

## Decillions of Eternal Minds

During the 30<sup>th</sup> November presentation, Shankara's Message included the revelation that he had been Vyasa (the author of the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad-Gita) in an earlier life. Shankara also revealed that he had been Archytas, the Pythagorean mathematician who was Plato's friend. At the same time Plato was trying to turn Syracuse's tyrant into a philosopher-king, Archytas was a political leader of Tarentum, then a prominent city-state of Magna Graecia. When Plato's attempt failed, he was exiled from Syracuse and thrown overboard to drown in the Mediterranean. But instead Plato swam for hours and washed ashore near Metapontum. He then sent word to Archytas, who brought Plato to his Tarentum home to recover.

Given this personal history and his wide-ranging intellectual curiosity, Shankara thinks it shouldn't surprise anyone that he was thoroughly intrigued during the "comparing notes" meeting of The Movement by a new metaphysical analysis which derives from Vedic philosophical arguments, ancient Greek philosophical arguments and current scientific thought, and which is outlined briefly below:

Aristotle's First Cause argument implies that it is more reasonable to conclude that the obvious regression of cause and effect must have had an origin at some point in the past, and that that origin was a self-caused First Cause, rather than concluding that there is a never-ending regression of cause and effect into the past, and a never-ending progression of cause and effect into the future, because that alternative would mean that reality has no beginning and no end.

However, current physics theories do imply that there is neither creation nor destruction, in essence, since the amount of mass-energy is always conserved in any transformation. That implies that the fundamental particles (the indestructible atoms of Democritus's theory that account for discreteness in the material world) are simply being continually reorganized.

Given the continuum of change that implies, a very useful definition of "eternal" becomes clear: it is the quality of being uninfluenced by the continuum of change. To realists it might sound ridiculous to even mention the word "eternal", but logic makes it clear that something must be eternal, even if it is just an indifferent and infinite void. By defining "eternal" as "uninfluenced by the continuum of change", though, it also becomes clear that many things are eternal, such as all the concepts and scientific laws we use to describe the inherent structure of reality, because none of those concepts or laws is influenced by the fact that change is continuously occurring. Ironically, even the existence of the "continuum of change" is itself eternal.

Current physics theories also conclude that that continual reorganization of the fundamental particles has a direction: it proceeds toward ever-greater entropy — increasing disorder and decreasing availability of energy to do useful work. Anti-

entropic behavior, even in a highly localized fashion such as biological life on our planet, implies that there is a force that can manipulate fundamental particles against their natural flow toward entropy. Since we can see by our own behavior that our own minds, in pursuing the fulfillment of our desires, can manipulate such particles to create the orderliness we desire, it is a good guess to assume that it could be the decision-making ability of minds that is that anti-entropic force.

And it is not that difficult, once it is clear that the existence of those fundamental particles appears to be uninfluenced by the continuum of change, even though their velocity and location clearly are influenced, to take the next step and guess that decision-making minds might be in the same basic position: that both fundamental particles and individual minds exist only in the continual present — that is, in the ever-changing but always-current condition of the continuum of change. Otherwise how, if material change has been governed solely by the law of entropy for billions of years, could anti-entropic reorganizations of fundamental particles still exist? The fact that localized anti-entropic reorganizations of matter do exist seems to require an obviously limited, but still crucial, co-existent manipulative anti-entropic force.

Of course, no one will probably ever know exactly how many indestructible fundamental particles there are, or how many eternal minds there are. But one thing we can know — there must be a specific number of each since neither can be created or destroyed. In addition, there can't be a mushy “infinite number” of each because the two concepts of “infinite” and “number” are logically uncombinable. A number is always specific and discrete, just as each fundamental particle and each mind is, and anything which is actually infinite must be without limit in one way or another.

We can also make a safe estimate, which is justified by the magnitudes involved, that the specific number of fundamental particles which exist probably exceeds decillion and that the specific number of eternal minds who exist probably also exceeds decillion.

Since it appears that decillions of individual minds and decillions of atoms exist, which are each eternal, uncreated and indestructible, there is no need for the universe to have a First Cause or a creator. It appears reasonable to conclude, therefore, that life may very well be an eternal democracy, rather than an eternal autocracy.

Although Shankara's well-known arguments in favor of the unitary conclusions of Advaita Vedanta imply that only one true reality exists, his interest in dualistic arguments about mind and matter is also ancient. For those who doubt that, he would like to draw their attention to Chapter 2, verse 12, of the Bhagavad-Gita, where he has Krishna say quite clearly to Arjuna: “There never was a time when I was not, nor you, nor these rulers of men. Nor will there ever be a time when all of us shall cease to be.”\*

[\* English translation from the Sanskrit original by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi]