self-realization**

Knowledge is of two kinds: direct and indirect. Direct knowledge is gathered through the senses, and indirect knowledge is obtained from authorities such as the spiritual teacher, and scriptures such as *Vedānta-sūtra* and the *Vedas*. In relative consciousness, we cannot have direct knowledge of Absolute Truth, but we can gain indirect knowledge of Brahman through spiritual authorities.

However, by performing the process to attain Brahman received through the process of indirect knowledge, we uncover our original absolute consciousness and perceive Absolute Truth directly through

absolute senses. In this way we come to direct knowledge of Brahman, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and also become cognizant of our real eternal identity in the absolute existence.

For, while the Supreme Personality of Godhead is certainly the Supreme Brahman, the dependent living entities emanated from Him also have the qualities of Brahman such as consciousness, desire, will, perception, action and intelligence. Therefore we are also Brahman, but we are not identical with the Supreme Brahman. Rather, we living beings are subordinate emanations of the Supreme Brahman. Because we are only infinitesimal individual emanations of Brahman, out of ignorance of our real nature our original absolute identity has become covered by relative existence in the form of the temporary material mind and body.

*pr̥thag-ātmānaṁ preritaṁ ca matvā  
juṣṭas tatas tenāmṛtatvam eti*

“When one understands that the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the individual spirit souls are eternally distinct entities, then he may become qualified for liberation, and live eternally in the spiritual world.” [*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.6]

By associating with the qualities of Absolute Truth through the process of transcendental sound vibration, the Holy Name, we can free ourselves from all relative limitations, uncover our original absolute nature and join the Supreme Brahman in eternal existence in the absolute world. This is the aim of *Vedānta* philosophy and the *yoga* practices given in the Vedic literature.

# Axioms of Transontology

The following axioms and their corollaries are derived from the Vedic Esoteric Teaching of *Vedānta*, as described above. For a formal mathematical presentation of these ontological axioms in the OWL notation, see our site <http://transontology.org>

- **Axiom:** All energies are emanated by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient spiritual source of everything.
  - **Corollary:** The qualities and quantities of the energies are a subset of the qualities and quantities of their source, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; He is infinite, but His energies are limited.
  - **Corollary:** The spiritual world is the internal energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the material world is His external energy, and the living entities are His marginal energy.
  - **Corollary:** Both the spiritual and material energies of the Supreme Personality of Godhead possess form and other qualities; however, the spiritual energy is eternal, living, conscious, individual and personal, whereas the material energy is temporary, impersonal and inert.
- **Axiom:** The spiritual energy (consciousness) is fundamental to existence; in fact it is the root substance of all other manifestations (Brahman).
  - **Corollary:** All manifestations and phenomena are simply transformations of consciousness.
  - **Corollary:** Consciousness is transcendental to the limitations of Aristotelian logic, specifically the Law of the Excluded Middle, because it is simultaneously, inconceivably one with and different from everything else.
  - **Corollary:** Conscious entities cannot be described by the categories of conventional ontology nor their behavior predicted by Aristotelian logic; this requires the transcendental ontology and logic of the Esoteric Teaching.
- **Axiom:** The living entity is a fundamental particle of spiritual energy.

- **Corollary:** Consciousness is the primary symptom or quality of the living entity.
- **Corollary:** Individuality, personality, intention, mind, memory, desire, initiative, emotion, creativity, living force (*prana, ki*) etc. are also qualities of the living entity and thus concomitant with, and inseparable from, consciousness.
- **Corollary:** The living entity's potency is infinitesimal because he is subatomic in size.
- **Axiom:** The living entity has an eternal ecstatic loving spiritual relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which is his natural constitutional position of pure consciousness in the spiritual energy.
  - **Corollary:** The living entity is eternally related with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one of five primary relationships: neutrality, servitude, friendship, parenthood or conjugal love.
  - **Corollary:** The living entity is temporarily related with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one of seven secondary relationships: laughter, compassion, anger, chivalry, dread, astonishment and ghastliness.
  - **Corollary:** Whether in the spiritual or material energy, the consciousness and experience of the living entity are determined by the character and flavor of his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- **Axiom:** The living entity has complete freedom, thus he may remain in his natural home, the internal spiritual energy, or may be covered by the external material energy.
  - **Corollary:** The living entity can be conscious of the spiritual energy at any time; he becomes conscious of the material energy by rebelling against the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
  - **Corollary:** When the living entity rebels against his natural constitutional relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, this original relationship becomes pervertedly reflected in the material energy, causing the consciousness of the living entity to become conditioned by the qualities of material nature.
  - **Corollary:** When the relationship between the living entity and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is in a normal

healthy condition, the living entity is happy; when the living entity rebels against this relationship, he becomes unhappy and suffers because he is in illusion and denial of his constitutional nature and real identity.

- **Corollary:** When the living entity in conditioned consciousness realizes the cause of his suffering, and again accepts his constitutional relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is reinstated in his original consciousness, ends his suffering and returns to the spiritual world.
- **Axiom:** The living entity is always accompanied by the Supersoul (Paramātmā), a plenary expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
  - **Corollary:** The Supersoul is the eternal friend of the living entity, and remains always faithful and affectionate toward him, constantly maintaining him in all conditions of existence.
  - **Corollary:** The Supersoul manifests and operates the material or spiritual body, senses and environment of the living entity, in cooperation with the living entity's desires.
  - **Corollary:** The Supersoul desires the living entity to be happy, and thus when the living entity is in the material world, always tries to invite him back to his real home in the spiritual world.
- **Axiom:** The living entity may indirectly cause various manifestations by petitioning the Supersoul, who according to His perfect judgment, may create the desired effects with His omnipotent will because of His eternal affection for the living entity.
  - **Corollary:** The apparent creative potency of the living entity is actually the power of the Supersoul responding to the petitions of the living entity.
  - **Corollary:** Prayer, meditation, energy work, creative visualization, worship, *mantras*, devotional service, *yoga*, exercise, mental training and various other material and spiritual disciplines are simply different direct and indirect methods of petitioning the Supersoul for the manifestation of the living entity's desires.

- **Corollary:** The living entity's petition is more effective and easily granted when it is consonant with the purposes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- **Corollary:** When the living entity's petition is against the purposes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he becomes responsible for the *karma* of the manifestation and has to accept an unintended but equal reaction in the same mode (ignorance, passion or goodness); this is the cause of all suffering.
- **Corollary:** When the living entity's petition is in harmony with the purposes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no karmic reaction.
- **Corollary:** The living entity can literally create miracles by dovetailing his will with the purposes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; this is the actual basis of creative visualization and so-called mystic powers.

## **Structural Assumptions of Transontology**

The structural assumptions of Transontology are largely based on practical experience. This differs from the Axioms, which are taken almost verbatim from the Vedic tradition of *Vedānta*, and the Corollaries derived from them by deductive logic.

Some of these structural assumptions are unique to Transontology; others are borrowed from General Semantics, cybernetics, experimental science and other fields. The common factor is that they are extremely useful rules of thumb for the practical application of Transontology. When we use them, we find that our methods work much better than when we don't.

You will probably notice that all the Transontology structural assumptions have a positive perspective.

**If you continue doing what you're doing now, you are very likely to continue getting the same result.**

Or, "If what you do is what you did, then what you'll get is what you got." The structural assumption here is that we are each responsible for and at cause over our own lives. Though we may not be able to control what goes on in the world around us, we can always control how we respond to those events. If we want to change what is happening in our lives, then we have to change our attitudes and activities. If we always act and respond in the same way, then the most likely result is that things will remain the same. This is also why making a decision on the basis of "that's the way we've always done it" is so often a prelude to disaster. One definition of insanity is compulsively doing the same thing that gave one an undesired result, expecting it to give a different result.

**If you want something different you must do something different, and keep changing your behavior until you get the result that you want.**

The second structural assumption is that there's a solution to every problem as long as you're prepared to keep on looking until you find it. Life is so complex that very often it is not possible to reason our way to a workable solution. So if something is not working the way we want, we have to adjust our activity and test the result to see if it gives us the outcome we desire. This leads us straight to the next structural assumption:

**The person with the greatest number of choices in a given situation is likely to get the best outcome.**

This is related to the idea of the BATNA (best alternative to non-agreement). If you go into a situation with only one outcome in mind, and you can't achieve that particular result, then you're up a dead-end street. If, on the other hand, you have several acceptable outcomes in mind (prioritized from the most preferred to the least preferred, of course) then it is very likely that you will be able to achieve at least one of your acceptable outcomes.

**You cannot fail to communicate.**

Some people imagine that they can avoid personal responsibility by simply saying or doing nothing. This structural assumption points out that we are constantly communicating—by what we say, by what we don't say, and by a host of nonverbal signals. There is more to be gained by taking responsibility for one's actions and communicating completely and honestly, than by trying to stay aloof.

**The meaning of your communication is the response you get.**

The structural assumption here is that people respond to **what they think you mean**, which may or may not be an accurate interpretation of your intended meaning. In this context, communication means the whole message: not only what you said, but also all of the accompanying nonverbal signals. The value of this structural assumption is that it points out that if we want people to respond appropriately, then we need to communicate **with** them rather than **at** them. That is, we should constantly be aware of others' responses, and adjust our communication accordingly. This interactive approach to communication will give much better results than just assuming that they will automatically understand what we intend.

**Everyone has all the resources they need to deal with their presenting problem.**

This structural assumption is a bit tricky. The real meaning is that at some level we already know how we created the problem we are most concerned with in the present moment, and therefore we already know all we need to resolve it. This isn't quite the same as saying that we all have whatever resources or capabilities we need to get us out of any situation. Even if we accept the structural

assumption as stated, in practice we must acknowledge two preconditions:

To utilize a resource we must:

1. Know that we have it, and
2. Know how to use it (though not necessarily at a conscious level).

A person with a pressing present-time problem may not be able to access the earlier incidents that led him to create the preconditions of that problem. For example, as a young child someone may have had difficulty with learning to read, leading to creating the attitude that “I can’t read.” Now as an adult, the same person may find it difficult to keep up with developments in his professional field. His lack of reading comprehension is a self-created problem, but he honestly cannot recall creating it.

The solution is for him to examine his attitudes around his difficulty until he realizes, “I **can** read! Anyone can increase their reading comprehension by looking up words in the dictionary, or taking one of the courses available on the Internet.” The key here is educating him in Transontology until he understands that he has the ability to examine his own mind and its programs, and change them at will.

### **Every behavior has a positive intention.**

This is possibly the most controversial of the Transontology structural assumptions, since it is so open to misinterpretation. What it actually means is that every behavior has a positive intention, **as far as the person exhibiting the behavior is concerned**. This does not mean that every behavior is the best possible choice from an objective point of view. Nor does it mean that the behavior will have positive benefits for anyone else.

A classic example of what we might call ‘inverted positive intention’ is the behavior of the insecure executive who gains reassurance from sexually harassing subordinates. The solution to this kind of inappropriate behavior is to find an alternate way of satisfying the intention by more appropriate means. Perhaps the manager has a latent interest in a hobby or some spiritual activity. By encouraging this interest, he could regain enough self-esteem that he no longer needs to bully his employees.

## **Every behavior is appropriate in some context.**

Another way of putting this is: we adopt certain behaviors because once upon a time they worked. The trouble is, we often go on using a certain behavior even though it is no longer appropriate. If we accept this structural assumption, then we can also understand that the most effective solution is to develop a new, more appropriate behavior. Letting go and moving on is a skill that facilitates growth and change. Holding a lengthy postmortem over the old behavior is not only pointless, it is more likely to reinforce that old behavior.

## **A map is not the territory it depicts; words are not the things they describe; symbols are not the things they represent.**

This may well be the single most important structural assumption in Transontology. It was originally stated by Alfred Korzybski, the founder of General Semantics. In very simple terms it means that consciousness is always slightly separated or abstracted from external reality. Even the sensations of our senses are not the things they represent to our mind and consciousness. We all create an internal map of reality (an ontology), but the map is not the place it depicts, and may even differ from it substantially. Words are only a kind of symbolic shorthand for the things they describe. The same with logic. Optimum sanity means that we respond to what is actually happening, rather than complaining that things aren't as they 'ought to be' as shown on our map.

## **Your mind and body are indivisible parts of the same system.**

The structural assumption that our body and mind are separate entities was developed by the medical profession during the 1930s and 40s. Despite its position literally at the head of the central nervous system, mainstream medicine considered that, for all practical purposes, the influence of the mind stopped at the neck. If there was something wrong with your body—from a sniffle to malignant cancer—the only solution was some kind of physical treatment.

That concept may be useful for selling medical treatments to an uninformed public, but it hardly corresponds to the reality of the relationship between the body and mind. More recent scientific evidence shows beyond reasonable doubt that the mind and body are very tightly coupled. For example, the immune system is integrally linked to brain activity, thus mental stress can inhibit

immune system performance, leading to a lower state of general health.

Thus we find that when a person analyzes their symbolic representations using the principles of Transontology, their state of health automatically increases. This occurs because the mind, being relieved of the stress of using an outdated or inaccurate map of reality, ceases to be a cause of stress to the whole body.

**If one person can do something, anyone else can learn to do it.**

One of the key activities in Transontology is the modeling of people who are recognized by their peers as excelling in some field of activity. This modeling helps us identify what they do differently from others, that gives them such remarkable results. Once these differences are identified, they can be communicated to other people, who can then learn to perform with a similar level of skill and excellence.

Of course, the person learning the skill must have the necessary aptitude, interest and motivation, and be willing to carry out the necessary self-development effort. In other words, it is easy enough to model the activity of a world class musician. But someone who has bad hearing, is severely lacking in talent or refuses to consistently put in the necessary hours of practice, is unlikely to be able to translate the modeled information into a personal skill.

Fortunately, in the case of spiritual advancement, everyone has the necessary facilities. Since every one of us is a spirit soul, we all have the ability to become self-realized. The only question is whether we have the desire and determination to do the necessary inner work.

**There is no such thing as failure, only feedback.**

When something doesn't go as we plan, we tend to see it as failure. Depending on the situation we might respond by getting angry, irritated, sad, depressed, worried, guilty or whatever—none of which serves any useful purpose.

But what happens if we see the situation as feedback, rather than failure? Or a lesson of how **not** to do something? Instead of being wrong or failing, we've learned something. Instead of wasting time and energy by feeling bad, we are free to improve our plan of action and try again.

Thomas Edison experimentally tested over 1,000 materials which are not suitable for light-bulb filaments before he found one that worked well enough for practical use. A high percentage of best-selling books were turned down by more than two dozen publishers before they were accepted for publication. And always remember the poor A&R man at Decca records who rejected the Beatles as having no future in music!

**Change makes change.**

It is a fact that the only person you can really change is yourself. Transontology goes one step further, and also acknowledges that changing your own behavior inevitably has an effect on the people around you. The underlying notion, derived from cybernetics, is that when one element of a complex interdependent system changes, the whole system must change to adapt to it.

There is a fascinating little experiment which demonstrates the truth of this presupposition. Groups of three people were seated in an otherwise empty room in such a way that they were each more or less facing both of the other two people. Nobody spoke, no one moved around, gesticulated or otherwise sent overt non-verbal messages. And yet, in every trial, it took no more than two minutes for the person with the strongest feelings at the time, positive or negative, to engender the same emotion in the other two people.

**Genuine understanding comes only from experience.**

You can read all you like, and talk to as many experts as you like, and watch other people doing something on video—but you don't really understand it until you personally have done it.

## Information Abstraction & Consciousness

The Esoteric Teaching is the most advanced spiritual knowledge available. It explains the complex relationships and interactions between the material body, subtle body, spirit soul and Supersoul that produce our conscious experience (see diagram below). The main point of this complex diagram and explanation is actually very simple, but extremely important:

**We do not directly experience the physical world, but abstract representations of sense perceptions created by our mental computer. Similarly, we do not directly control the physical body, but the Supersoul operates it in response to our petitions. Therefore, we can radically improve our consciousness and experience of life by upgrading the software our mental computer and enhancing our relationship with the Supersoul through the process taught by the Esoteric Teaching.**

Note: Please refer to the diagram on the next page.

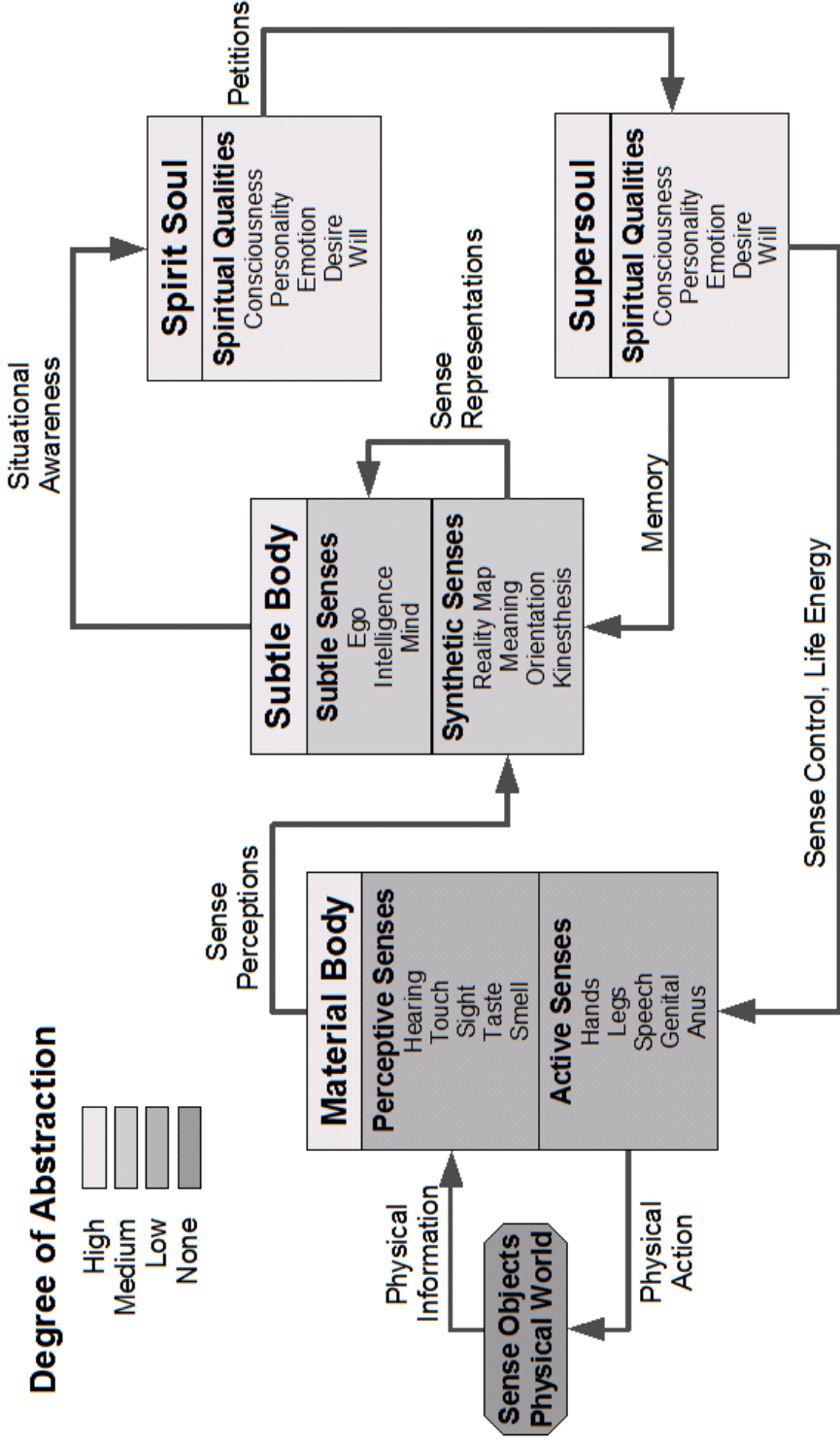
First notice that there are five separate entities, represented by boxes in the diagram: the **physical world** of sense objects, the **material body** and senses, the **subtle body** and mental computer, the **spirit soul** or consciousness, and the **Supersoul** or God. All five work together to create our conscious experience. Each of these five separate entities has very different properties and functions. The correct understanding of the functions and relationships of these five separate entities is the **most powerful key** to changing and improving our consciousness and experience of life.

### Physical World

The physical world contains innumerable sense objects. The sense objects display various qualities of form, color, sound, texture, weight, chemical composition, flavor, odor and other physical qualities. The sense objects and qualities are concrete by definition. In our present state of material consciousness, we are interested in the sense objects of the material world because we think we can derive pleasure from them through the material bodily senses.

# Degree of Abstraction

- High
- Medium
- Low
- None



## Material Body

The **perceptive senses** of the **material body** process the concrete qualities of the sense objects into **sense perceptions**. The main perceptive senses are hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. There are many others, but these are the most important. The complex hardware of the eyes, ears and other senses encode the qualities of the material sense objects into electrical nerve impulses.

Note that these **sense perceptions** are **abstractions** of the qualities of the concrete sense objects they represent. For example, the sense perceptions of hearing are abstractions of the sense objects of sound because they are not sound, but representations of sound as electrical nerve impulses. The perceptions of the senses generate an enormous amount of data—far more than we can process directly without being overwhelmed. The encoded sense perceptions travel along the nerves from the perceptive senses to the brain and subtle body for higher-level encoding, further processing and even greater abstraction.

## Subtle Body

The **subtle body** consists of the **mind, intelligence** and **false ego**. The mind is like a computer that runs many different programs. It is another layer of processing that abstracts the sense perceptions even further from the original material qualities. The computer of the mind runs partially on the hardware of the nervous system and brain, and partially on the subtle body, which is made of energy. Just like any computer, the mind uses an operating system. The mind's operating system technically is called a **metaprogram**, an **ontology** or more informally, a **reality map**. Fortunately, the mind's operating system is much more intelligent, powerful and easier to use and upgrade than Windows!

The mind computer compares patterns in sights, sounds and other sense perceptions with our memories and ontological reality map to form **identifications**. Thus we recognize and classify different objects according to our previous experience. These identifications are processed further by the mind, intelligence and false ego to **recognize** and **evaluate** the **situation** we are in. Recognition and evaluation allow us to form an opinion of how we are doing compared to our purposes and goals. The final output of the mental

computer, **situational awareness** is passed along to the spirit soul as the principal contents of consciousness.

Several programs run under this operating system, including **kinesthesia, orientation** and **meaning**. There are many more programs, but these are the most important ones. Collectively these programs are called **synthetic senses**, because they synthesize more abstract **sense representations** of the original sense perceptions using the transformational semantic functions of **deletion, distortion** and **generalization** (see *Semantic MetaModels*).

The input of the mind's programs is the constant stream of sense perceptions generated by the senses. The output is a series of **sense representations**. These representations are abstractions of the original sense perceptions, in the same way as a graph conveniently represents a series of values. A graphical representation is easier to understand and evaluate than a large set of raw data. Similarly, the sense representations produced by the mind's programs are easier to deal with than the raw data of sense impressions produced by the senses. Abstract representations generally contain far less data than the original sense perceptions on which they are based.

The abstract sense representations output by the mind serve as input for the higher functions of the subtle body. The **intelligence** evaluates the sense representations produced by the mind in terms of our purposes and goals, to determine how we are doing. Do the current sense perceptions indicate that we are coming closer to, or going farther away from our goals? Are circumstances favorable or unfavorable for our purposes? Evaluating information, and also formulating plans based on circumstances, projections of the future and contingencies are functions of the intelligence.

All this information is fed to the **false ego**, which evaluates it in terms of our current conception of our identity and generates feelings based on it. The combined outputs of the mind, intelligence and false ego comprise **situational awareness**: our sense of experience, what is going on and how we are doing in life. Situational awareness is a very high-order abstraction compared to the raw material sense data it is based on, but it is really the most important part of our experience.

When someone greets us and asks, "How are you?" they are really interested in the state of our situational awareness: "Alright," "Fine, thanks," or "Not so good today." Of course, when we need to or

want to, we can drill all the way down to the original sense perceptions. But in fact we spend most of our time and attention on the various abstract representations produced from the original sense perceptions by the mental computer of the subtle body.

## **Spirit Soul**

The **spirit soul** is the immortal self. You are a spirit soul: not a body, a mind or a false ego. Real ego is the spirit soul's eternal identity—but that is a much more advanced subject than we are discussing here. The spirit soul has transcendental qualities like consciousness, personality, individuality, emotion, desire and will. The spirit soul is pure, eternal and indestructible consciousness. Therefore we are not directly conscious of the the physical world, but perceive it indirectly through the material body's senses and the abstractions created by our mental computer.

As pure consciousness, we are transcendental and have nothing to do with the material world. The senses of the material body and the mental computer of the subtle body are a **communication interface** connecting the spirit soul with the material world. They compress the tremendous quantity of physical information of the material sense objects into forms that our limited consciousness can handle without being overwhelmed. They do this by processing and encoding the raw sense data into more and more abstract forms.

The final product of this process of abstraction is our situational awareness. Based on the contents of our situational awareness, the spirit soul forms desires and emotions, and submits requests or **petitions** for action to his eternal friend and companion, the Supersoul.

## **The Supersoul**

The **Supersoul** is the universal controller, the source of all energy, the abode of all possibilities and the Absolute Truth. He is a transcendental plenary expansion of the Supreme Lord who is omnipresent in the material universe. The Supersoul's transcendental qualities are similar to the individual spirit soul, but unlimited in quantity. He constantly accompanies His dear friend, the individual spirit soul, in his long journey through material existence. The Supersoul weighs the petitions submitted by the spirit soul based on His infallible judgment and wisdom of what is best for

the individual and all living entities. He then uses His absolute will to control the active senses, physiological systems and life energy of the material body, and supply memory and inspiration to the mind.

This relationship between the spirit soul and the Supersoul means that we are not independent entities, but all the energy comprising the world, our body, mind and even our self is emanated and controlled by the Supersoul. We are always under the control of the Supersoul. We do have free will, intention and desire, but whether or not we are able to realize our ambitions is subject to the Supersoul's judgment. "Not a blade of grass moves without the will of the Lord," and similarly nothing happens in our material body or mind without His agreement and approval.

It clearly follows that when our petitions are in line with His purposes, the Supersoul is much more inclined to grant them; when we go against His purposes, our aims become much more difficult to achieve. Why should we choose the hard path of fruitless struggle against the infinite power of God, when we can have an easy existence of cooperating with His purposes? God's purposes are revealed in the Esoteric Teaching of the *Vedas* and other bona fide scriptures of the world: He wants us to overcome the conditioning of material consciousness, realize our transcendental nature as spiritual living entities, and go back to the spiritual world to live and enjoy with Him eternally.

As we get to know Him and trust His good character and intentions, we gradually come to see that His plan is really best, both for ourselves and the rest of creation. As the Absolute Truth, He provides the Esoteric Teaching that is the source of the knowledge you are reading now. His desire is that everyone take advantage of this Esoteric Teaching to attain self-realization and become free from all suffering. But since He grants us free will, He never forces Himself on us. He waits until we are tired of the suffering of material existence and conditioned consciousness, and then makes the Esoteric Teaching available through His authorized representative so that we can attain self-realization.

## **Process of Self-realization**

According to the Esoteric Teaching, this process of self-realization has four steps:

- Acquiring accurate knowledge of the process of spiritual advancement (*dharma*)
- Pursuing *karma*-free economic development through sacred work (*artha*)
- Enjoying regulated sense enjoyment according to spiritual principles (*kāma*)
- Attaining complete liberation from material existence (*mokṣa*)

The Esoteric Teaching treats each of these steps in detail. The process involves changing the metaprogram and other programs of our mental computer. Fortunately this is very easy, since we have already been doing it our whole lives. But until now, we have been trying to program our mental computer by trial and error, without accurate knowledge of how the whole system works. Naturally, we have been getting mixed results. The Esoteric Teaching is a detailed manual explaining exactly how to reprogram our computer for optimum results.

First we need an overview of the entire system of information abstraction and how that relates to consciousness. Once we have this high-level overview of the process of consciousness, then we can use the spiritual knowledge of the Esoteric Teaching to reprogram our mental computer so that its metaprogram, abstractions, identifications, representations, evaluations and situational awareness are in harmony with the actual structure and relationships of the physical world, material body and senses, subtle body, spirit soul and Supersoul.

The accurate spiritual knowledge of the Esoteric Teaching enables us to think in terms of the real structure of the world, our bodies, minds and our self in proper relation to God. Real sanity is possible only on this transcendental ontological platform of understanding. Once we have achieved this, we can develop our economic situation without creating the heavy *karma* that cripples most efforts at material work and sabotages the happiness we hope to derive from it. We do this by following the principles of *karma-yoga*, dedicating our work to the purposes of God and the well-being of our fellow humans.

Once we are well-established in *karma-yoga*, it is possible to enjoy life in this material world without anxiety. The prosperity and pleasure we gain in this way is not harmful because it is free from karmic

reaction. This allows us to cultivate the higher consciousness of spiritual liberation, even while in this material body. This is the exalted aim and highly sophisticated process of the eternal Esoteric Teaching, the most advanced technology of advancement in spiritual life.

# **Transontology: the Calculus of Consciousness**

Transontology, a convenient contraction of ‘transcendental ontology,’ is the master key to understanding the science of consciousness. With Transontology, for the first time we can logically map different states and qualities of consciousness, and accurately predict the symptoms and outcomes of conscious states. The theory of Transontology explains all states and manifestations of mind and consciousness: from deep sleep to superconsciousness, and from the pathologies of neurosis and psychosis to advanced stages of meditation, creative visualization, so-called mystic powers and transcendent God-realization. Transontology literally demystifies these aspects of consciousness, bringing them for the first time into the domains of empirical scientific inquiry and even engineering.

Contemporary research into consciousness is stymied because it insists on trying to study consciousness using the same ontological framework as the physical sciences. This will never produce satisfactory results because consciousness is not mundane or physical, but a transcendental object with completely different properties. Existing scientific ontologies lack a proper set of categories for transcendental objects. Therefore the difficulties in consciousness research stem from the fact that consciousness can only be observed, measured and manipulated by entities of equivalent ontological nature and qualities—in other words, by similarly conscious entities.

Transontology eliminates this heretofore intractable difficulty by introducing a complete background ontology of such conscious entities drawn from the Esoteric Teaching of *Vedānta*, a very ancient tradition of transcendental consciousness research. Transontology is the first mathematically precise definition of consciousness and the conscious living entity against the background of other spiritual entities, such as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the spiritual world.

Transontology is a special type of ontology that describes transcendental objects and phenomena. If you are conscious, then you are a transcendental entity; as such, to understand yourself requires Transontology. Against this transcendent background, it is easy to design and implement protocols that produce clear-cut experimental results. In other words, for the first time,

Transontology makes consciousness amenable to methodical empirical research.

Ordinary materialistic ontology and logic cannot account for, or correctly reason about, transcendental phenomena such as consciousness, individuality, personality, living force (prana, ki), desire, choice, intention, initiative, imagination, creativity, love and many other human qualities we experience every day. We need Transontology to understand these phenomena because existing ontologies were developed to support materialistic ways of looking at the world. Transontology helps us to correctly evaluate the immanence of spirit, consciousness and the inner life of the soul.

Transontology is important because it is the only way of giving appropriate meaning to the transcendental aspects of human consciousness, experience and life. To understand ourselves as spiritual beings, make tangible advancement in spiritual life and develop our consciousness to its highest potential, we need to understand Transontology and apply it in our lives.

## **The Ontology of Consciousness**

Consciousness is the primary issue in human life. Indeed, without consciousness, there are no other issues. Consciousness and its corollaries are fundamental to every thought, word and action. Yet how strange it is that no universally accepted, comprehensive theory of consciousness exists in Western science. The reason for this is clear: science intentionally restricts its domain to empirical investigations of the manifest objective world, whereas consciousness is intrinsically subjective and immanent.

Consciousness is the primary experiential fact. Without a practical theory of consciousness, science cannot adequately explain our experience or the world in which we live. Any observer must be conscious, and therefore the consciousness of the observer is critical to the outcome of any quantum experiment. However, so far Quantum Mechanics treats the observer's consciousness as a 'black box,' as if consciousness were proscribed from serious scientific inquiry. And the consciousness research done so far tries to isolate consciousness, as if it were a physical substance that could be poured into a test tube.

This is a perfect example of how language and theory can differ from reality. Just because it is possible to isolate the word

‘consciousness,’ it does not follow that one can isolate the thing consciousness. In reality, consciousness is not a thing, but on the internal side it is a quality inseparable from the living entity: he who is conscious of being conscious. On the external side, consciousness is never found separate from senses, form, mind and personal identity. Any attempt to treat consciousness apart from its structural relationships with the living entity, form (whether material or spiritual) individuality and identity, is futile. Such crippled theories can never lead to any practical result because they fail to recognize the actual structure of consciousness as a transcendental quality of the living entity or soul.

Transontology is derived from the ancient theory of consciousness of Vedānta, a spiritual tradition of vital living importance to hundreds of millions of adherents and practitioners all over the world. Our research reveals an unexpected deep congruence between the Vedic model of consciousness and current trends in pure mathematics and the philosophy of science. It provides a practical and efficient model for understanding all consciousness-related phenomena and techniques that have so far eluded scientific exploration.

Although the *Bādārīnāyana-sūtras* of *Vedānta* certainly make reference to the *Upaniṣads*, they cannot be interpreted by reference to the *Upaniṣads* alone. *Vedānta* can be understood properly only in reference to *Bhagavad-gītā* (*Gītōpaniṣad*) and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*), the natural commentaries on *Vedānta-sūtra* by the same author. Any attempt to interpret *Vedānta* without reference to these works will lead only to an intractable regression into nihilism, similar to Theravada Buddhism or existentialist philosophy. Although such disempowering misinterpretations are popular today, they are useless for understanding and realizing the true potentials of consciousness, for they attempt to deny the indelible structural connections between consciousness and its concomitant transcendental qualities, such as individuality and personality.

## Consciousness Theory

Consciousness is the primary issue in human life. Indeed, without consciousness, there are no other issues. Consciousness and its corollaries are fundamental to every thought, word and action. Yet how strange it is that no universally accepted, comprehensive theory of consciousness exists in Western science. The reason for this is clear: until recently, science intentionally restricted its domain to empirical investigations of the manifest objective world, while consciousness is intrinsically subjective and immanent.

Consciousness is the primary experiential fact. Without a practical theory of consciousness, science cannot adequately explain the world in which we live. Any observer must be conscious, and therefore the consciousness of the observer is critical to the outcome of any quantum experiment. However, so far Quantum Mechanics still treats the observer's consciousness as a 'black box,' as if consciousness were proscribed from serious scientific inquiry.

Here we present and explore an ancient theory of consciousness from *Vedānta*, a spiritual tradition of vital, living importance to hundreds of millions of adherents and practitioners all over the world, discuss and evaluate its potential value to modern science. Our research reveals an unexpected deep congruence between the Vedic model of consciousness and current trends in pure mathematics and scientific inquiry.

Here is a perfect example of how language can differ from reality. Just because it is possible to isolate the word 'consciousness', it does not follow that one can isolate the thing consciousness. In reality, consciousness is inseparable from the living entity on the internal side, he who is conscious of being conscious. On the external side, consciousness is never found separate from senses, form and personal identity. Any attempt to split off consciousness from its structural relationships with the living entity, form (whether material or spiritual is another question) and identity, is a futile endeavor that can never lead to any practical application because it is against the structure of reality.

In other words, consciousness is only one member of a higher-order reality: ontologically, the living entity is the root class, and consciousness, ideation and action are the subclasses. Our whole experience is a very large series of instances of these subclasses. We

can very easily illustrate this in an ontological class diagram. The living entity himself is ontologically inconceivable to us because we ourselves are living entities, and living entities are the *tatāṣṭha-śakti* of the Supreme. As we have discussed numerous times, the ontological conception of the Supreme and His potencies as seen by the Supreme Himself is closed to the living entities.

So we can never be conscious of ourselves as God sees us, just as you can never see your own eyeball. But we are conscious of our own consciousness, the objects of consciousness and the relationships between and among them. So in the ontology of consciousness, the living entities are the superclass or senior order, and the symptoms of the living entity, which are all subjective, are the subclasses composing the living entities' field of experience.

That's why Bhakti is the only path that actually leads to self-realization, because it is completely non-dual. In other words, the practices of devotional service are all performed in the context of an exalted transcendental ontological conception. Because this conception is transcendental, it is eternal. Because it is eternal, it does not change. So the practices of Bhakti, such as chanting the Holy Name of the Lord, are both the *sādhana* (practice) and the object of *sādhana* (realization). One has to experience this to fully appreciate it.

