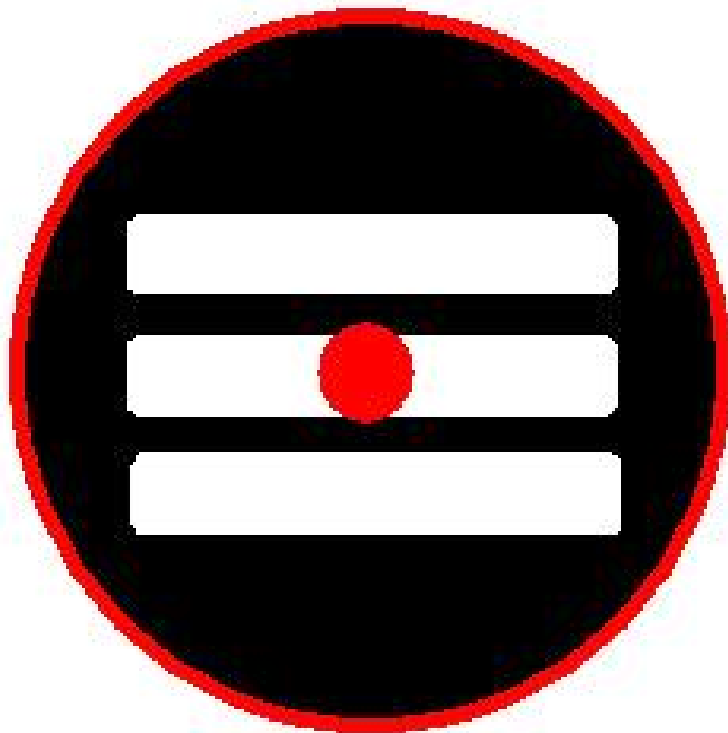


**A PHILOSOPHICAL
INTRODUCTION TO
'THE NEW YOGA
OF AWARENESS'**



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“New names need not be a question of mere nomenclature, but may also be looked at as a genuine way of thinking itself. Through such thinking alone can the older systems of thought undergo the process of being re-integrated to the living currents of current thinking. And this process should be taken as one organic to true philosophising rather than as external to it.”

Debabrata Sinha *Metaphysics of Experience in Advaita Vedanta*

An introduction to a philosophical work should explain the nature of its content in the context of the title or name given to it. This is true above all if the text is intended as a serious metaphysical treatise or ‘tantra’. For then the title itself cannot be treated merely as a convenient brand marker for some literary commodity or school of philosophy. Instead the text as a whole should be introduced and understood in advance as an explication of what each and every word of the new terms that name its central theme are intended to say, in the case of this work the term - **‘The New Yoga of Awareness’** and also the terms given to the central terms and principles it introduces - **‘Absolute Subjectivism’** and **‘The Awareness Principle’**.

To begin with then, what are the first three words of the first term - **‘The-New-Yoga’** - intended to say? The word ‘The’ says clearly that this work is not intended merely to introduce ‘a’ new-fangled ‘form’ of yoga, adding itself to the already countless ‘schools’ of yoga, past and present which currently compete for followers. In contrast, the definite article in ‘The New Yoga’ is intended to reflect an entirely ‘New’ way of *thinking* both ‘yoga’ as such and the long tradition of Indian religiosity from which it is drawn. It announces the intention to introduce a definitively ‘New’ account of ‘Yoga’ as such. This in turn means that the word ‘Yoga’ – cannot itself, in the context of this text, be taken as

simply representing what is already or commonly understood by the term – either in contemporary culture or in the countless other works on this subject. For as the Indian philosopher J.L. Mehta pointed out, the Indian term ‘yoga’ is a wholly independent or *sui generis* concept. Because of this, it stands on the same plane as other basic Western words and concepts such as ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’, and therefore **“cannot be defined or explicated in terms of a philosophy or a religion.”**

The great 20th century German thinker Martin Heidegger wrote of ‘The End of Philosophy’. By this he meant the transition to what he called ‘the other thinking’, describing it as a thinking of a fundamentally *meditative* and in this sense also ‘yogic’ character; one not focussed on thoughts and their objects but on the field of awareness in which both thoughts and things arise. John Anderson summarises the essential nature of this ‘other’, ‘meditative’ way of thinking as follows:

“... it is a thinking which allows content to emerge within awareness, thinking which is open to content. Now thinking which constructs a world of objects understands these objects; but meditative thinking begins with an awareness of the field within which these objects are, an awareness of the horizon rather than of the objects of ordinary understanding. Meditative thinking begins with an awareness of this kind, and so it begins with ... the field of awareness itself.”

This brings us to a principal aim of this work, which is not to simply explicate ‘yoga’ and its meditational practices “in terms of a [traditional] philosophy or religion” but rather to rethink our whole understanding of such seemingly independent spheres as ‘religion’ and ‘philosophy’ - not to mention ‘science’ and ‘psychology’ – and to do so through a ‘yoga’ of thinking itself that is essentially meditative in

nature, - and can therefore offer us a way of rethinking the essence of 'yoga' and 'meditation' in a way that is resonant with their essential spirit. This is important, for as Richard Rorty writes, Western thinkers **"are the heirs of three hundred years of rhetoric about the importance of distinguishing sharply between science and religion, science and politics, science and philosophy, and so on. This rhetoric has formed the nature of Europe and made the West what it is today."** In contrast, as Jaideva Singh reminds us: **"Every philosophy here [in India] is a religion, and every religion has its philosophy."** The significance of 'Yoga' - a word whose root meaning is to 'join' - is precisely that it inwardly conjoins the supposedly separate spheres of philosophy, religion and science. In this light let us return again to the word 'New'. For another principal aim of my writings on 'The New Yoga' is to offer a new interpretation of the unthought essence of both 'Yoga' and 'Tantra'. And though these writings are not principally of a scholarly character, they draw on the work of many excellent contemporary scholars of Yoga and Tantra - albeit in a way that also takes into account the warning voiced by J.L. Mehta, namely that:

"The purely scholarly work, irrespective of its initial motivation, leads to interpretative attempts by poet, scholar, humanist, theologian or scientist, in which a specific item in the alien culture is de-contextualised and extricated from its historic particularity. Yoga, for example ... is abstracted from its cultural and historic content in Indian life, liberated from its historical and provincial setting ... or domesticated in secularised form, as in the case of Transcendental Meditation ... From the Indian point of view, such abstractive reinterpretation may appear misleading for his own self-understanding and of questionable legitimacy in so far as it neutralises something which to him carries a primarily sacred meaning, within the context of his tradition."

In the context of the new “abstractive reinterpretation” offered by The New Yoga, Mehta’s otherwise true and well-intended warning does not apply to for four important reasons. Firstly because The New Yoga is precisely a reinterpretation of that which is most *sacred* to the yogic tradition. Secondly, because the specific yogic traditions it reinterprets – the ‘Tantric’ tradition of ‘Kashmir Shaivism’ was itself a tradition *of* interpretation – indeed of inspired and novel *reinterpretation*. Thirdly, The New Yoga follows the true spirit and continues the true ‘lineage’ of those traditions because its *conceptual reinterpretations* of the essential principles of ‘Yoga’ and ‘Tantra’ are at the same time *experiential reinterpretations*, being grounded in a lifetime of direct subjective, experiential or ‘phenomenological research’ into the nature of ‘awareness’ and ‘consciousness’. It is out of the methods and results of this direct subjective and inter-subjective research that the essential practices as well as principles of ‘The New Yoga’ have evolved.

Finally, when contrasting ‘old’ and ‘new’ interpretations (or reinterpretations) of spiritual traditions we must also bear in mind Martin Heidegger’s profound understanding of ‘the new’ – *not* as something that simply supersedes or outstrips ‘the old’ but as that which brings us closer to its primordial essence and source. The ‘new’ is that which renews by bringing us back to a primordial beginning – a first principle - and beginning again from that beginning. We do not remain true to a tradition by repeating its maxims like hollow mantra but by repeating, in a new way, the new beginning that it itself made.

“... we do not repeat a beginning by reducing it to something past and now known, which we may simply affect and ape. The beginning must be begun again, more radically ...” Martin Heidegger

'The New Yoga of Awareness' does not seek to repeat a beginning or renew a tradition by aping it or by approaching it anew in a purely scholarly manner, for both would imply "reducing it to something past". The challenge it poses to both scholars and practitioners of yoga is whether there is room in today's world – and in their own minds - not just for a new interpretation 'of' the yogic tradition but for a wholly original and contemporary contribution *to* it, one written for the same purposes and in the same spirit of the most important treatises or 'Tantras' of the past – in particular the **Vijnanabhairava Tantra** and the **Tantra-Aloka** of Abhinavagupta. It seeks not only to renew but to give *rebirth* to 'Tantric Wisdom' through a new conceptual and experiential framework relevant to 'Today's World', an aim reflected in the title of an earlier work of mine, 'Tantra Reborn'.

For those new to meditation and to 'yoga', the larger historical, philosophical context in which The New Yoga of Awareness situates itself is not necessarily of principal interest or concern - which is why my works on this subject are written in a way that does *not* assume any prior knowledge of Eastern spiritual traditions. And yet the questions it raises regarding the essential nature of 'Yoga' and 'Tantra' are clearly of contemporary relevance given the number of Yoga courses, gurus and supposed teachers of 'Tantra' promoting themselves today, many of which do indeed merely "ape" the traditions they lay claim to - rather than meditatively rethinking and renewing these traditions out of the same depths of original spiritual experiences and conceptual insights from which they first arose. This is not a new problem, but one that was well recognised by one of the most important renewers of these traditions – the great 10th century Tantric teacher and adept Abhinavagupta. For he too was a writer and teacher who saw his writings and teachings as vital in 'cutting asunder' the accretion of

historical ignorance and distortions disseminated by the Gurus of his time, and their “blind followers”.

“Having thus seen creatures who are simply carriers of the burden of Gurus and their blind followers, I have prepared a trident of wisdom in order to cut asunder their bondage.”

Here it may be appropriate to say something more about myself, the author and expositor of ‘The New Yoga’ and he who, in this very introduction to it, is making claims regarding the ‘newness’ of this ‘yoga’ that some would find outlandish or arrogant. Let me first emphasise that the ‘newness’ of ‘The New Yoga’ is something to be experienced as well as perceived through its conceptual articulation in this and other writings of mine. Let me also emphasise that I myself did not discover ‘Yoga’ or ‘Tantra’ through attending yoga classes and workshops or reading literature on it. Instead it has been through a lifetime of intensive and sustained experiential and conceptual research and exploration that I found the essence of my own evolving meditational principles and practices reflected in the works of Abhinavagupta, the great synthesist of the Tantric religion and tradition called ‘Kashmir Shaivism’. Being able to savour the sublimely aesthetic, poetic and devotional flavour or ‘quintessence’ of this great teacher’s writings - their ‘Rasa’ – they inseminated my own spiritual experiencing with new and blissful qualities, allowing new dimensions of conceptual insight to spring from that bliss. Being able to experientially comprehend the inner senses of Abhinava’s spiritual language and insights from within, they provided me with a necessary ‘foil’ through which to reformulate those insights within a new conceptual language and to reinterpret them within a new and comprehensive conceptual framework - one which I call, quite simply: ‘The Awareness Principle’.

The Tantric religious tradition of 'Kashmir Shaivism' or 'Shaivist Tantrism' recognised that awareness alone is the sole conceivable 'Absolute' – the very essence of 'God' and of the Self, the Divine source of All That Is, and the 'God-Stuff' of which every thing and being is composed. The great Tantric Gurus also recognised that Awareness is the key to true freedom. For only through identification with that Self which IS awareness can we free ourselves from bondage or identification with any particular thing we are aware of. Only through identification with that Self or 'I' do our actions become truly free – ceasing to be mere *reactions* to things we are aware of. And only through Awareness can we also come to a true experience of the Divine - one based on the understanding that neither 'God' nor 'Self' is a being 'with' awareness. Instead God IS awareness, and each of us in turn is a unique shape and portion of that Divine Awareness. Yoga without religion is empty, just as religion without yoga offers no experience of the reality of the Divine. In addition to its recognition of The Divine Awareness as personified by the god 'Shiva', Tantra has also always affirmed the innately sensual, sexual and bodily character and capacities of the Divine Awareness – symbolised by its powers or 'Shaktis', and by the goddess-principle as such – 'Shakti'. 'God' in Tantrism and Kashmir Shaivism is both bi- and trans-sexual, being the divine unity or coupling of bodiless and embodied awareness, of Awareness and Action, that is 'Shiva-Shakti'. This unity finds expression in us all as our own Subjective Body or 'Awareness Body'. The New Yoga allows us to cultivate the psychic powers ('Siddhis') and total motility of awareness latent within this body.

Greatness, great powers and great works come only out of humble respect for greatness. 'Abhinavagupta' is not just the name of a truly great Indian thinker, Yogin and Guru – albeit one who has only relatively recently begun to be recognised and appreciated by scholars and practitioners of yoga alike for his supremely great learning

and spiritual accomplishment. For being a person of such learning and accomplishment is what his name essentially *means*. I understand myself as *doing* what Abhinava did in his time – using the tradition of experientially-based reinterpretation to weave together a web of traditional scriptures ('Agamas'), teachings ('Shastras') and practices ('Sadhanas') and create a new and shining fabric of Tantric wisdom. In doing so, I seek to re-embody the essential spirit of 'ABHI-NAVA-GUPTA' this being a name assigned to him which captures the essential spirit and mission of his work: 'protecting' (GUPTA) ancient wisdom through 'approaching' it (ABHI) anew, or indeed through its total renewal (ABHINAVA). In the light of this understanding of the mission of The New Yoga – and to make clear its absolute accordance with the spirit of Abhinavagupta's name and work, I need only cite his own words and those of Jayaratha - one of his intimate family or 'Kula' of disciples:

"Philosophy is an elaboration of different kinds of spiritual experience. The abstractions of high-grade metaphysics are based on spiritual experience and derive their whole value from the experiences they symbolise."

Abhinavagupta

"That person is 'Abhinavagupta' who remains aware in the course of everyday activities, who is present in the objective domain as well as in the subjective, and dwells there without limitation. He sings the praises [of divinity] without ceasing to concentrate on the powers of knowledge and activity. He is protected by this praise even though he lives under the pressure of temporal affairs."

Jayaratha

To these words I would only add the following, earlier and more primordial saying of Vamadeva - one of the founding Rishis of the Indian spiritual tradition. **"I have much to accomplish that has never been done, fighting the one and conciliating the other."** My boo 'The New Yoga of Awareness – Tantric Wisdom for Today's World' can only accomplish what it sets out to do by both fighting and conciliating. Fighting those attached to historically ignorant and superficial yogic concepts and practices. Conciliating those whose deeper learning makes them rightly sceptical but I hope also open to and aware of the authentic originality and 'Newness' of this New Yoga.

Both the title of the above-mentioned book, my other works on The New Yoga and the philosophical introduction I give to it here refer not only with 'Yoga' but to 'Tantra'. Like 'Yoga', the term 'Tantra' is a *sui generis* concept, concealing and interweaving countless levels of meaning both literal and metaphorical, historical and etymological – hence it is no accident that one of its root meanings is 'loom'. Philosophically, an important way of understanding 'Tantra' is in contrast to the 'Vedanta'. 'Vedanta' is an Indian philosophical tradition, which understood itself, according to the very meaning of its name, as the 'completion' of the Vedas. Historically we see in Indian thinking a contrast between two distinct approaches to 'yoga' - those derived from the Vedas and from Vedantic teachings on the one hand and those which derive from the Tantras and 'Tantric' teachings ('Tantrashastra'). What is the essence of this distinction?

Both Vedanta and the 'Classical Yoga' of Patanjali teach us how to *concentrate or narrow the focus of our awareness* in order to *subdue* the intensiveness of our sensory experiencing. 'Tantra' on the other hand, teaches us how to *widen the expansiveness of our awareness* in a way that allows us to embrace *ever-greater* intensities of sensory

experiencing within it – using the transcendental light of awareness - acknowledged in both Vedanta and Tantra - to ‘de-light’ in all things sensory, yet without becoming bound to or identified with them.

For followers of the Vedas (‘Vedikas’) and philosophers of ‘Vedanta’ - such as the revered and renowned Indian religious philosopher Shankara - it is ‘Brahman’ alone, understood as pure, transcendental and divine awareness, that is real. The world of the senses is but an unreal dream (‘Maya’), brought about not by divine action (Shakti) but only by ignorance (‘A-vidya’). Enlightenment therefore, went together with ‘asceticism’ and anti-sensualism.

For followers of the Tantras or ‘Tantrikas’ on the other hand – not least the great aesthete Abhinavagupta - true asceticism is in essence and effect a heightened *aestheticism* – for pure awareness goes together with and brings in its wake a richly intensified sensuous and aesthetic experience of the world. Shiva as ‘ascetic’ lives in the forest - the latter being both a reference to the sensual fullness of nature and a metaphor for the sensual world as such. Pure content-free awareness is understood not simply as the transcendent context. The dialectic whereby pure awareness is understood as both absolutely distinct but also *inseparable* from all we are aware of - both transcending and enriching our experience of all things sensory – belongs to the very heart of Tantra, this dialectical relation being symbolised by the inseparability and sexual intercourse (‘Maithuna’) of the male and female aspects of divinity symbolised by Shiva and Shakti. For Tantricians - as opposed to Vedantists or Buddhists - ‘Absolute Subjectivism’ goes hand in hand with what might be termed ‘Absolute Sensationalism’, ‘Absolute Sensualism’ or ‘Absolute Sexualism’. The modern-day obsession with sex and sensationalism, sensation-seeking and the sensual heightening of sexual pleasure (‘Kama’) knows nothing of the

true essence of Tantra and of 'Tantric' sex, for the true Tantric understanding of sex and sensuality is that, paradoxically, it is only pure, desire- and sense-free awareness that creates the conditions for the enrichment of sensual and sexual experiencing.

The great thinker and teacher Shankaracharya is recognised as the major philosopher, if not founder, of the so-called 'non-dual' or 'Advaita' school of Indian philosophy. Yet unless this 'non-duality' is understood as a relation of *inseparable distinction* – not only between the individual soul and the divine awareness, but also between pure transcendental awareness ('Brahman') and the entire sensory-perceptual world we are aware of, then it remains distinct from the unique form of 'Advaita' represented by the Shaivist Tantrism.

Hence, as Abhinavagupta wrote:

"The Brahmin of Shaivism is not the same as that of Advaita Vedanta, which comes very close to the final principle of nihilistic Buddhism."

"Brahman is that infinite and all-pervading reality that has evolved [into phenomenal reality]. This is not the same as that form of Vedanta that comes close to Shunyavada [the Buddhist doctrine of the Void]."

"Since Brahman is accepted as having ignorance as another beginningless element) along with him, this [Vedantic] doctrine cannot be accepted as monistic [non-dual]."

"Even if the absolute monistic existence of pure awareness is accepted, its independent activity of bearing diverse forms cannot be explained at all [by Advaita Vedanta]."

"All the apparent entities, having consciousness as their basic character, exist eternally within [the divine] awareness. At the same time, having an outward manifestation through Maya, these entities do exist as well in outer phenomena."

In a nutshell, then, position of Shaivist Tantrism is that not only the divine - God - is awareness, but also that everything is awareness - and therefore everything Divine. For there can be nothing outside awareness, and thus awareness must also be within all things. Pure, transcendental or divine awareness lacking active, creative expression in countless worlds, beings and phenomena, would have nothing to be aware of, and therefore, according to the argument of Abhinava, would be no more aware than a seemingly insentient object such as pot or jar. And as Abhinava's disciple Kshemaraja points out, Shankara himself admits the universality of awareness when he write that:

“Existence itself is awareness and awareness itself is Being.”

In the Tantric metaphysics of Kashmir Shaivism, awareness is understood not just as Transcendental Subjectivity or 'Knowing' ('Jnana') therefore, but *also* as Action ('Kriya'). 'Shakti' refers to the innate power of action or capacity to act ('Shak') that belongs to awareness, and that allows its infinite potentialities to magically, imaginatively and materially manifest in the countless forms known as 'Maya-Shakti' – the term 'Maya' having the same etymological root ('ma' or 'mag') as the words 'make', 'magic', 'image' and 'imagination'.

'Maya' understood in Vedantic terms - as the illusory or unreal nature of a manifest world arising entirely from ignorance – is in reality a concept that applies less to the sensory world of nature than to the ever-increasing unreality or 'virtuality' of our media-dominated socio-cultural world. For this is a world which through its very plethora of visual and auditory media imagery actually serves to de-sensitise and *de-sensualise* our senses. It does so by reducing the actual sensuous qualities of things to mere signs that indicate their nature as branded commodities. What one sees in the commodity and all the sensory

imagery used to promote it is actually nothing sensuous at all. The beautifully shaped and coloured perfume bottle with its aesthetically designed logo is seen as just that – a branded perfume bottle and no more. No delight can be taken in the pure sensuous qualities of things, no matter how vivid or colourful so long as they are merely advertised or arrayed in stores as commodities - designed to draw out and bind our awareness to them rather than to cultivate a genuine delight in the sensory through the 'aesthetic asceticism' of pure sense-free awareness that distinguishes Tantra and Vedanta.

The key question addressed by Tantra to Vedanta is: what has the light of the absolute pure and divine awareness to de-light *in* – if not in the sensuous *reality* of its constant and active manifestation and materialisation as the sensory world of 'Maya-Shakti'? This is a world that in turn has its roots in that infinite womb of power – of latent potentialities or 'powers of action' (Shaktis) that is the great dark mother goddess (Mahadevi or Mahakali). It is because of the Tantric recognition of the dynamic, feminine aspect of divinity (Shakti) that is power of action – not just the 'non-active' awareness that is Brahman - that not only 'Aryan' Brahmins but also women, and low-caste, dark-skinned aboriginals were welcomed into Tantric spiritual families ('Kula') or circles ('Chakra'). Together with this went an acknowledgement in Tantra of the innately sexual dimension of divinity as Shiva-Shakti, and with this, the innately sensual character of awareness – even the divine-transcendental awareness.

Abhinavagupta, as a thinker and writer on aesthetics, poetry, music and drama, sought his entire life for an understanding, *implicit* in his concept of 'Rasa' (essential aesthetic feeling), but made *explicit* for the first time in The New Yoga, of the fact that awareness - in itself and as such, possesses its own *innate sensual qualities* of substantiality, sound,

light, colour, form etc. These sensual qualities of awareness itself are quite distinct from the outer sensory qualities of things we are aware of. Thus the silent tone-colour, mood or 'feeling tone' awareness belonging to a chord of music is something quite distinct from its sensory manifestation as an audible sensory tone. Similarly 'warmth of feeling' is something quite distinct from the purely sensory and physical experience of 'feeling warm' – the former being an innate sensory quality *of awareness* rather than a physical sensation we are aware of. It is innate sensual qualities of awareness *as such* that are made manifest in the outer sensory qualities of things we are aware of – a distinction fundamental to 'The New Science' of psychological 'qualia' I articulate in my book 'The Qualia Revolution'.

This New Science is what takes The New Yoga itself decisively beyond the old Vedantic dualism of a pure, quality-less or 'transcendental' awareness on the one hand, and the sensory forms and qualities on the other. It does so by introducing a 'third term', hitherto missing in both Vedanta and Advaita, and through it, a basic new threefold or 'Trika' metaphysics. 'Trika' metaphysics or triadism was regarded as the highest form of tantra by Abhinava, and the key to transcending both duality (Dvaita) and 'non-duality' (Advaita).

The missing 'third term' that The New Yoga introduces so as to present a new 'Trika' metaphysics is the concept of innately sensual qualities of pure awareness itself - such as its innate light, spaciousness, and above all its all-pervading bliss - all of which qualities are both transcendental *and* innately sensual. Such 'sensual-transcendental' qualities were constantly referred to in the highly sensual language of the Tantras themselves. They were even recognised only in the form of higher 'Tattvas' or 'essences', and yet the essential nature of these Tattvas, not as progressive 'devolutions' of pure or transcendental awareness but as

innately sensual qualities of this very awareness - as 'transcendental qualia' - was not fully conceptualised. As a result, the Vedantic dualism of pure, transcendental awareness ('Brahman') on the one hand, and the sensory world of 'Maya' on the other was not itself fully transcended, even within Abhinava's Trika school of Shaivist non-dualism or Advaita.

