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Organic Whole

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There is a nested hierarchy of wholes that characterizes reality, and especially life. The most fundamental principle is that Reality in the *Vedantic/Bhagavat* conception is based on Personality, as mentioned in the very first aphorism of the *Bhagavat Purana*, “*janmady asya yatho nvyat itaratas charteshu abhijnah svarat.*” Here and in many other scriptures the foundation or origin of everything is centered upon the *abhijna* or cognizant (conscious) primordial Personality of Godhead.

Modern science in the West has become centered on matter as the foundation of everything, and this is called materialism. But matter is impersonal. The question is: how can a person come from what is impersonal? We consider such an approach to be backward. Person cannot come from an impersonal material substratum. It is very difficult to conceive how a rock can give rise to a concept of rock. But it is quite natural to understand that a rock exists as a concept for a conscious person. So too can the concept of objectivity, concreteness and perception arise from a personal substratum, and historically, this has been demonstrated by the detailed philosophical study of these ideas by numerous philosophers.

We can call this the *Vedantic/Bhagavat* paradigm, but it was also re-developed in the period of modernity that began with Descartes in the Western tradition of Idealism, especially among the Germans in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Accordingly, if the ultimate ground is personal, then every atom has a soul or latent personality within it. Every living cell certainly has a soul or life principle, and therefore every multicelled organism is not only an aggregate of such soul-based cells, but there is also a predominating soul or personality for each multi-celled organism. Thus, even from the cellular level we can understand the beginning of the nested hierarchy of Life.

We may note that it is only with the modern development of advanced biological techniques that the vast complexity of the cell has come to light. This complexity has proven to be a major challenge to the Darwinian-minded scientists who believed that such cells could have been formed by chance aggregation of molecules in a primordial soup of the primitive earth. Even such elementary cellular life forms show such a systematic unity that a only pre-existing *bijam* (seed/soul) or implicit concept could explain its formative origin.

Plants represent a particular level of aforementioned nested hierarchy. In the mundane sphere we find the basic mineral, vegetable, and animal levels of Nature. There are other intermediate levels also, but these represent the general types or kinds in Nature. Life in the Mineral kingdom is only what goes on outside the apparently inert minerals, and which utilizes them for the life processes. The Vegetable kingdom, type or kind is a little more advanced in that the life process is what actually constitutes the vegetable organism. Yet the living principle is still quite primitive here because the parts of the vegetative organism are not wholly dependent upon the predominating life that unifies the organism as such. In other words, the parts of the plant can exist semi-independently from the rest of the plant. And this is why we can take a cutting from a plant and have it grow another entire organism.

However, under natural conditions, we cannot take a limb from an animal and expect that another animal can be produced from it, or that the limb will grow back. This is because the animal represent another type or kind of life process that is higher, in the sense of more unified or integrated, than that of the plant/vegetable kingdom.

Thus we can see a hierarchy forming here. Minerals are easily separable from one another because they are organized (or unified) by a life chiefly outside or around them. Vegetables, on the other hand, are more integrated, but at the same time not so tightly as we find in the animal kingdom. Therefore, the parts of plants can be segregated to a certain degree without destroying their unity, and still constitute other whole plants.

Minerals are in a sense consumed by plant life, and plants are consumed by animal life, so even in this sense we can see a natural hierarchy among them in Nature. This is, therefore, not a violation of the organic whole principle, but a verification of it when understood in conjunction with the principle of nested hierarchy.

Beyond animal life is human life. Human life has the same principles as animal organisms, but it has the additional principle of rationality, which is a still higher and more refined unity than the vegative or reproductive processes found in the lower rungs of the hierarchy.

Now the details of all this is a great science, and it has to be studied carefully in order to understand the principles involved. This is the work of the Institute and those who wish to study it are welcome to come and learn this science. Basically, as we explained in our previous post, the Earth itself is also part of the personal hierarchy, called *Bhumi*, and the universe has its predominating personality, Brahma, and beyond that, all the way to the Complete Whole Personality of Godhead, the Ultimate Reality, Sri Krishna, Who is non-different from Ultimate Reality.

Just as any developed science is not so easy to understand without proper training and education, so too, the science of the Absolute Truth requires proper training and development in order to come to a proper comprehension of it. So this cannot all be expected to be fully digested upon a first acquaintance with it.

Regarding the identification of species, this is a difficult problem even for modern scientists who still do not have a proper definition of species. An ancient scriptures does, however, point out that there are 84 lakh *yonies*, or species, i.e. 8,400,000 forms of life. This is interesting because it not only posits a particular number, but it also implies that there must be a particular method by which that number is deduced, no doubt connected

with the *trigunas*, by which the entire material creation is manifest. We must leave it to further study to find the origin of such calculations.

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