The practices of all other forms of yoga change upon attainment of liberation. The *karma-yogi* becomes a renunciant; the *jnana-yogi* becomes an *avadhuta*. But the Bhakta just keeps on doing *bhakti-yoga* eternally, in this world and the next, in heaven or hell, in *samsāra* or in Vaikuntha.

When the mind is unified and one-pointed, such *samādhi* opens the door to connection with God. If we can understand that our ontological platform is going to change, then we have not yet attained the Absolute Truth: that which is true at all levels of form regardless of time, person, place, condition or state. Realization of this truth is the real goal of *Vedānta* and all the Vedic literature.

# Transontology Processes

**Applied Transontology** is a process of ontological education and transformation leading to personal realization of the Absolute Truth. In theory, all the information required to attain perfection in self-realization is available from the Esoteric Teaching; in practice, it is very difficult for people without special background and training to benefit from it. The degree of ontological aberration in contemporary people is much greater than when the scriptures of the Esoteric Teaching were recorded about 5,000 years ago. Therefore we developed Transontology to bridge the ontological and cultural gaps between people today and the Esoteric Teaching, making the sublime benefits of this great spiritual tradition easily accessible to everyone.

Transontology is a spiritual technology; like any field of technology or engineering, it is always a work in progress. It must be flexible enough to adapt to a wide variety of circumstances and applications without compromising its principles or losing its effectiveness. Therefore we are always eager to hear about successful applications, new improvisations and inspired inventions that produce results. The only rule is: somehow or other, bring people to the exalted state of self-realization as described in the Esoteric Teaching. We're only interested in figuring out how a new technique works once we know that it *does* work. And if it breaks existing rules, so much the better: then we've learned something *really* important!

So this paper, or any other paper on Transontology, is only a suggestion: our best understanding at the time of writing. If you can improve on this understanding, please, by all means go ahead. We are eager to hear of your successful work; after all, the aim of this endeavor is to help people. Exactly how we do it is a detail. With that understanding, let's review the current state of the art of Transontology.

## The Esoteric Teaching

The Esoteric Teaching of the *Vedas* was first presented in the West in an abbreviated and distorted form by Indian teachers like Swami Vivekananda. This greatly minimized its usefulness, and led many intelligent and educated people to reject it. Finally in 1965, our spiritual Master Teacher presented the Esoteric Teaching in its complete and undistorted form. Unfortunately, the Esoteric Teaching is considered a religious tradition in the Indian cultural context. In Western culture this introduces an unfortunate bias due to widespread cheating and the insufficiencies of Western religion in solving the practical problems of life.

The Esoteric Teaching is actually a science, and it is extremely effective in that form. However it is different from Western science because its ontology

includes an extensive understanding of the categories and qualities of transcendental entities such as consciousness, the soul and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This ontology is drawn from the Sanskrit teachings of *Vedānta* such as the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the works of the Gosvāmīs of Vrndāvaṇa. Transontology presents the Esoteric Teaching in a scientific framework, making it more accessible to Westerners educated in empirical methodology.

The goal of Transontology processes is to bring the client's personal ontology into alignment with the transcendental ontology of the Esoteric Teaching. This can be done most effectively with a combination of education, counseling and personal spiritual work. The traditional spiritual processes of the Esoteric Teaching may not be effective with people who have little religious sentiment or Vedic cultural background; therefore the educational and counseling approach is preferred, especially for public presentations and new students.

## **Transontology Counseling**

A qualified client for Transontology Counseling has enough educational background in Transontology to have some understanding of and confidence in its aims, intentions and methods. Transontology Counseling develops a personalized set of powerful affirmations to transform the client's ontology, and start them on the road to realization of the Esoteric Teaching. The affirmations are designed to:

- Counteract the client's inappropriate Semantic MetaModels.
- Diminish the client's false ego and introduce concepts of spiritual identity.
- Build the client's positive relationship with the Master Teacher and the Supreme Personality of Godhead .

Creating an effective set of personalized affirmations requires the Transontology Counselor to develop the following background information:

- Survey the client's real-time problems and their associated semantic patterns.
- Survey the client's habitual inappropriate Semantic MetaModels.
- Determine the nature and qualities of the client's false ego.
- Determine the nature of the client's concept of spiritual life and God.

- Develop an effective set of positive semantic challenges for the client's inappropriate Semantic MetaModels and include these in the language of the affirmations.
- Develop a set of affirmations to reinforce the client's spiritual identity.
- Develop a set of affirmations to reinforce the client's positive relationship with the Master Teacher and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Once a set of appropriate affirmations is developed, they are recorded (with light hypnotic trance induction if necessary) over a background of a *harināma-mantra* that the client has faith in. The client listens to this recording first thing in the morning and last thing at night, and at other convenient times in the day (such as while commuting to and from work) meditating on the affirmations as creative visualizations.

There should be enough time between affirmations for the client to visualize the material. The recording should not last more than 45 minutes. There will seldom be enough time to address all the issues developed during the discovery process. The Counselor must therefore consult the client to prioritize the issues to be addressed in the affirmations.

The Counselor performs the discovery process in a session or series of sessions, making audio recordings with the client's permission. These are for later review and analysis of the client's semantic patterns, which can be difficult to analyze completely in real time.

Transontology Counseling is an art as well as a science. Individual Transontology Counselors develop unique approaches, skills and abilities that others do not possess. Some will be talented in recognizing and challenging inappropriate Semantic MetaModels; others will excel in spiritual insight and education. A working knowledge of Jyotish (Vedic astrology) is very valuable to expose and develop insights the client is unable or unwilling to articulate. Both the natal chart and upcoming transits can reveal challenges that Transontology can help the client confront and overcome.

Prepare a generic set of affirmation recordings to cover issues that most people have: love, affluence, depression, fear of death, health and energy, etc. This can save a lot of time when preparing specific affirmation recordings for clients.

# Open-Source Transontology Programs

## Consciousness-Enhancing Software for Your Mind

Transontology is a **new technology of consciousness enhancement** based on the Esoteric Teaching of the Sanskrit *Vedas*. The Esoteric Teaching has been carefully handed down for over 5,000 years as a secretive religious tradition. Transontology **open-sources this powerful technology** so that anyone can freely benefit from it, and interested professionals can develop new applications in their area of interest and expertise.

Previous versions of Vedic teachings available in the West have been cripple-ware: deliberately distorted and incomplete copies of the original. The original source code and more powerful methods were kept secret by arcane esoteric traditions. Transontology breaks this copy protection and for the first time, provides the original, complete source code and integrated development environment to the public.

What does Transontology do? Like any programming language or software environment, it facilitates developing applications. But unlike other programming languages, Transontology produces programs that run on the computer of the human mind and enhance consciousness with new functions and applications. What kind of applications? That is an open question, limited only by the imagination and ingenuity of the developers.

According to the axioms of Transontology, the definition of every problem includes the assumption that the consciousness and identity of the person experiencing the problem condition will remain the same. Transontology includes powerful processes for changing consciousness, therefore it can be applied as a universal problem-solving engine.

Mental therapy and problem-solving are only partial aspects of the possibilities inherent in Transontology. Increasing the human potential for happiness, creativity and productivity is an unlimited field. It will be very interesting to see what kind of applications imaginative people create, once they have access to the tools to enhance their consciousness in effective and novel ways.

Like any software environment, Transontology has two aspects: as a tool for development of new applications, and as the applications

themselves. The development tool is suited for artists, psychologists, educators, holistic health professionals and others interested in new applications of the human mental computer, and the applications are for their clients to use and benefit from. Like any general-purpose programming language, Transontology principles and techniques are richly typed, complex and abstract. But they can be learned and applied by any intelligent, motivated person with a reasonable amount of time and effort.

The traditional model for religious and spiritual technologies has been closed and proprietary. The most powerful technologies are kept secret, their knowledge limited to an esoteric mystery school, initiated priesthood or inner circle. Development of new applications has been prohibited or heavily controlled. This outdated policy has had a very inhibiting effect on human spiritual progress.

All Transontology applications, and the development environment itself, will be licensed for free public distribution under a license similar to the GPL open-source software license. In other words, the developers retain the copyright to their works, but license it under terms that require free distribution, and any applications and other improvements must also be similarly licensed, open-sourced and freely distributed.

Recent trends in computer software and publishing have shown that the value of a technology increases dramatically when it is shared freely among an open network of users or consumers. This increase of value multiplies exponentially when development tools and source code are also shared openly. Open-source distribution enables many contributors to enhance the value of the technology and develop new applications, often far beyond the vision and imagination of the technology's originators.

Transontology applies the open-source distribution and development model to an ancient technology of consciousness for the first time. By making the development tools and applications available freely to everyone, we open the ancient esoteric teachings to a much wider audience and increase their value to society through community participation.

## **Transontology Semantic Meta-Models**

The concept behind Semantic MetaModels is Korzybski's principle that 'the map is not the territory.' That is, the models of the world and our experience we make with our sense perceptions and language are not the world itself, but representations of it. These representations are necessarily abstractions. If we are unaware of the semantic principles of Transontology, the language we use to represent our experience and thoughts can inappropriately delete, distort and generalize elements of our thinking and communication. Semantic MetaModels formalize a richly defined set of linguistic patterns that can facilitate changing and removing the obstacles in a person's mental map (ontology) of himself and the world.

The specific verbal patterns of the Semantic MetaModels are highly effective in the context of therapeutic change. They are designed for challenging the specific inappropriate deletions, distortions and generalizations in our mental maps, and changing them through the processes of Transontology. With systematic use of the Semantic Meta-Model patterns, we can expand and revise mental maps containing semantic traps, flaws and limitations that prevent us from shifting to more effective and congruent behavior.

Inappropriate Semantic MetaModels are obstacles on the path to success and happiness. Removing an obstacle is not the same thing as traveling the path, but it makes progress possible and reveals something about the territory the path traverses. Some inappropriate Semantic MetaModels can be the result, rather than the cause, of other limiting patterns. "Mind reading," for example, is not necessarily linguistically originated but is often the linguistic representation of self/other identity confusion, boundary ambiguity and other core state meta-patterns.

Semantic MetaModels are an immensely powerful tool in the therapeutic counseling context and for working on oneself. We can make significant progress quickly simply by acknowledging specific inappropriate Semantic MetaModels (limiting patterns) and suggesting better alternatives.

Different individuals have different numbers and kinds of inappropriate Semantic MetaModels in their thinking and speech. The absence of inappropriate Semantic MetaModels does not indicate that a person has no problems in life. But the presence of

inappropriate Semantic MetaModels clearly indicates at least one limiting factor in thinking: language structure that inappropriately deletes, distorts and generalizes thinking and our mental map (ontology).

## **Deletion, Distortion and Generalization**

Semantic MetaModels help us identify inappropriate deletions, distortions and generalizations in our internal thinking patterns and our linguistic interactions with each other, and suggest constructive ways of transforming them or revising their use. The three general categories of Semantic MetaModels are **deletion, distortion and generalization**. All three may be useful in some contexts, and a source of pain or difficulty in others.

- **Deletion** means that we selectively pay attention to certain dimensions of our experience and exclude others. For example, filtering out the sound of a room full of people talking to listen to one particular person's voice requires selective awareness or filtering. Deletion reduces the information throughput, so we can handle it in real time without being overwhelmed. The process of deletion used inappropriately may lead a person to ignore important changes in the environment or within himself.
- **Distortion** allows us to shift or remix our experience of sensory data. Fantasy, for example, allows us to prepare for experiences which we may have before they occur. Distortion facilitates dreaming and the human creative process. All great novels, art and music, and all revolutionary discoveries of science require the ability to distort, remix and misrepresent present reality. The process of distortion used inappropriately may lead a person to alter or concoct information about his state or surroundings.
- **Generalization** is the process by which elements or pieces of a person's model become detached from their original experience and come to represent the entire category of which the experience is an example. Our ability to generalize is essential to coping with the world. The inappropriately use of generalization may lead a person to establish a rule such as, "Don't express any feelings," that may have been helpful in one situation but is generally ineffective.

## How to Use Semantic MetaModels

Because of the large number of Semantic MetaModels, it is best to learn them in small chunks. One way to do this is to read this document over once without the intention of remembering it, noticing any patterns that one recognizes in one's own thinking or communications. For many people, a few will stand out. Focus on learning those few well. Tune your ears to hear them in the speech of others, and catch and transform them your own thinking and speaking.