'Awareness' itself is of course the fourth and most central key word in 'The New Yoga of Awareness'. For central to the Tantric metaphysics of Kashmir Shaivism is the understanding of ultimate reality as 'Chit' - a word usually translated simply as 'consciousness' or 'universal consciousness' but which I translate as 'awareness'. If people get lost in watching TV or playing computer games, in work or domestic chores, in thinking or talking, in worrying about life or in feeling particular emotions, pains - or even pleasures - then they may be 'conscious' but they are not *aware*. Whenever our consciousness becomes overly focussed or fixated on any one thing we are conscious of, dominated by it or identified with it, we lose *awareness*. For unlike ordinary 'consciousness', awareness is not focussed on any one thing we experience. Awareness is more like the *space* surrounding us and surrounding all things we are aware of. For space is not the same as any 'thing' within it. Living with and within awareness is like truly living with and within space - which both encompasses but is also absolutely *distinct* from each and every thing within it.

To transform our ordinary consciousness into awareness therefore, means first of all becoming more aware of *space itself* - both the outer space around us and surrounding things, and also the inner space surrounding our thoughts, feelings, impulses and sensations. Enhancing our bodily awareness of the space around us is the first step to helping us to experience space itself - outer *and* inner - as a spacious *field* of

awareness – a field free of domination by anything we may be conscious of or experience within it. That is why identifying with the seeming emptiness of space was presented as a primary means of achieving liberation ('Moksha') in that most important of Tantric meditational manuals - the 'Vijnanabhairvatantra'.

In the terms of The New Yoga, achieving freedom through awareness therefore means transforming our ordinary consciousness or 'focal awareness' into a new type of spacious 'field awareness'. If we are able to sense and identify with the *spacious awareness field* around and within us, then we can do two things. We can both freely acknowledge and affirm everything we experience or are conscious of within that field – whether pleasant or unpleasant. And yet at the same time we can stop our 'consciousness' getting sucked into it, stuck on, focussed or fixated on any one thing. The capacity to constantly come back to the spacious awareness field frees us from all the things our consciousness normally gets so fixated on that we can no longer distinguish or free ourselves from them. True *freedom* is freedom from *identification* with anything we experience – anything we are 'conscious' or 'aware' of. This freedom comes from sensing and identifying with that spacious awareness field within which we experience all things, outwardly and inwardly. And just as through enhanced awareness of space we can experience it as a boundlessly expansive awareness *field* of awareness, so can we also come to experience our own spiritual core or essence – and that of all beings - as a powerful *centre* of awareness within that field, that single point or 'Bindu' within which all power of action is condensed and out of which arises into material manifestation.

Awareness then, is not simply 'consciousness'. Nor is it the same as what Buddhists commonly called 'mindfulness' - for it includes

awareness of all we experience as mind and mental activity. It is also important to distinguish awareness from any type of 'consciousness' that is thought of as 'owned by' or 'belonging' to a particular self or 'subject', ego or 'I', that is conceived merely as consciousness 'of' some object or thing, or seen merely as a blank mental 'mirror' of the world around us. For all these reasons 'The New Yoga of Awareness' might just as well have been prefaced with the same words with which one of my first and brilliant teachers - Michael Kosok - introduces his own singular and exceptional book: 'The Singularity of Awareness':

"The central theme of this work is ... awareness qua awareness, which is to say, not awareness as a topic within, or relative to, a context that defines it by *confining* it, as e.g. social awareness, physical awareness or awareness physically analysed ... Rather, without trepidation, awareness 'itself' – awareness without confinement – is our topic, awareness *without imposed limits as our 'context'*... Awareness as such is a truly primitive term (unlike consciousness with all its differentiated levels) which ... always refers to being 'aware-of-something', of some content, as vivid or vague, sharp or dim as it may be. However ... to approach *any* content as a topic of consideration always demands its immediate relation to the awareness ... that makes it 'visible' or 'observable' in the first place; awareness as context never stands alone but only in relation to a content ... awareness as simultaneously context *and* content in a universe that cannot regard these two terms as separable in any way whatsoever."

Awareness, as defined in The New Yoga of Awareness, is 'Absolute Subjectivity' – a subjectivity that is neither the private property of any self or subject, nor the product, passive mirror or 'slave' of any object or world of objects. In 'Today's World' a renewal of this 'Tantric Wisdom' is more needed than ever. For this is a world, in which, as Marx

recognised long ago, private property has transformed relations between human beings into relations between things – between material ‘objects’ in the form of commodities. Human labour itself is bought and sold as a commodity, and society uses science and technology to turn the human being as such into an object of economic exploitation and bio-genetic and media manipulation. The human being is no longer understood scientifically as a spiritual being, for as Marx wrote:

“... the representation of private interests ... abolishes all natural and *spiritual distinctions* by enthroning in their stead the immoral, irrational and *soulless abstraction* of a particular material object and a particular consciousness which is slavishly subordinated to this object.”

Understood as ‘Absolute Subjectivity’, awareness transcends each and everything we are conscious or aware of. It is not the product or private property of any self or world. It cannot be, because awareness is the ‘transcendental’ or ‘a priori’ condition for our experience of any possible self or world. It is the primordial pre-condition of all experiencing and thus too, of all experienced realities. This understanding of ‘awareness’ as an Absolute Subjectivity independent of both ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ forms part of a number of ‘Precepts of Awareness’ which together make up ‘The Awareness Principle’ – this being both the basic metaphysical framework or conceptual skeleton of ‘The New Yoga’ and the essence of the new philosophical world-view I call ‘Absolute Subjectivism’.

This new metaphysical framework is called for in order both to refine the conceptual articulation of previous yogic philosophies, and to challenge the ruling reductionistic ideology of our day – the neuro-genetic ideology that would have you believe that ‘you are your brain’

or 'you are your genes'. That this ideology can be held up as a self-evident 'scientific' fact is nothing but a sign of the thoughtless ignorance of our time, a time in which scientists and philosophers of 'consciousness' cannot recognise the most basic and self-evident of facts – namely that consciousness can no more be seen as a product of one of its own objects (the human body or brain for example), than can dreaming be seen as a product of some thing that we dream *of*. A few simple questions to those who uphold this ideology are all that is necessary to dispel its truth and display its counter-experiential, counter-evidential and therefore counter-empirical nature. Ask a scientist to raise a hand for example. Then ask him or her the following question. Did you experience your *brain* raising your hand or *you* raising your hand? If the latter, in what way then is there any 'empirical evidence' that your brain raised your hand - rather than serving as an instrument or organ by which *you* raised your hand? And if you insist on holding to the viewpoint that 'you are your brain' why is it that neither you nor anyone else senses their brain directly – 'empirically' - let alone experiences themselves *as* a brain? Then there is the aesthetic question. Did Beethoven compose his symphonies or were they a product of his genes and composed by his brain? Did Picasso paint his pictures or were they the product of his genes and painted by his brain? Finally, there is the ethical adjunct to these questions. If it is our genes that make us what we are and our brains that determine what we do, then is it human *beings* that commit crimes or is it only their *bodies* – their genes or brain chemistry - that do so?

Behind all these questions is a whole host of paradoxes and contradictions unacknowledged by Western scientific thought. For if, as it is sincerely argued by brain science, all that we perceive through our senses as an external world of objects is in fact just a picture *created in our brains* then how on earth can it be argued that this picture is a result

of any one thing in it – not least that object which we perceive on the laboratory table as a ‘brain’? Brain scientific ideology is fundamentally flawed - and totally floored - by this paradox, which reduces it to a ridiculous claim that our whole waking consciousness of the world is a product of just one object we perceive within it – the brain – and this *despite* the fact that according to the very same ‘science’ our perception of any object - including ‘the brain’ itself – is nothing but a figment or phantom image created by the brain. The figment of course is supposedly created using sensory information or data received by the brain from an *independent world of objects*, and yet according to the self-same science – our very perceptions of these supposedly independent ‘source’ objects are themselves figments of the brain. It is such basic but still unthought paradoxes and contradictions of neuro-scientific ideology that Heidegger pointed to when he challenged the ‘double’ or ‘triple’ accounting standards of the brain scientist:

“When it is claimed that brain research is a scientific foundation for our understanding of human beings, the claim implies that the true and real relationship of one human being to another is an interaction of brain processes, and that in brain research itself, nothing else is happening but that one brain is in some way ‘informing’ another. Then, for example, the statue of a god in the Akropolis museum, viewed during the term break, that is to say outside the research work, is in reality and truth nothing but the meeting of a brain process in the observer with the product of a brain process, the statue exhibited. Reassuring us, during the holidays, that this is not what is really implied, means living with a certain double or triple accounting that clearly doesn’t rest easily with the much faulted rigour of science.”

The foundational philosophy of Western science can be termed ‘Absolute Objectivism’, the identification of truth with ‘objectivity’ and

reality with an independent world of 'objects' we just happen to be 'conscious' of. The foundational principle of The New Yoga, on the other hand – The Awareness Principle – can, as a philosophical position, be termed 'Absolute Subjectivism' - recognising as it does that the most basic scientific fact is not the independent existence of a world of objects in space and time but our subjective experience of such a world. For the deeper truth is that *all experiencing*, whether of ourselves, our bodies, or the universe as a whole is *essentially subjective*.

'Absolute Subjectivism' does not imply that there is no ultimate shared reality or universe, and that everything is 'relative' to our own personal or private 'subjective' experience. This is because it does not reduce subjectivity to the private property of persons - to your 'consciousness' or mine, your 'brain' or mine. On the contrary, it is today's supposedly 'rigorous' brain science that effectively turns the universe into a completely relativistic reality - one made up of private world-pictures created by and in each person's brain. Brain science is perhaps - and paradoxically - the most 'thoughtless' or 'brainless' of all the sciences. Its false foundations can only be undermined by a new science, one based not on the false presuppositions of 'Absolute Objectivism' but on the philosophy of Absolute Subjectivism – on 'The Awareness Principle' rather than on simplistic principles of causality. It is the basic precepts of The Awareness Principle that both lay the foundations of The New Yoga and at the same time *renew and refine* the foundations of 'Kashmir Shaivist' metaphysics. For this too was a metaphysics whose basic principle was the recognition of 'Awareness' or 'Absolute Subjectivity' ('Chit') as the ultimate reality lying behind All That Is ('Vishva'). The very name Shiva has the root Sanskrit meaning of 'to lie behind' ('shi') and also to cut asunder ('shvi') - the second meaning being also the root of the word 'science' (Latin 'scire' – to cut).

For the Shaivist, 'Shiva' is a god or deva by virtue of personifying and symbolising the reflexive self-awareness or 'I'-ness of the absolute or Divine Awareness. 'Shiva' is also mythologically renowned as 'Lord of Yoga'. 'The New Yoga of Awareness' is therefore also 'The New Theology of Awareness'. This not a secular-scientific 'neuro-theology' of the sort that would have us believe that 'God' too is a mere phantom of the brain, but a 'noo-theology' (from Greek 'noos' – awareness). This theology, which recognises that divinity itself is nothing other than awareness as such. God is that Divine Awareness or 'Noos' which is not the property of any self or subject, body or being, god or ego - and yet is the creative source of all beings, one identical with that true Self or 'I' known in the Indian philosophical tradition as 'Atman'.

Yet the Awareness Principle is not only a foundational philosophical or theological principle but a foundational scientific principle – the foundation of a science that is essentially subjective rather than objective, and that identifies truth itself with subjectivity and not objects or objectivity. 'Subjective Science' is not based on external manipulation and measurement of objects (to 'measure out' being the root meaning of illusion or 'Maya') nor does it make use of external 'experimentation' on its 'objects'. Instead it is based on the methodical cultivation of a direct, inner subjective knowledge of things, and a direct subjective experience of their own aware inwardness or 'soul'. The 'results' of such subjective scientific research can be *inter-subjectively* validated by comparing the experiences of individuals, making them no less scientific than the results of 'objective science', with its methods of external measurement and experimentation. Indeed the very aim of subjective science is to explore and research the inter-subjective dynamics of awareness that lie behind all that is - those interweaving field-patterns and qualities of awareness that become manifest both as sentient beings and seemingly insentient

things - this creative weaving together of subjectivities being the great 'loom' of awareness that is the essential meaning of 'Tantra'.

The counterpart of Absolute Subjectivism is Absolute Objectivism – the assumption of a pre-existing world of objects independent of subjective awareness. The counterpart of Objective Science is a Subjective Science founded on the recognition that awareness, as Absolute Subjectivity is not purely a domain of private experiencing. The counterpart of The Awareness Principle in Western science is 'The Causality Principle'. The terms 'cause' and 'causality' are Latin translations of the Greek word 'arche' – meaning 'first principle'. The Awareness Principle is the First Principle of Subjective Science and of Absolute Subjectivism, because its major precept is that awareness or 'subjectivity' is itself the 'first principle' and absolute foundation of all that is - and not any possible 'object' of consciousness. In essence there simply are no such things as 'objects' - for there can be nothing 'outside' awareness or subjectivity. Our lived experience of things and the entire world of things that constitutes that lived experience is intrinsically subjective. *All* experiencing, whether reflective or pre-reflective, whether of thoughts or things, inner or 'outer' worlds, is essentially subjective. Absolute Subjectivism is the recognition that subjectivity *as such* – which I term 'awareness' - is the sole possible absolute, being the transcendental or 'a priori' condition for our experience not only of any possible 'object' but also of any possible ego or 'I', subject or self, world or universe. Awareness - understood as 'absolute' or 'transcendental' subjectivity, is neither the *product* of any object, nor the *property* of any subject ('empirical' or 'transcendental').

Just as there is nothing 'outside' space, so *there is nothing outside awareness*. Just as space transcends every thing that stands out or 'ex-

ists' within it, so does Absolute Subjectivity - 'awareness' - transcend every thing we experience within it. Absolute Subjectivism abolishes the presupposition of Transcendental Phenomenology that subjectivity is necessarily the property of an ego or 'I', subject or self, being or body and the 'scientific' myth that subjectivity or awareness can - even in principle - be understood as the product of any 'thing' we can experience within it - such as the human brain. Like space, there is nothing outside awareness. Yet it possesses an infinite *interiority* that embraces not only all actual things but all potential realities - the unbounded potentialities of awareness immanent within every thing. Awareness is thus not only transcendent but also immanent within every thing and every being. Even seemingly insentient 'things' such as atoms, molecules, clouds and rocks are in reality aware or sentient *beings*. They are all distinct subjectivities or consciousnesses, not separate or apart from one another but each a distinct but inseparable part of the 'Universal Consciousness' or Absolute Subjectivity. However, a subjectivity or consciousness is not an abstract or punctiform 'subject', 'ego' or 'I' - nor does it presuppose such a subject. Subjectivities or consciousnesses are simply individualised shapes and patterns, tones and textures of awareness.

The fact that we do not directly experience things as subjectivities is the sole reason why we perceive them only *as* things - as 'objects' of cognition. Thus we see a cat as 'a cat' - objectifying it in both thought and perception - only because we do not directly experience the particular shape and pattern, tone and texture of awareness that constitutes 'cat consciousness'. Similarly, we only perceive sensory qualities such as 'shape' and 'colour' as qualities of 'objects' because we do not directly experience the sensual shapes and colourations of awareness they give outer expression to. Ordinary thought and sense-perception *objectify* other *subjectivities* or 'consciousnesses'. It is this

activity of objectification, occurring within awareness or subjectivity itself, that first gives beings the apparent character of atomic subjects confronting a world of 'objects'. 'Subject' and 'object' are offshoots of an activity of objectification, albeit one occurring *within* awareness - understood as Absolute Subjectivity. The activity of objectification is a peculiar character of human subjectivity or 'ego-consciousness' and does not extend to animals or other living organisms, let alone to the innate subjectivity or consciousness of higher consciousnesses or seemingly 'insentient' things. Nor does it even extend to the human body. For every cell and vital organ of the body - and not just the brain - is an aware or sentient *organism* in its own right, not just *inseparable* from the other cells and organs that form part of the body as a whole but also *distinct* from them.

Brain science has in fact now tripped up on its own theoretical foundations with its most recent and proudest technological 'applications'. The fact that electronic brain implants can allow people to use their own thoughts to influence neuronal activity - and do so in such a precise way as to be able to move computer screen cursors or operate instruments such as artificial limbs - all this shows precisely that thinking is not in itself a function or property of the brain as an organ. It is the other way round - the brain is but one organ or 'instrument' (Greek 'organon') of thought. Biologists of 'consciousness' have now also been forced to recognise that even in their own purely neurological terms, the brain is not the sole or even principal organ of human consciousness, there being clear evidence showing that we have both a 'heart-brain' and a 'gut-brain' suffused with neuronal circuits, that more information is sent from the heart to the brain than vice versa, and that even *transplanted* hearts transfer personality traits and memories which transform the consciousness of their recipients - altering their personality traits and memories in the likeness of that of their donors.