Some of the most common and problematic inappropriate Semantic MetaModels are: **Mind Reading, Modal Operators, Cause and Effect, and Complex Equivalence.**

### Inappropriate Semantic MetaModels

#### 1a. Simple Deletions (Unspecified Nouns)

Vague nouns or pronouns that create confusion and ambiguity.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Point to missing specifier)
"It's time for you to face reality."	"Whose reality?"
"Get a life."	"What kind of life?"
"This situation is impossible."	"Impossible exactly how?"
"There are certain things you just can't get through your head."	"Which things specifically?"
"Its not what you know, it's who you know."	"What's not what who knows? Whom does who need to know?"

#### 1b. Simple Deletions (Unspecified Adjectives)

Adjectives the meaning of which are unspecified. Unspecified adjectives are a frequent indicator of interpretation rather than observation and often beg the question of lost performatives.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Point to missing specifier)
"I attract jerkish behavior."	"Jerkish in what way?"
"Must you wear that silly hat?"	"Silly in whose opinion?"
"Why the smug look?"	"What kind of look is 'smug'?"

### 1c. Simple Deletions (Unspecified Relationships)

Relationships between terms or ideas that are assumed and unspecified.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I need to buy new clothes before I can feel confident."	"Is there anything you feel confident about that doesn't require new clothes?"
"I've had this problem a long time, so it will be hard to change."	"What is the relationship between time and ease of change?"
"I can't have a relationship until I lose weight."	"What specifically connects relationships to your weight?"

### 2. Comparative Deletions

Phrases and sentences which imply a comparison but delete the object on which the comparison is based, or which do not specify the basis of comparison. Frequent words: *even, very, more, less, greater, lesser, bigger, brighter, smarter*, etc. (than what? how?)

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"Even you can understand what I'm about to tell you."	"Even? Compared to whom?"

"If your tastes were better, people would like you more."	"Better? Than what?"
"Do you think you could talk less and think more?"	"Talk less and think more than whom?"

### 3. Unspecified Referential Index

A phrase that deletes who is doing the acting. Using a general subject that doesn't refer to a specific person. Frequent words: *a person, someone, people, they, one, we*. Also, generalizations that apply to classes or groups of individuals: *Americans, Catholics, Jews, managers, workers, men, women, etc.*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"A person could get really fed up with you."	"Which person?"
"People don't like you."	"Which people?"
"One isn't going to learn what one doesn't want to know, is one?"	"Which one?"
"A wife should at least fix a man dinner."	"Which wife should fix which man dinner?"
"A body has to wonder what's going on in that brain of yours!"	"Whose body?"

### 4. Unspecified Verbs

Process words that are missing a complete description, and verbs that are unspecified to a greater or lesser degree. Also omitting the verb, the object of the verb, or both.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Point to missing specifier)

"Don't force me to get angry with you again."	"Force you how?"
"You never express your feelings."	"Express in what way?"
"I wish you wouldn't chatter on like that."	"Chatter?"
"Oh, stop whining."	"Whining exactly how?"

### 5. Nominalizations

A process (verb) that has been converted to a thing or event (noun). A common nominalization is adding *-ing* to a verb to make it a noun.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Convert the back into a process)
"Men have no appreciation for feelings or intuition."	"What do you appreciate about men?"
"Women like you are not successful."	"We succeed best at what we love."
"If only you had a new thought now and then, your understandings wouldn't be so trivial."	"I wonder if I understand your intentions."
"You have a hard time with decisions."	"So that's what you've decided."

**Note:** Inductive Nominalizations of Identity: adding *-er* to a verb to classify an identity by means of a complex equivalence. "I see you walking. Therefore you are a walker." The process is one of complex equivalence: "I see you walk and that means you are a walker." The speaker who is unaware of this linguistic pitfall may often believe a 'meaning' has been arrived at when in reality the process only has been converted to a class.

## 6. Modal Operators

Words which dictate or imply what is possible, right and/or necessary.

### 6a. Modal Operators of **Necessity**: *must, mustn't, have to*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You have to get your act together."	"What would happen if I didn't?"
"I have to make at least \$500,000 a year."	"According to what criteria?"

### 6b. Modal Operators of **Possibility**: *can, can't, could, couldn't*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You can bring me a beer."	"What would happen if I didn't?"
"I can't stand your hair anymore."	"What would happen if you <i>could</i> stand my hair?"
"She could be more intelligent."	"She could be more intelligent if what?"
"He couldn't be dumber."	"What prevents him?"
"I can't get the hang of this."	"Can't? What if you could?"

### 6c. Modal Operators of **Judgment**: *should, shouldn't, ought to* (see also Lost Performative)

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Same as challenge to Lost Performative)
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"You should be a better cook."	"According to whom?"
"You shouldn't wear those colors."	"According to whom?"

**Note:** When "I" is the subject, challenge parts. Example:

Internal Dialog: "I should be better at this."

"According to whom?"

"According to me."

"According to which part of me?"

**6d. Modal Operators of Contingency:** *would, wouldn't*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"Surely you must have realized I would get angry [if you did that]."	"You would? How would you rather get?"
"You wouldn't look natural in a car that expensive."	"I wouldn't? If what?"
"I would make a change."	"You would, except for what?"

**7. Presuppositions**

Statements in which some unstated element must be assumed (presupposed) to be true in order for the statement to make sense (to be true or false). That is, the surface structure of the statements (the specific words and their meanings) omit or obscure the deep structure of the statements (their underlying message or presupposed truths). In the Semantic Meta-Model, presupposition forms are named for the manner in which the sentences that contain them either delete or obscure them in the surface structure. As you learn about these presuppositions, you will hear people using these on you all the time. It's not that they suddenly learned how to do that, they've been doing it to you all your life, up until now.

### 7a. Selectional Restriction Violation

Attributing conscious awareness to an inanimate object or a mode of communication to a creature that doesn't have that mode. ("A chair can have feelings.") Denying conscious awareness in conscious beings or denying a mode of communication or capability to a creature which does have that mode. Excluding complementary categories by definite description (gender, race, religion, etc.).

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Challenge directly or reframe same structure)
"You have the personality of a stump."	"Stumps always speak highly of you."
"Your dress probably wishes you were younger."	"My dress definitely wishes you were smarter."
"Men cause wars."	"Believing men cause wars causes a war between the genders."
"Women are manipulative."	"So then, every woman is always manipulative and no man ever is?"
"To my parrot I'm just 'The Food Lady'."	"So then, what are you to the food?"

### 7b. Simple Presuppositions

These are syntactic environments in which the existence of some entity is required for the sentence to make sense (to be either true or false).

Type	Example	Supposition
<b>Proper Name</b>	"George Smith left the party early."	There exists someone named George Smith.

<b>Pronouns</b>	"I saw <i>him</i> leave."	<i>Him</i> refers to a person who was here.
<b>Definite Description</b>	"I liked the woman with the silver earrings."	There exists a woman with silver earrings.
<b>Generic Noun Phrases</b> Noun arguments standing for a whole class	"If wombats have no trees to climb in, they are sad."	There are wombats.
<b>Quantifiers</b> <i>all, any, each, every, some, many, few, none</i>	"If some of the dragons show up, I'm leaving."	There are dragons.

### 7c. Complex Presuppositions

Cases in which more than the simple existence of an element is presupposed.

Type	Example	Supposition
<b>Relative Clause</b> Noun followed by a phrase beginning with <i>who, which, or that</i> .	"Several of the women who had spoken to you left the shop."	Several women had spoken to you.
<b>Subordinate Clauses of Time</b> Clauses identified by <i>before, after, during, as, since, prior, when, while</i>	"If the judge was home when I stopped by her house, she didn't answer her door."	I stopped by the judge's house.
<b>Cleft Sentence</b> Beginning with <i>It [was/is]</i>	"It was the extra pressure which shattered the window."	Something shattered the window.

<p><b>Pseudo-Cleft Sentence</b> In the form, <i>What [Clause] is [clause]</i></p>	<p>"What Sharon hopes to do is to become well liked."</p>	<p>Sharon hopes to do something.</p>
<p><b>Stressed Sentence</b> Voice stress</p>	<p>"If Margaret has talked to THE POLICE, we're finished."</p>	<p>Margaret has talked to someone.</p>
<p><b>Complex Adjectives</b> <i>New, old, former, present, previous</i></p>	<p>"If Fredo wears his new ring, I'll be blown away."</p>	<p>Fredo had /has an old ring.</p>
<p><b>Ordinal Numerals</b> <i>First, second, third, fourth, another</i></p>	<p>"If you can find a third clue in this letter, I'll make you a mosquito pie."</p>	<p>There are two clues already found.</p>
<p><b>Comparatives</b> <i>-er, more, less</i></p>	<p>"If you know better riders than Sue does, tell me who they are."</p>	<p>Sue knows [at least] one rider.</p>
<p><b>Comparative As</b> <i>As x as . . .</i></p>	<p>"If her daughter is as funny as her husband is, we'll all enjoy ourselves."</p>	<p>Her husband is funny.</p>
<p><b>Repetitive Cue Words</b> <i>Too, also, either, again, back</i></p>	<p>"If she tells me that again, I'll kiss her."</p>	<p>She has told me that before.</p>
<p><b>Repetitive Verbs and Adverbs</b> <i>Verbs and adverbs beginning with re-: repeatedly, return, restore, retell, replace, renew</i></p>	<p>"If he returns before I leave, I want to talk to him."</p>	<p>He has been here before.</p>
<p><b>Qualifiers</b> <i>Only, even, except, just</i></p>	<p>"Only Amy saw the bank robbers."</p>	<p>Amy saw the bank robbers.</p>

<p><b>Change-of-Place Verbs</b>  <i>Come, go, leave, arrive, depart, enter</i></p>	<p>"If Sam has left home, he is lost."</p>	<p>Sam has been at home.</p>
<p><b>Change-of-Time Verbs and Adverbs</b>  <i>Begin, end, stop, start, continue, proceed, already, yet, still, anymore</i></p>	<p>"My bet is that Harry will continue to smile."</p>	<p>Harry has been smiling.</p>
<p><b>Change-of-State Verbs</b>  <i>Change, transform, turn into, become</i></p>	<p>"If Mae turns into a hippie, I'll be surprised."</p>	<p>Mae is not now a hippie.</p>
<p><b>Factive Verbs and Adjectives</b>  <i>Odd, aware, know, realize, regret</i></p>	<p>"It is odd that she called Maxine at midnight."</p>	<p>She called Maxine at midnight.</p>
<p><b>Commentary Adjectives and Adverbs</b>  <i>Lucky, fortunately, far out, out of sight, groovy, bitchin', innocently, happily, necessarily</i></p>	<p>"It's far out that you understand your dog's feelings."</p>	<p>You understand your dog's feelings.</p>
<p><b>Counterfactual Conditional Clauses</b>  <i>Verbs having subjunctive tense</i></p>	<p>"If you had listened to me and your father, you wouldn't be in the wonderful position you're in now."</p>	<p>You didn't listen to me and your father.</p>
<p><b>Contrary-to-Expectation</b>  <i>Should</i></p>	<p>"If you should [happen to] decide you want to talk to me, I'll be hanging out in the city dump."</p>	<p>I don't expect you want to talk to me.</p>

<b>Selectional Restrictions</b>	"If my professor gets pregnant, I'll be disappointed."	My professor is a woman.
<b>Questions</b>	"Who ate the tapes?"	Someone ate the tapes.
<b>Negative Questions</b>	"Didn't you want to talk to me?"	I thought that you wanted to talk to me.
<b>Rhetorical Questions</b>	"Who cares whether you show up or not?"	Nobody cares whether you show up or not.
<b>Spurious Not</b>	"I wonder if you're not being a little unfair."	You are being unfair.

### 8. Universal Quantifiers

Words that are absolute generalizations without a referential index.  
 Frequent words: *always, never, every, all, none, etc.*

<b>Inappropriate Models</b>	<b>Positive Challenges</b> (Open the universal quantifier to question)
"You always wear that shirt."	"Always? I never wear anything else?"
"With you, it's always something."	"Always? Without exception?"
"She's that way all the time."	"So she's never <i>not</i> that way?"
"He's never on time and never dressed properly."	"Never? Not once?"

"Every time I try, I fail."	"Every single time? Without exception?"
"None of my efforts have ever succeeded."	"None? Not even one?"