Science has yet to recognise however, that our very perception of the body's vital organs as mere biological *objects* is itself the result of our inability to directly experience them as distinct subjectivities. Except, that is, for the brain. For whereas we may feel our skin tingling, a pain in our intestines, a movement of our limbs, or our hearts fluttering, we do *not* directly feel or experience our brains in the same way. That is because instead we *do* experience the distinct subjectivity or consciousness that the brain essentially is. Yet were we able to identify with and experience the innate consciousness of other vital organs in the same way – for example that of our skin, heart and guts - we would cease to think of or perceive these organs merely as biological objects – as parts of our body. Instead we would experience the consciousnesses they each embody – consciousness quite distinct in nature from brain consciousness. Indeed it is only because human beings are primarily identified with their *brain consciousness* that they perceive both the brain itself and other bodily organs as biological objects – perceiving the heart for example, as a mere bio-mechanical pump, or the lungs as a mere bio-mechanical bellows.

It is the identification of the scientist with their own purely 'head thinking' and brain consciousness that is the true foundation of brain 'science' - and of the pseudo-scientific myth that consciousness is a by-product or property of the brain. This myth has taken a blow with evidence that another organ - the heart – registers images on a computer screen even before the brain does – indeed *before they even come up on screen*. There is nothing astonishing about this from the point of view of Absolute Subjectivism, which recognises that "The body IS an awareness" (Castaneda) - and that awareness embraces not only all actual but all potential possible and probable experiences – past, present and future.

Religions are often accused of 'anthropomorphism' – picturing God or gods in human form. Yet many brain 'scientologists' now seriously believe that 'God' or 'gods' are themselves phantoms of the *human brain*, rooted in our genes to serve some evolutionary purpose. And when it comes to considering the well-known phenomenon of 'phantom limbs' and 'phantom pains' – pains with no apparent source in physical limbs and the physical body – Western science once again takes recourse to the brain as '1st Cause'. And yet it is subjectivities - *beings* and not brains - that feel pain, making the whole notion of neurological 'pain receptors' an *objectification* of an essentially subjective sensory phenomenon. Neurology will only 'come to its senses' when it acknowledges that – as the phenomenon of phantom limbs tells us – our *felt* body is an independent *subjective body* in its own right, not to be confused with its manifestation in the objective form of the *physical* body and its organs, including the brain. The fact that chemical drugs, electrical signals or electro-magnetic waves used to stimulate or depress parts of the brain can directly affect human consciousness, accentuating or eliminating particular sensations or pains, is no proof that the brain is their 'cause' - just as interfering with the images relayed by a television set, whether electrically or electromagnetically, by switching its channels or by switching it off entirely, is no proof that those images – of or created by human beings - have no independent reality outside 'the box' and are merely produced by and within it.

It is not religion but Western 'science' and medicine – with its philosophy of Absolute Objectivism - that is the most anthropomorphic and anthropomorphising of world-views. A primary example is 'scientific' biology and zoology, where our specifically *human* and therefore 'anthropo-morphic' perception of the bodily form of other species – whether that of a shark, insect or cat for example - is taken as

definitive standard of 'scientific' objectivity. Zoologists take the way human beings outwardly perceive other organisms and their organs as the definitive guide to their nature. The reality however (as pointed out long ago by Uexkull) is that all organisms perceive their external environment - and with it, each other's outer bodily forms - in quite different ways. Thus the way an insect perceives another insect - or a cat, shark or human being - is quite different from the way the latter perceive each other or the insect itself.

This is not just due to their having distinct sense organs as human beings perceive them externally - for example through our identification of the electrical sense organs of sharks or the geo-magnetic sensitivity of birds. It is not such *humanly* perceived biological differences in the perceptual organs of different species that produce differences in their perceived sensory environment or experiential 'sensorium'. It is the other way round. Differences in both the sensory organs and experienced environment of different species embody and give biological form to their essential nature as distinct *species of subjectivity* - each with their own unique field patterns of awareness. It is these species-specific *field patterns of awareness* that are given form in their biological sense organs, and that in turn create the *patterned field of awareness* specific to each species' experienced environment or 'Umwelt' (Uexkull).

"We cannot say that the organ has capacities, but must say that the capacity has organs....capability [the root meaning of 'Shakti'] articulating itself into capacities [Shaktis] creating organs characterizes the organism as such."

Martin Heidegger

What any biological 'organism' or indeed any biological 'organ' essentially *is* – including organs of sense perception themselves – cannot be experienced in its essence – as an *organising field-pattern of subjectivity* – if it is perceived only in the *anthropocentric* form of an *object patterned by human sense perception and the human brain*. In general, we can only experience the reality of things – whether living organisms, organs or inorganic matter – by experiencing them as unique subjectivities. This we cannot do by thinking with our brain alone, thus privileging its current and specifically human way of patterning awareness and perception – and turning it into a 'scientific' standard of 'objectivity'. Nor can we experience the subjective nature of all things through a purely 'person-centred' psychology – one which focuses people's awareness only on the purely private dimensions of subjective experiencing, which treats each person's 'psyche' and psychological 'processes' as their private property, and which ignores that Fundamental Distinction, central to The New Yoga, between all we experience personally and the very awareness of experiencing it – an awareness that is essentially 'trans-personal' or 'transcendental'.

Today there are of course many different or new 'approaches' to medicine, mental health, psychology and psychotherapy. Yet The Awareness Principle that is the core of The New Yoga, is as its name implies, not simply a new practical 'approach' or even 'a' new yoga, but a new therapeutic principle or 'paradigm'. It is far more than a *therapeutic* principle however. For The Awareness Principle is essentially a fundamentally new *philosophical* principle, one that in turn provides the foundation of a new *scientific* principle or paradigm, a new medical principle, a new psychological and sociological principle, a new meditational principle – and a new spiritual and religious principle. Above all, however, The Awareness Principle is a new and highly practical *life principle* – a principle to *live by* through The Practice of

Awareness. Out of The Awareness Principle comes an entire range of new Practices or 'Yogas' of awareness. It is The *Practice* of Awareness that provides a new foundation for life, just as it is The Awareness *Principle* as such that provides a new foundation for science. The Awareness Principle provides the guiding principles for The Practice of Awareness. Conversely, it is through Practicing Awareness in life that The Awareness Principle itself truly *comes to life* – not just as an abstract principle but as a way of life, not just as a philosophical or scientific principle, but as an intrinsically therapeutic *life-principle*. The Awareness Principle as such is neither old nor new but is an 'old-new' principle. Its groundbreaking and authentic originality or 'newness' comes from making fully explicit – for the first time and in an entirely new way – a primary truth or 'first principle' recognised long ago. And whilst this first principle is implicit in both life and science – as well as in many forms of counselling, meditation and psychotherapy – its *primary truth* is still unrecognised. As a result, it has remained unformulated as a *primary principle* or 'first principle' – as a principle of both life and science. As a *first principle* it has instead been replaced by the idea of 'first causes' - whether of life itself and the universe as a whole, of health and ill-health, or of human experience in all its shapes.

Whenever a new therapeutic principle or practice is announced, the key questions asked about it in today's economically governed world are: whether it is *effective*, whether it is *economic* and above all, whether it is '*evidence-based*' and therefore 'scientific'? The final question is the most important and basic one, for it rests on an unquestioned concept of 'science'. Nor does it recognise that the basic presuppositions of Western 'science' are not themselves the object of any possible scientific experiment. It is precisely these presuppositions that The Awareness Principle challenges, albeit in the most evidential or empirical way possible - in a way more 'scientific'

than science itself. That is because, from an experiential, evidential or 'empirical' point of view, the most fundamental scientific 'fact' is not what science takes it to be - the objective existence of a universe of objects - of 'things'. On the contrary, the most fundamental, self-evidential, empirical and therefore scientific fact is our *subjective awareness* of ourselves, and of a universe of things. That very awareness of things however, is not itself a thing - nor can it be explained by any thing or things we are aware of. To even attempt to do so would be like explaining our entire awareness of the universe of dreams and dream objects by some particular object or objects we dream of.