### 9. Cause/Effect

The implication or direct claim that one thing causes, or is caused by, another when there is no well-formed logical support or demonstrable, sensory-based evidence to support a causal connection. Frequent words: *makes, because, if...then, as...then, then, since, so.*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"Look what you made me do."	"How exactly did I make you do that?"
"Whenever you come along, our team loses."	"So our team always wins when I am absent?"
"It's your own fault she left you because you didn't like her music."	"No woman has ever left a man who liked her music?"
"I'm not responsible for my actions because my parents were abusive."	"Children of abusive parents behave in different ways."
"If it weren't for the economy, I'd be doing fine right now."	"I could be doing fine right now, regardless of the economy."
"I didn't call, so he killed himself."	"Who have I not called who hasn't killed himself?"

### 10. Mind Reading

10a. Believing one knows the thoughts, feelings, intentions, meanings, motivations, or other internal processes of another

person, with no basis in reasonable, logical grounds for interpretation or direct, sensory observation.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You are just trying to make me look foolish."	"How do you know what I'm trying to do?"
"You are deliberately annoying me."	"Are you sure you know my intentions?"
"I'm sorry to bore you with my story."	"So you think you will bore me?"
"They're probably thinking how foolish I look."	"I have no idea what they're thinking."
"I knew she was going to say that."	"I thought she might say that."
"I'm boring her."	"I notice her eyes wandering. I wonder what that's about."

**10b.** Believing that another person knows, doesn't know, or should know the thoughts, feelings, intentions, meanings, motivations, or other internal processes of oneself without direct communication.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You know how I feel about you."	"So you know what I know? That's impressive. How do you do that?"
"You always knew I would leave you eventually."	"When do you believe I began to always know that?"
"You know what I'm going through!"	"So that's what you think."

"They can all tell I don't feel confident right now."	"They may not perceive how I'm feeling right now."
"She should know I want to be left alone for awhile."	"She can't know I want to be left alone for awhile."
"When I think of something, he always picks up on it!"	"We often have very good rapport with each other."

**10c.** Believing one knows that another person doesn't know or understand what is apparent to their sensory observation, what has been or is being expressed or explained, or what their capabilities are to understand.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You wouldn't understand."	"How do you know that?"
"I already told you."	"Are you certain?"
"You don't know how hard I'm working."	"So you think I don't know how hard you're working."
"Even if I told him, he couldn't appreciate it."	"If I told him, I'm afraid he wouldn't appreciate it."
"She just can't understand despite my efforts to communicate."	"She doesn't seem to understand what I've been trying to communicate."
"If I wait, eventually they'll figure out what I want."	"If I wait, eventually they might figure out what I want."

**10d. Crystal Ball Gazing:** Believing one knows an unknowable future for oneself or others.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I'll never find a man who loves me."	"So you'll be surprised when he shows up?"
"He'll always be an addict."	"How can you be so sure?"
"My future is dark and full of pain."	"How can you tell so far ahead of time?"

Stacked Meta Model Violations with Mind Reading includes claiming any of the above types of knowledge about another person's internal processes plus using other Meta Model aberrations (stated or implied) as evidence (cause-effect, complex equivalence, missing referential index, universal quantifier, lost performative, etc.).

This category includes armchair psychology, such as presuming the ability to diagnose mental disorders or claiming to know or understand another person's unconscious processes without either professional expertise or the ability to back up the claim with reasonable and widely accepted standards of observable behavior and criteria.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"You don't know what I'm going through! [but you should]"	Stacked MetaModel Violations are less accessible to productive interactive challenge since, if one aberration is challenged, the other presuppositions are tacitly accepted. Yet, to challenge all of the stacked aberrations is cumbersome in natural conversation.
"You burned the vegetables [and that means] you don't love me."	
"You wouldn't understand because men never do."	
"If you weren't so neurotic you'd do what I say."	

<p>“You always forget where you put the car keys. You’re obviously getting senile.”</p>	
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## 11. Complex Equivalence

Statements where complex situations, ideas, objects or their meanings are equated as synonymous. Frequent words [which are often omitted from the surface structure of the sentence]: *that means, that just means, it must be that, [rhetorical] what else could it mean?*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
“The boss has his door closed. He’s planning to fire me.”	“You mean every time your boss closes his door somebody gets fired?”
“You’re not eating your vegetables. What’s the matter? You don’t like my cooking?”	“If I liked your cooking, would I have to eat my vegetables?”
“You bought me white flowers instead of red ones. You don’t love me like you used to.”	“So only red flowers mean I love you?”
“I don’t know what to do. I must be really stupid.”	“I don’t know what to do. What resources do I need in order to have a better idea?”
“I’m getting frustrated. I can’t do this.”	“I’m getting frustrated. Perhaps I’ll take a break and see if there’s a better approach.”
“They’re succeeding and I’m not. I just don’t have what it takes.”	“They’re succeeding and I’m not. What specifically are they doing differently?”

## 12. Lost Performative

Value judgments made without specifying who is making the judgment (the performer of the judgment is deleted from the statement).

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"It's a good thing your head is attached (or you'd forget it)."	"According to whom?"
"You have lousy taste in clothes. It needed to be said."	"Who needed to say it?"
"Your ideas are stupid."	"Says who?"
"I'm no good at relationships."	"Sometimes I think I'm no good at relationships."
"I'm a slow learner."	"I notice that, compared to Jim and Kim, I'm faster at learning some things, slower at learning other things."
"I'm a computer dummy."	"Working with computers is not currently one of my top skills."

## 13. Either/Or

Statements or questions that engage one's attention on a consequence that presupposes something else. It creates what Erickson called "an illusion of choice," and directs attention to consider only the two possibilities mentioned.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Outframe the limitation in choices)
"Are you doing that on purpose or can't you help it?"	"Are those my only two choices?"

"Do it now <i>or</i> do it later."	"Aren't you forgetting something?"
"Are you dense <i>or</i> just naïve?"	"Are those the only two options you can think of?"
"Either we win or lose."	"Could we win in one sense and lose in another? What would have to be true if we did neither?"

#### 14. Over/Under Defined Terms

Terms that rely on purely abstract definitions that do not reference anything or anyone specific. Such terms rely on multiple levels of indirection and tend to produce trance (positive or negative). They are over-defined when we treat the words as 'real' in themselves, when in fact they are abstractions, and they are under-defined in the sense that they do not use sufficient specific facts and details that clearly extend to actual referents we can point to or perceive with our senses.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I married him because I thought he'd be a <i>good husband</i> ."	"If he became a good husband, what specifically would be different?"
"Crime is caused by problems in <i>socialization</i> ."	"What part of socialization causes which specific crimes?"
"I get impatient because I'm not being <i>productive</i> ."	"What do you want to produce?"

#### 15. Delusional Verbal Splits (Elementalism)

Using language to compartmentalize and dichotomize elements of a whole so that we think and talk about them as if they actually exist apart from the whole. Maps created with elementalism do not accurately represent the territory and prevent us from thinking

systemically. Common delusional verbal splits include: ‘mind’ and ‘body’, ‘space’ and ‘time’, ‘thoughts’ and ‘emotions’.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
“My mind wants one thing, but my body wants another.”	“Does your mind really stand alone?” “What context does your mind occur within?” “What would it be like if your mind-body wanted something?”
“Rationally, I know it’s not true but my emotions still believe it.”	“If your thoughts and emotions merged into an attitude, what would it be?”
“Part of me wants to stay, and part of me wants to leave.”	“Who will you be when those parts merge into one?”

### 16. Multiordinality (a type of nominalization)

Over-generalizing the meaning of words to the point where a word has a multiplicity of meanings and can be applied, ad infinitum, to itself. For example, “I have a thought about that thought (and a thought about that thought about that thought),” etc.

Deleted in multiordinal terms is the level or dimension of abstraction being used in the generalization. Example words include: mankind, being in love, marriage, job, thought, education, ethics, religion, sanity, insanity, object, etc. These terms are infinitely valued stages of processes with a changing, ambiguous content.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
“I’m having second <i>thoughts</i> about our relationship.”	“What thoughts are you having?”
“I’m <i>in love</i> with being <i>in love</i> .”	“What kind of love are you talking about?”

"This isn't a <i>marriage</i> ."	"If this were a marriage, what would be different?"
"I'm afraid I'll use poor <i>judgment</i> again."	"When can you determine that a judgment will be poor?"
"My goal is to be <i>happy</i> all the time."	"If you break your leg, do you want to be happy about it?"

### 17. Static Words (a type of nominalization)

A fixed or rigid meaning applied to a multiordinal term. Static expressions sound like pronouncements from heaven, made as if by an all-knowing deity or inaccessible legislator, or spoken with an attitude of, "Everyone knows that..."

Static expressions map reality in absolutist and dogmatic terms and phrases, assumed (or intended to be taken) as true without challenge.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"That's just the way <i>life</i> is."	"Life? What do you mean? For whom?"
"Kids are a <i>pain</i> ."	"Which kids are a pain when they do what?"
"You've got to be <i>together</i> to be together."	"If I were together, how would I know it?"
"It's <i>lonely</i> at the top."	"Is that always true?"
"Money can't buy you <i>happiness</i> ."	"What kind of happiness are you talking about?"

## 18. Pseudo-Words (a type of nominalization)

Linguistic maps that reference nothing either in the mind (including abstract logic) or the external world. These can be nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, expressions, etc. They are either names of things which do not exist, or fictions based on false or idle theories. As such, they may be context dependent. For example, ‘unicorn’ references nothing in the external world, but does reference something in mythology. Example words: *heat, space, infinity, ownership, awful, horrible.*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
“It’s <i>terrible</i> being alone.”	“What don’t you like about it?”
“The <i>violence of truth</i> oppresses me.”	“If I could experience the violence of truth, what would I see, hear or feel?”
“Scientists may have found the <i>edge of the universe.</i> ”	“If the universe is the whole of everything that physically exists, its ‘edge’ forms the boundary between it and what else?”
“We can’t finish building your house. We’ve run out of <i>inches.</i> ”	“Where did you get the inches you already used?”
“ <i>Before time began</i> , there was nothing.”	“Are you referring to a time before time began?”
“I have a sense that I am <i>flawed.</i> ”	“Flawed as opposed to perfect? Please show me perfection.”
“I can’t recapture my <i>motivation.</i> ”	“Perhaps I can help you find it. Can you show me a photo of it?”

## 19. Identification (a type of nominalization)

The root of the word ‘identity’ is the Latin ‘*idem*’, meaning “the same.” No two things are ever exactly the same in all respects, so no two things can be identical. No one thing is even the same from

moment to moment. Therefore, identification is abstract, resulting from deletion of distinctions. Example words: *is, am, are, an, was, were, be, being, been, like, etc.*)

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I <i>am</i> a loser."	"What, specifically, have you lost?"
"You <i>are</i> high maintenance."	"How are you maintaining me?"
"This car <i>is</i> so 'me'."	"How is it like you?"
"I <i>am</i> not the type of person who can succeed."	"How is it useful to identify with a type?"
"I don't like who I <i>am</i> ."	"How are you different from the 'you' you don't like?"

## 20. Emotionalizing

Using our emotions for gathering and processing information: "I feel it, so it must be true." Emotionalizing confuses internally generated and externally generated experience, so that instead of simply experiencing an emotion, we use it as evidence of a corresponding negative external situation. Emotions arise in response to differences or similarities between our maps and the territories they represent.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I got fired today."	"What words did your boss use to fire you?"
"The world is a hopeless place."	"So you are feeling hopeless?"
"He loves me, I can tell."	"How can you tell?"
"What a sad life this is."	"What about it makes you feel sad?"

## 21. Personalizing

Interpreting events, especially the words or actions of others, as specifically targeted toward us and/or as an attack on us. This process inaccurately connects external events to our self-image, self-opinion and self-definition, and ultimately relinquishes responsibility for our own choices and actions. Example words: *I, me, mine.*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I'm under constant attack by society, finances and relationships."	"Is someone attacking you right now? Can you point them out to me?"
"They make hamburgers too big, out of disregard for my health."	"If they make a hamburger, what do you have to do to get fat from it?"
"She doesn't want me here. She asked how long I'd be staying."	"How do you know she wasn't just planning her time?"
"He abandoned me. Every football season he was glued to the TV."	"How do you know when to take that personally?"

## 22. Metaphors

Understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. Metaphor is different from simile. Metaphor: "My love *is* a rose." Simile: "My love is *like* a rose." Metaphors are an important feature of language, but they can create negative states when we take their meanings, and the fact that they are metaphors, for granted without examination. Like identification, they delete differences. Example clue words: *is, are, were, be, etc.*

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"She is damaged goods."	"How was she injured?"

"We are swimming in a sea of man-made toxins."	"The 'sea' is similar to what in your experience?"
"Time is money."	"What else is time?"
"He's a pain in the neck."	"What does he do, specifically?"
"Life sucks."	"Is that all that life does?"

### Tag Questions

A question added at the end of a statement, which changes the focus of the listener's attention to answering the tag question, away from the preceding statement. Tag questions are sometimes accompanied by a temporal shift.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges (Return focus to the statement)
"You always manage to turn the tables on me, don't you?"	"Is that what you believe?"
"You've really done it this time, haven't you?"	"Done what as opposed to which time?"
"You'll never learn, will you?"	"Is that today's lesson?"

### Conversational Postulates

A "yes or no" question to which the listener is expected to respond by actively doing what is implied. The simplest example is: "Can you tell me what time it is?" (Most people will look at their watch and tell you the time, answering with behavior rather than answering the actual question.)

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"Will you please stop telling me that?"	No action. A simple 'yes' or 'no' answer, or no answer at all if presuppositions are embedded -- <i>without doing what is implied.</i>
"Would you mind not looking at me like that?"	
"Can you move your fat duff over a bit?"	

## 18. Ambiguity (selected)

### 18.3 Syntactic Ambiguity

Where the function of a word in the immediate context is ambiguous.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"The Smiths are visiting relatives."	"Is 'visiting' a verb or an adjective?"
"Frank is a training consultant."	"Is Frank <i>in</i> training, or does he <i>do</i> training?"
"The peasants are revolting."	"Do you mean the peasants are disgusting, or launching a revolution?"

### 18.4 Scope Ambiguity

Where the scope of the linguistic context can't be determined. Using a modifier in a linguistic context where it is unclear which other part(s) of the sentence the modifier refers to.

Inappropriate Models	Positive Challenges
"I noticed your messy habits and towels on the hanger."	"Are the towels messy? Are the habits on the hanger?"

"Speaking to you as a person of intelligence, language isn't always clear."	"Is the speaker a person of intelligence, or is the listener a person of intelligence?"
"There is a time and a place for everything and this is one of them."	"Is 'this' a time or a place?"

## Ontological Commitment

Every time we make a statement about anything, we knowingly or unknowingly reference an **ontology**. An ontology is a collection of descriptions of the world that helps us define the meaning of our experience and actions. A metaphysics is an ontology; so is a science, a religion, a culture and many arts, such as music.

For example, simply using the word **ontology** or **ontological** immediately invokes a whole science of meaning, along with its technical vocabulary and specialized terminology. Similarly, mention **music** and you link to a vast historical and contemporary repertoire of music, musicians, musical styles, technique, theory, interpretation, etc.

Ontologies are far more than definitions of terms; they are definitions of **concepts**: the thoughts in our minds that terms represent. Whenever we use a term in a certain sense, we invoke the concept it represents. Concepts do not stand alone, but form **contexts** that more fully qualify their meaning; a context complete with a full metaphysical structure is an ontology.

Therefore, just as no one can avoid making ontological implications, **no one can avoid making ontological commitments**. Nor can we divorce ourselves from making ontological judgments about people and situations. Our ontological commitments identify our level of consciousness and determine our possibilities—what we believe to be possible certainly delimits the scope of our activities. For example, if one does not believe that he is smart enough to understand ontology, it is very unlikely that anyone can teach it to him with any amount of effort.

Ontologies are necessary because we require more information than just the immediate experiential facts to determine the meaning of a thing or process. **We need a map to remind us where we are in the forest while we deal with the trees.** An ontology is such a map, supplying additional contextual information and effectively increasing our intelligence.

The more consciously aware we are of our ontological commitments, the clearer we will be about the meaning of our life and ourselves as persons. The more we make our ontological commitments explicit, the better we communicate our understandings with others. **Anyone**

who is unaware or unsure of their ontological commitment is certainly at a disadvantage.

## Vedic Ontology

Vedic texts express a very high degree of ontological commitment. Scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Vedānta-sūtra* do not stand alone, but remain integral parts of a vast ontological context: the Vedic literature. Analyzing the meaning of any Vedic scripture apart from its ontological context would be like a desert dweller, who has never seen a lake or ocean, trying to figure out the biology of a fish.

The Vedic literature contains numerous ontologies, all perfectly harmonious with the ultimate purpose of the *Vedas*: to help humankind attain self-realization. *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the extensive commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* by its author Srila Vyasa-deva, is especially rich in ontological content. The [Second Canto](#) describes the process of universal manifestation, and the [Fifth Canto](#) contains a very complete ontology of time and an amazingly accurate map of the solar system.

Thus, to speak in the Vedic context is to invoke a powerful ontology, a complete metaphysics and a science of consciousness unequaled elsewhere in literature. **One who claims to represent the Vedic tradition must understand the Vedas on the ontological level**, and must live according to the Vedic ontological model. This means he must be willing to accept instruction and initiation from a spiritual master in the Vedic disciplic lineage. Why? To validate his conception of the Vedic ontology. Beyond this external commitment, a sincere student of Vedic thought must also make a commitment to the Vedic ontological context, and personally realize the state of consciousness described in the original Vedic literature.

So far in the West we have seen very few teachers of the Vedic tradition who can speak from the Vedic ontological conception. Most seem to base their claim to teach Vedic wisdom on their status in a particular ecclesiastical organization. However, this is not the standard of *Bhagavad-gītā*:

**“Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent there is no endurance, and of the existent there is no cessation. This seers have concluded by studying the nature of both.”**  
[\[2.16\]](#)

The original Vedic sources are full of such highly metaphysical ontological statements qualifying the Vedic conception of reality. **Only a student who grasps the ontological content is actually studying the Vedic tradition;** others are studying mere arrangements of words. Explaining this in simple language to an unsophisticated audience without becoming dogmatic is the mark of a real Master. The greatest difficulty any student or teacher of Vedic wisdom faces is the ontological gap between Vedic sources and Western culture.

Western ontologies, even of spiritual or religious origin, tend to be based on the assumptions of Platonic metaphysics and Aristotelian logic. The Vedic ontology is a non-Newtonian metaphysics based on consciousness in a non-Euclidean space using non-Aristotelian logic. Therefore it is unsurprising that **serious conceptual barriers to communication and understanding of Vedic subjects exist in Western culture.** Our practical ontological work therefore should focus on becoming conscious of our ontological commitments, and clarifying those commitments with others. That is the purpose of any Vedic exegetical work, such as the *Vedānta* commentary of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the original author of *Vedānta-sūtra*, entitled [\*Srimad-Bhagavatam\*](#).

# Appendix: Transcendental Ontologies

## *The Ontology of Consciousness*

The following sections detail the first experiment with the OWL formal ontology language. The OWL language specification is maintained by the W3C Semantic Web committee, and is found at [www.w3.org/2004/OWL/](http://www.w3.org/2004/OWL/). The software tool used to edit, compile and view the ontology is the Protégé Ontology Editor and Knowledge Acquisition System, a free, open source ontology editor and knowledge-base framework developed by Stanford University. The Protégé software project is found at [protege.stanford.edu/](http://protege.stanford.edu/)

The best way to understand this ontology, developed from an overview of the Vedic scriptures, is to download the Protégé software and use it to explore the OWL code found on our website [www.transontology.org](http://www.transontology.org). The following sections provide an introduction to the ontological categories used in this analysis, followed by the complete class diagram produced by the software.

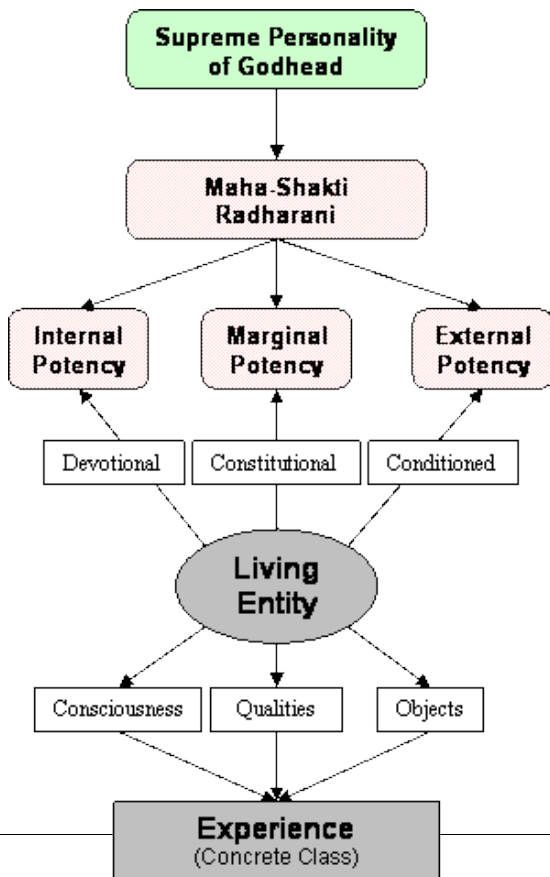
The goal of self-realization is direct personal experience of the ontological situation of the living entity. The accompanying ontological sketches give rough idea of the ontology of consciousness, which does not exist independently of its context. These simple, two-dimensional diagrams are rough sketches, only meant to convey a preliminary conception of the actual Vedic ontology of consciousness.

### **Abstract and Concrete Classes**

In the first class diagram, **Abstract and Concrete Classes**, (next page) the living entity is a concrete ontological class. Consciousness, qualities and objects are abstract classes—in other words, none of them has real-world instances. We can list the living entities that we know, and we can recount or demonstrate some experiences. But no one can produce an instance of consciousness, qualities or objects because they do not have a separate concrete existence; they are always found inseparably joined as experience. ‘Consciousness, qualities and objects’ could also be called ‘awareness, relations and senses’ or ‘subject, predicate and object.’ The point is that an instance or unit of experience requires all three.

The same is true of our relationships with the internal, marginal and external potencies (*śaktis*) of the Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is His complete and unlimited potency. From Her emanate the internal spiritual potency *Yogamāyā*, the marginal potency *tatāṣṭha-śakti*, and the external potency *Mahāmāyā* or the material energy.

The marginal potency emanates the *jīvas* or living entities, who therefore always have a constitutional relationship with the *tatāṣṭha-śakti*. When the living entities are conscious of their relationship with *tatāṣṭha-śakti* and the Supersoul, they are in their constitutional consciousness of liberation. When the living entity comes into relationship with the external potency, the influence of material energy overwhelms and covers the living entity’s constitutional consciousness. This covered state of consciousness is called materially conditioned. And when the living entity is conscious of his relationship with the internal potency *Yogamāyā*, he is said to be in devotional consciousness of his eternal constitutional position.



Constitutional, conditioned and devotional consciousness are also abstract classes; they have no meaning apart from the living entity's relationship with the Lord's *śaktis*. One can, however, observe real-world instances of living entities in these various states, and the living entities can observe themselves having experiences. So in the first diagram, the living entity and experiences are concrete classes; the qualities of his consciousness and relationships with the Lord's potencies are abstract classes because they are non-instantiable. The classes of the *śaktis* themselves, as well as *mahā-śakti Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī* and Kṛṣṇa Himself are transcendental classes—each has one and only one instance. Because of this fact, transcendental classes are the only classes for whom the transitive identity function applies.

Ontologically, a 'thing' is any class. But an 'individual' is an instantiable class. What does that mean? It is real, rather than abstract or conceptual. For example, 'red' is a subclass of the class 'color.' However, no one can show or demonstrate a 'red.' 'Red' is therefore an abstract or conceptual class. (BTW the same is true of 'color'. Color apart from objects is an abstract, non-instantiable concept.) We can, however, demonstrate a 'red wagon.' This means 'wagon' is an instantiable or concrete class with the abstract quality or attribute 'color:red.' Similarly, no one can produce an example of a 'consciousness.' This fact has become the source of endless debate and discussion, even an entire field of science called 'consciousness science.' But what if 'consciousness' is by nature an abstract class?