The 1st Precept or 'first principle' of 'The Awareness Principle' is that Awareness itself - and not any thing or universe of things we are aware of - is the First Principle of the universe.

Every aspect and application of The Awareness Principle comes from the recognition that awareness comes first - not matter, energy or any universe. The underlying principle of 'physical' science - untested and untestable, counter-intuitive and counter-evidential, is that awareness mysteriously arose from an unaware universe of space and time, matter and energy. How awareness could arise from this unaware universe is not just something temporarily inexplicable, and therefore a subject of scientific hypothesis. It is inexplicable *in principle*. For just as the starting point of all inquiries into the nature of the universe is awareness of that universe, so is the starting point of all scientific inquiries into awareness nothing but awareness itself. Every 'scientific' attempt to explain the origins or basis of 'consciousness' or 'awareness' through something outside or beyond awareness is scientifically impossible in principle - the very attempt and all the experiments that

go along with it being something that occurs inside and within the awareness of the scientist.

The primary purpose and value of The Awareness Principle, as a new foundation for life and science, is to rescue life itself from domination by the unquestioned, non-scientific presuppositions of what is, in reality a purely Western concept of 'science'. That does not mean returning to the dead ends of paganism or religious fundamentalism, Eastern or Western, Oriental or Occidental, Southern or Nordic. Neither does it mean retreating into the realm of personal lived experience, secular or spiritual (for in today's world even this realm is insidiously shaped by popularised Western-scientific concepts, concepts which shape the world in which each individual lives through their ruthless application in fields as diverse as government and economics, medicine and psychiatry, and even counselling and psychotherapy). Instead, the aim of The Awareness Principle – to rescue both personal and social life from domination by the abstract presuppositions of science – is one that can only be achieved by rescuing the whole Western *concept* of science from these unquestioned presuppositions. Principal among these root presuppositions is the identification of truth with 'objects' and 'objectivity'. The Awareness Principle challenges this whole 'Objectivity Principle' of Western Science - instead reasserting the primary truth and absolute reality of 'subjectivity'.

Precursors of The Awareness Principle can be found in Indian philosophy, in European 'phenomenology', in Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis. None of these precursors of The Awareness Principle however - besides those found in Indian Tantric philosophy - explicitly articulated its First Precept. Nor did any of them properly explicate the truth of its 'Second Precept'. The Second Precept of The Awareness Principle is that Awareness as such is inseparable but also quite *distinct*

from each and every thing we are aware *of*. I call this second Precept of Awareness 'The Fundamental Distinction'. Out of it comes 'The Fundamental Choice' – a choice that each of us can make at any moment of our lives. The choice is whether to identify with things we are aware of or 'experience' – whether in the form of desires and impulses, sensations or perceptions, emotions or events – or, on the other hand, to identify with *the very awareness* of them; recognising that awareness as something essentially *distinct* from each and every thing we 'experience' or are aware of within it, including ourselves.

The 2nd Precept of the Awareness Principle is that Awareness both embraces and transcends all that we experience or are aware of.

The relation between Awareness in its transcendental character and all that we are aware of can be compared to the relation between space and things we perceive in space. Space embraces all the objects or bodies within it. Yet it is not itself an object – and transcends all the objects within it. Objects have location – we can say where they are 'in' space. Space itself on the other hand has an essentially non-local or 'field' character – we cannot say 'where' space is. Similarly, whereas we can localise each and every object or thing we are aware of – for example localising an object in space, a sensation in our bodies or a thought in our heads – we cannot localise the awareness of it – we cannot say where our awareness of anything is. The most important of Indian treatises on awareness placed great importance on the yogic practice of identifying with the space around and within things. That is because space, like time, is not essentially an 'objective' dimension of the universe at all but a basic dimension of transcendental subjectivity - of awareness. Absolute Subjectivity is itself an infinite subjective *time-space* of experiencing - one unbounded by any bodies within it, and one that simultaneously embraces the past, present and future of each

and every being. As individual 'consciousnesses' or 'subjectivities' we are each 'incarnations' – unique *individualisations* – of that Divine and Absolute Subjectivity that is 'awareness'.

Absolute Subjectivism is not just a 'post-modern' but a *post-materialist* philosophy of a new sort. Quite simply it denies the reality of both 'matter' and 'energy' as they are understood in modern scientific terms, seeing them only as the outer manifestation - *within* awareness - of specific field patterns and qualities of awareness. What we perceive as the form of external objects are these shapes and patterns and qualities of awareness - as perceived through the lens of our own specific field patterns of awareness. Different beings, subjectivities or consciousnesses perceive not only material 'objects' but each other's 'material' bodies in a way shaped by their own field patterns of awareness. The true nature of 'matter' itself however, lies in the dynamic, interweaving matrix or loom of these field patterns of awareness. The 'prima materia' is not itself anything solid or material but consists of this inter-subjective matrix or loom, which is also the innate *substantiality* of subjectivity or awareness as such. The term 'Tantra', in its deepest sense, is what names this loom or matrix of Absolute Subjectivity, just as it was the terms 'Prakriti' and 'Prana' that named its primary substantiality and flowing, breath-like character.

When you look at the apparently fixed form of a material object you are perceiving nothing but 'Maya' - the outer form of another consciousness or subjectivity as it is given form by your own specific field patterns of awareness, and as it appears within the world or patterned field of awareness these give form to. What you are seeing - or hearing, touching and feeling – is not the independent reality of a material 'object' but a materialised sensory image of another subjectivity or consciousness. The same applies to your perception of

your whole material environment and the 'material' bodies of other people – they are nothing but *materialised body images* of other consciousnesses or subjectivities. The power to materialise such images and create the semblance of an 'objective' material world was called 'Mayashakti' – this being the innate potential of awareness to take on infinite and ever-changing patterns or forms. Yet as humanity has known for millennia, not all these forms are perceptible to human beings. Furthermore, many of them belong to other *non-physical* 'species' of consciousness, not least those 'higher' consciousnesses that were indeed once perceived by human beings as 'the gods' - but then became imaginative projections, and are now seen as mere pre-programmed phantoms of the brain.

Western sciences, religions and philosophies are dominated by the belief that knowledge is cognition by individual subjects of an independent world of material objects. It is not. 'Matter' itself is an inter-subjective 'matrix' of those interweaving patterns and qualities of awareness that lie behind all things and all beings, all 'objects' and 'subjects'. 'Maya' is the delusion that stems from ignorance ('A-vidya') of this essential Tantric truth. 'Tantric Wisdom', understood both as religion, yoga and true science, is the sole way of getting behind and cutting through this delusion in Today's World - the very words 'science' 'con-science' and 'con-consciousness' having a common root in the Latin 'scire' - 'to cut through'. The tradition of Kashmir Shaivism cuts through the philosophical and scientific delusions that stand in the way of acknowledging the ultimate truth and reality of awareness, recognising, as Abhinava wrote, that

**“... the being of all things that are recognised
in awareness in turn depends on awareness.”**

And as written in the Shiva Sutras of Vasugupta – one of the foundational scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism:

“Awareness, Shiva, is the soul of the world.”