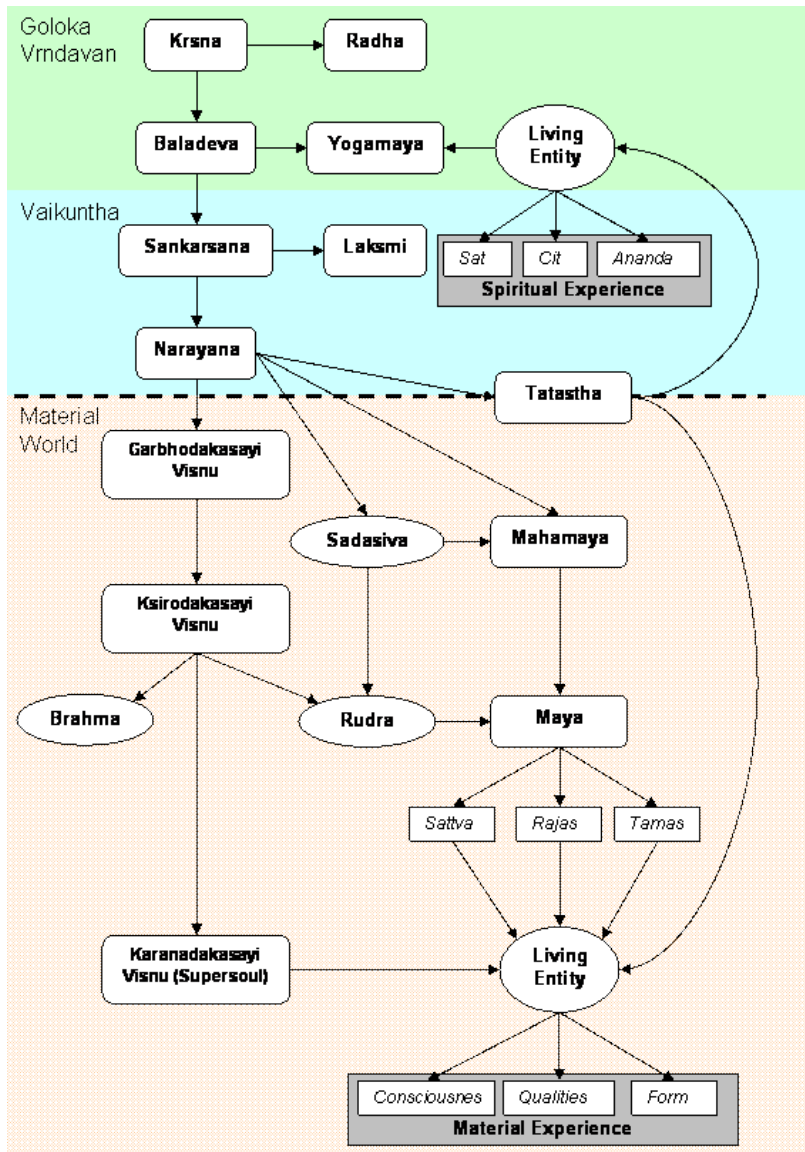
A complete sentence has three parts: subject, predicate and object. Similarly, every experience has three parts: consciousness, the qualities of consciousness and the object of consciousness—or the actor, the action and the object of action. All of these are abstract classes. Why? An object or quality is meaningless without consciousness. Consciousness without an object and quality is meaningless. Consciousness and objects without qualities are meaningless. Here 'meaningless' signifies a non-instantiable or abstract ontological class. One cannot demonstrate an individual instance of such a class. They are only concrete when all three are taken together as a complete 'experience.' An 'experience' is an instantiable class.

Therefore, it is meaningless to speak of consciousness, objects or qualities alone. It is only meaningful to speak of these 'things' in relation to an 'individual' (instantiable) experience. What has experiences? The living entity or spirit soul has experiences.

Therefore the living entity is also a concrete class. We can experience ourselves as a living entity because we have experiences. We cannot say the same about consciousness or any other abstract class by itself. Can you show or demonstrate 'a consciousness'? Of course not; no one can. Therefore concepts like 'consciousness science' are meaningless oxymorons, because consciousness is an abstract class. How can we perform a scientific experiment on an abstract entity? But we can and do have, remember, create and share experiences routinely. This is an workable ontological foundation for a science of consciousness, and also happens to be the actual ontology of *Vedānta*.

### **Domains of Emanation**

The next class diagram, **Domains of Emanation**, shows the ontological position and relations of the living entity in both conditioned and devotional consciousness.



This diagram begins from Kṛṣṇa and His consort Rādhā in Goloka Vrndāvaṇa, Their spiritual realm. Kṛṣṇa is *bhagavan svayam*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead or source of all emanations (*janmad yasya yatah [Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.2]*). He emanates Baladeva, whose *śakti* or consort is Yogamāyā, the internal spiritual potency. All further expansions of Godhead emanate from Baladeva, beginning with the

*catur-vyuha* or fourfold expansion in the Vaikuṅṭha worlds (Baladeva, Saṅkarṣana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha).

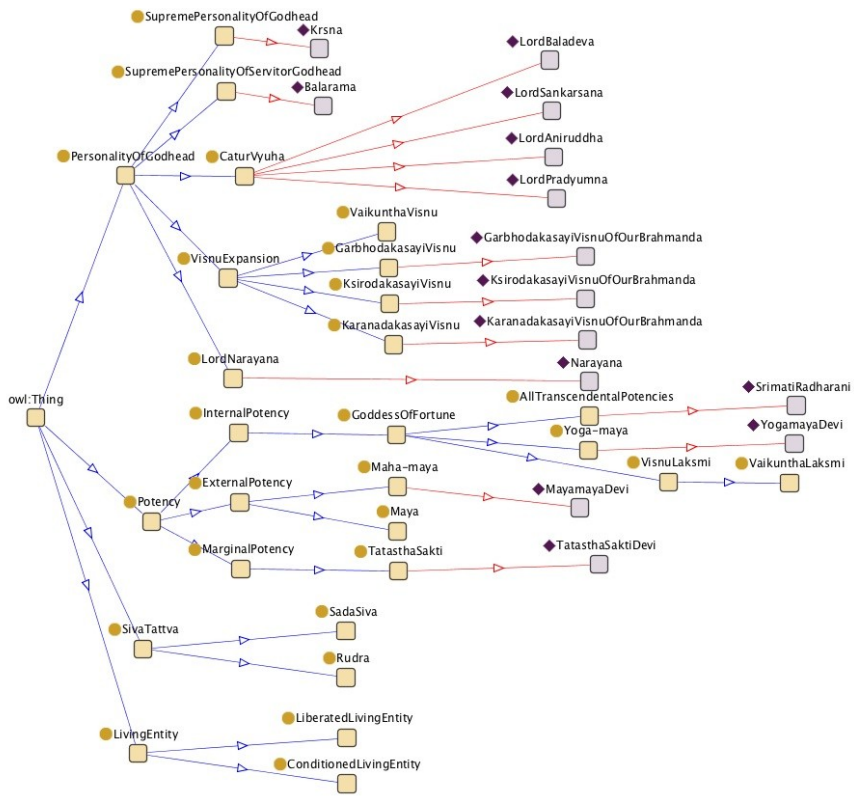
Saṅkarṣana expands as Lord Nārāyaṇa, who emanates the *tatāṣṭha-śakti* or marginal potency, and the subtle elements of the material creation (*mahat-tattva*) personified by Mahāmāyā-śakti. Mahāmāyā is under the control of Sadāśiva, the eternal Lord of the *tatāṣṭha* realm.

Lord Nārāyaṇa creates innumerable material universes and expands Himself within each one as Garbhodakaṣāyī Viṣṇu, from whom Lord Brahma is born. Then He expands Himself as Kṣīrodakaṣāyī Viṣṇu, who with Brahma and Siva control the material modes of goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*) respectively. Finally the Lord expands Himself as Karanadakaṣāyī Viṣṇu, the Supersoul within the heart of every living entity.

On the *śakti* side, Mahāmāyā expands within each universe as Durga or Māyā, the consort of Lord Rudra, who himself expands from Sadāśiva. Māyā's energy is directly the three material modes of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Now the living entity, being an emanation of *tatāṣṭha-śakti*, is on the borderline between the spiritual and material world. The living entity can be related either to the internal or the external energy of the Lord. When the living entity comes under the influence of the external material potency, he forgets his constitutional nature as an emanation of the spiritual energy of the Lord, and becomes immersed in materially conditioned consciousness. In that condition, his experience is composed of the three modes of material nature expressed as consciousness, qualities and forms.

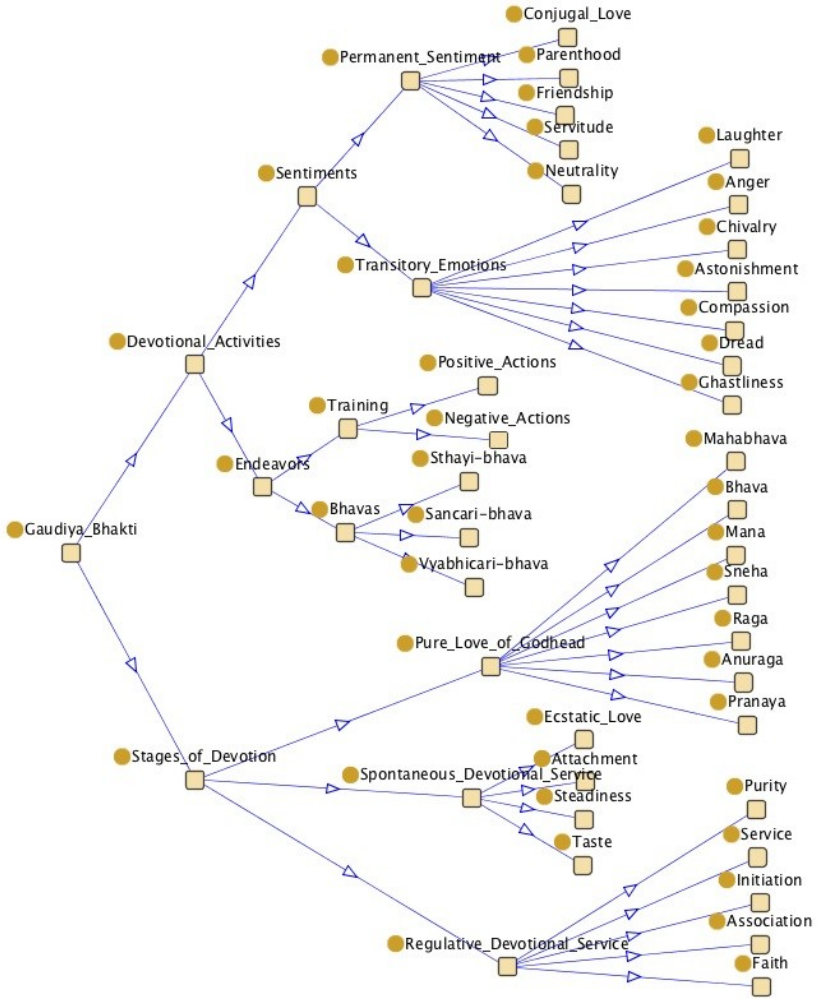
However, when the living entity begins to realize his relation with the Supersoul, he can become situated in relationship with the internal spiritual energy of the Lord, Yogamāyā. In this condition, the experience of the living entity is no longer dependent on the material classes, but becomes constituted of the transcendental classes *sat-cit-ānanda*, eternity, knowledge and bliss.



This is the complete class diagram of the OWL file located at [transontology.org/consciousness/consciousness1.owl](http://transontology.org/consciousness/consciousness1.owl), giving the ontological classes that are necessary preconditions for the existential states of consciousness experienced by the spiritual living entity (*jīva*). It encompasses the entire worldview of the Vedic literature, and is mainly composed of the spiritual categories of existence that create, support and permeate our material world.

### ***The Bhakti[Gaudiya] Ontology***

The second detailed ontology created with the OWL language and tools describes the exalted states of consciousness attainable through the advanced spiritual methods of *bhakti-yoga*. These include both the conscious states and the methods, as they are mutually interdependent. This OWL file may be found at [transontology.org/bhakti\\_gaudiya/bhakti.owl](http://transontology.org/bhakti_gaudiya/bhakti.owl), and an HTML version is located at [transontology.org/bhakti\\_gaudiya/index.html](http://transontology.org/bhakti_gaudiya/index.html)



All the esoteric nomenclature in this class diagram is defined in *The Nectar of Devotion* by my spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is a very elaborate subject matter, therefore we refer the read to that source for a detailed discussion.