For Shiva ‘himself’ is essentially nothing but that Universal Awareness or Absolute Subjectivity that lies behind all manifest things and cuts asunder the bonds that make us believe that awareness, and with it, all aware beings, are nothing but a product of those things – the principal delusion of Western science. According to Martin Heidegger this science has supplanted philosophy to become **“the new religion”**. And indeed, both global capitalism and Western science have their own ‘gods’ – whether money, commodities, matter as such or the abstract energy ‘quantum’. Only in its esoteric religious traditions and in the philosophical tradition known as ‘phenomenology’ did Western thinkers **“... arrive at the crossroads that the Indian thinkers had already reached about seven hundred years before the birth of Christ.”** (Heinrich Zimmer). Phenomenology recognised subjectivity as the transcendental condition for all experiencing, whether of inner or outer phenomena. The term ‘phenomenon’ itself derives from the Greek ‘phainesthai’, meaning to ‘shine through’. Yet long before the birth of phenomenology, Einstein’s ‘absolutisation’ of the speed of light, or the quantum-physics of the ‘photon’, Indian philosophy had recognised that it was *the light of awareness* (‘Prakasha’) that finds its reflection in all physical phenomena - including physical light itself - being that light which first allows their inner nature to ‘shine through’ and ‘come to light’ *in* awareness. The relation between pure subjectivity on the one hand, and phenomenal experience on the other, was compared to the relation between a mirror and the objects it reflects. Except that in this analogy there are no external objects reflected in or by the mirror. Instead all phenomena perceived as ‘objects’ are but manifestations

of that pure awareness that is the mirror as such, a mirror both distinct and inseparable from all the manifold images it displays. Hence the luminous insight of Abhinava's principle tantric disciple, Kshemaraja:

**“Every appearance owes its existence to the light of awareness.
Nothing can have its own being without the light of awareness.”**

Western Phenomenology opened up an important distinction between our wordless 'pre-reflective' awareness of things and our reflective awareness of them in thought. Tantric 'phenomenology' on the other hand, understood both things and thoughts as forms of 'reflective awareness' ('Vimarsha'), both being phenomena that are subjectively experienced and therefore both being reflections of the pure space and light of awareness within which our experience of all phenomena, internal or external first comes to light. Only through the most refined thoughts however, can we come to a reflective intellectual *recognition* of this truth that is at the same time a direct experience of it – experiencing the pure light of awareness in and through its reflection in both thoughts and things. This is the 'Doctrine of Recognition' ('Pratyabhijna') central to both Kashmiri Shaivism and 'The New Yoga'.

'The New Yoga' is thus both a new 'phenomenological' understanding of yoga and a new 'yogic' understanding of 'phenomenology' - as a way of directly experiencing the Absolute and Divine awareness known as 'Shiva'. The meaning of this name and of the term 'Shaivism' should not be misunderstood. In the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism 'Shiva' is neither one god among others of the Hindu 'Trimurti' (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva) and nor is 'Shaivism' a form of Hindu 'monotheism'. Being identical with Absolute Subjectivity, Shiva is not a god 'with' awareness but is awareness itself. This does not mean that iconic representations of Shiva, whether in human form or in the form of the phallic 'Linga' or

other 'inanimate' objects are mere crude 'idols'. Linga means 'sign'. The 'worship' of such signs is based on the recognition that awareness cannot *only* be understood as an impersonal and abstract 'Absolute' - for it is the very source both of our personhood itself and that which pervades all things. It is also the very essence of self - that Self ('Atman') which does not 'have' but IS awareness, the divine 'Awareness Self' ('Chaitanyatman') present within all beings.

It cannot be sufficiently emphasised, in contrast to so many philosophically muddled interpretations of Kashmir Shaivism, that the Divine Awareness as such is neither a Supreme Being nor 'Being' as such. Just as the scientific counterpart of The Awareness Principle is The Causality Principle, so is its historic philosophical counterpart 'The Being Principle'. This is the underlying principle of that 'Absolute Objectivism', already questioned by Husserl, which takes as the starting point of thinking a universe of already existing things, entities or 'beings'.

The primary principle of the universe, seen in this way, is thus Existence or Being as such. The Awareness Principle challenges The Being Principle through the simple recognition that the most basic, self-evidential, and experiential or 'empirical' starting point of scientific, religious and philosophical inquiry is *not* the Being or Existence of a universe of existing entities or beings - nor the existence of a 'Supreme Being' - but The Awareness of such a universe. The most primordial experience of every human being too, is not the 'fact' of their Being but the Awareness of Being, and of the particularity of their nature as a being. Yet if Awareness and not Being is the primary principle, then Awareness itself can in no way be reduced to a property, either of Being as such or of particular entities, things or beings. That is why I speak of THE Awareness of Being rather than 'my', 'our' or 'your' awareness - for these possessive adjectives would imply that Awareness

is a private property of beings, and thus secondary to Being as such. It was in order to transcend the old 'subject-object' dichotomy – a dichotomy that assumed that awareness or subjectivity was the property of localised, individual 'subjects' or 'beings', that Heidegger shifted from a phenomenological language of subjectivity to an ontological language, emphasising the mystery of Being as such and its 'ontological difference' from beings. In place of the 'ontological difference' The Awareness Principle is founded on a 'noological difference'. This is the distinction between Awareness as such – *not* seen as the property of particular beings or subjects – and every entity, thing, being or phenomenon that it is possible to be aware of. The Awareness Principle and its philosophy of 'Absolute Subjectivism' constitute a *monism* of Awareness and not of Being. Such a monism is quite distinct from any form of *monotheism* - Shaivist or otherwise - which regards awareness as the property of a Supreme Being, whether under the name of 'Shiva' or any other name, even if the latter is identified with 'Being' as such. Such wholly misleading interpretations of Kashmir Shaivism as the following indicate how deeply rooted is the failure to explicitly distinguish The Awareness Principle from The Being Principle. It follows Vedantic philosophy in subsuming Awareness or 'Consciousness' under The Being Principle, whilst at the same time denying the essence of Kashmir Shaivism – the absolute identity of Shiva with Awareness or 'Consciousness' *as such* - and confusingly identifies Shiva with both Being as such and with 'a' or 'One' being.

"In describing the nature of reality, the Kashmir Shaiva explains that there is only One Being, called Lord Shiva. This Being is the nature and existence of all beings. This Being is defined as being filled with the infinite light (*prakasha*) of God Consciousness."

John Hughes

It must be accepted that this failure to distinguish The Awareness Principle from The Being Principle in interpretations of the Kashmir Shaivist tradition has its roots in the tradition itself, and above all in those preceding it - in which the still unthought nature of this distinction is literally *compounded* in the Sanskrit compound noun 'Sat-Chit-ananda' ('Being-Awareness-Bliss'). The *primacy* of awareness in experiencing the Bliss of Being rarely comes to explicit expression, save in the already cited words of Abhinavagupta:

**“... the being of all things that are recognised
in awareness in turn depends on awareness.”**

The Awareness Principle clarifies the primordial relation of Awareness and Being with the understanding that the very 'Being' of Awareness is nothing else than the Awareness of Being and of all beings, actual and potential. The Bliss of this Awareness is the recognition that Awareness itself is the very essence of all beings, including our own being, and the very Being of the Divine - of God. Being aware, we can each learn to BE the AWARENESS, which we most essentially ARE - both recognising and experiencing it as identical with that Awareness which is the sole Being of The Divine. Aware of Being and identifying with or 'Being' that Divine Awareness we experience its Bliss. This understanding of 'Sat-Chit-Ananda' - and not any muddled monotheistic monism of Being - is the as-yet unthought essence of The Kashmir Shaivist tradition, brought to light by The New Yoga of Awareness through the philosophy of Absolute Subjectivism and its foundational principle: The Awareness Principle. It is through this Pure Principle ('Suddha-Tattva') that The New Yoga of Awareness answers the unaddressed question of what exactly it is that is 'worshipped' as the essence of The Divine in Kashmir Shaivism - is it an absolute or supreme *being* called 'Shiva' or is it Awareness as such understood as Absolute Subjectivity? The answer is that 'Shiva' is

the very self-recognition or 'I'-consciousness of that Absolute Subjectivity or (Paramashiva), an Awareness which is not itself 'a' being - nor the property of one - yet is identical with The Divine. This Divine Awareness is the central point ('Bindu') of that triad or trinity ('Trika') that is 'Being-Awareness-Bliss'. It is also a 'centre of centres' or 'Singularity of Awareness' (Kosok) at the heart of all monadic beings - "The Divine Heart of Shiva" (Muller-Ortega). Understanding this makes Kashmir Shaivism not only a 'monism' or 'triadism' of awareness but also what Michael Kosok calls a "triune monadology" of awareness, resting on the principle of an Absolute Subjectivity transcending and prior to and not the property of any limited or localised 'subject'.

"Some may be able to speak, but if their awareness is obscured, they are unable to rise, unaware as they are, to the level of the experiencing subject who understands what has been said. They only grasp the outer successive [sound] of what the other person says and thus can only repeat it parrot-fashion ... An understanding of meaning presupposes that they have caught hold of their own power of awareness, - by attaining the autonomy of Absolute [Divine] Subjectivity."

Abhinavagupta

Further reading:

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Wilberg, Peter *Heidegger, Phenomenology and Indian Thought*

See www.thenewyoga.org/Bookshop.htm
and www.thenewyoga.org/further_writing.htm

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