

# MYSTICISM

## The Matrix to Transcend 'Brain, Mind, and Soul'

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### 1. Introduction

As some astrophysicists predict a 'Big Crunch' at the other end of the 'Big Bang', it looks as if a convergence of physics and metaphysics is gaining momentum. Quantum physics, the physics of the subatomic elementary particles, now seems to propose theories which are quasi-mystical in nature and content. Quantum and astrophysicists are now asking epistemological questions about how we can know about the universe in terms of its more distant objects (quasars, black holes), its size (finite vs. infinite), quantity (universes vs. multiverse), and 'life span' (eternal [i.e., open] or thermodynamically limited [i.e., closed and inevitably doomed to collapse into a Big Crunch and then another Big Bang, a pulsating universe]). Geneticists are asking ethical questions about what is the nature of man in molecular terms regarding possible genetic controls of behaviour and man's similarity or close kinship with chimpanzees and other 'advanced' animals. They are also asking questions as to what extent the genetic code of humans should be altered or edited to remove defects or even improve humankind. The theoretical possibility of incorporating nonhuman genetic material into people has even been considered. Medical technologists have asked the question whether life should be extended 'at any cost' both physically and financially. Advanced life support systems can maintain otherwise hopelessly incapacitated people in a vegetative state almost indefinitely. The issue of quality of life and whether life is worth living under those conditions arises and, therefore, the value or meaning of life itself is questioned. These questions go to man's fundamental assumptions about his universe and himself which traditionally is the study of first principles or metaphysics, the core discipline of philosophy.

From the other end, it seems that religions are influenced strongly by the economic systems of society, as illustrated in the hunting-gathering, agricultural, industrial and information-based societies of the world.

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Religions continue to claim to have a hold on Para-normal, Supra-normal psychic phenomena such as ESP (extra sensory perception), precognition, telepathy, and NDE (near-death experience), which the science fails to explain fully. Scientists are fully aware of presently available cumulative statistical database for experiments studying such phenomena. They provide strong, scientifically credible evidence for repeatable, anomalous effects. Though the brain is physical, these phenomena involve non-physical communication, thus implying the existence of some non-physical entity in addition to the brain.

## **2. Monism versus Dualism**

The question of whether mind and body are separate entities is one of conscious man's oldest conundrums. Dualistic thinking is almost universal. In every society, the vast majority of people believe in supernatural beings, spirits without bodies. In every society, the vast majority of people believe that they would survive death. Conventional science takes the stance of monism, i.e., that brain and mind are one and the same – or rather that the mind is a function of the brain as software is a function of the computer that runs it. The Cartesian dualism of mind and matter necessarily involved the problem of how mind and brain could interact in perception and in willed acts. Most philosophers now argue that the hopeless difficulties of this problem have rendered untenable both dualism and the interactionist view of brain-mind liaison. Brain science increasingly shows that the qualities of mental life that we associate with souls' – memory, self-control, decision-making, etc., – are purely corporeal; they emerge from biochemical processes in the brain. Hence, they assert that our physical brain is our soul. However, there are numerous arguments to suggest that the (non-physical) mind (and soul) is distinct from the (physical) brain.

Biologically, we are primates, close relatives of chimpanzees, with which we have more than 98 percent of our DNA in common. In terms of genes, the kinship is even closer, as part of the difference concerns 'junk DNA', which has no coding function. Yet, mentally, the distance that separates us from our simian cousins is huge. In the past, this was explained by our having a soul that animals did not possess. Today, the explanation is that we have a bigger brain. What is it about this organ that explains the wonders of mental life? In recent years, this question has become a central topic of research, sometimes referred to as the 'last

frontier’, involving some of the best neurobiologists, psychologists, cognitive scientists, computer experts, and philosophers in the world.

Progress in the neurosciences raises lots of other interesting philosophical questions, which necessarily overlap with religious and theological concerns. First, there is the question of reductionism and how far it can go? If we can reduce certain metaphysical phenomena, say mystical experiences of enlightenment, to neurological processes, does that mean that we have adequately explained the experience and can dismiss it? What happens if we invent ways to simulate these peak experiences at will? If the brain is a deterministic system, then how can we talk about free will, moral responsibility, and creative choice? If personality is intrinsically linked to brain chemistry should we reject the dualism between brain and mind, body and soul?

### 3. Mystical Answers to the Fundamental Question

In the long evolutionary process, as and when humanity attained the ability to reflect upon itself, the fundamental question surfaced is “Who am I?” and it is resonated in “Who are you?” The human history is embedded with numerous answers given to these fundamental questions. The Hindu Vedas, the oldest among the religious scriptures, answered: “I am God” (*Aham Brahmasmi*) and there was the echo, “You are that” (*Tat tvam asi*). True to Rig Veda’s prediction (*ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*: the reality is one, the learned speak of it differently, RV 1.164.46), very soon experts began expressing their conflicting views regarding the ‘reality’ and this continues even to this day. Each claims that his/her answer is the best and qualitatively different from the rest. By way of attempting to understand and explain the true nature of reality, these experts dissected and dismembered ‘reality’ into bits and pieces and now its mutilated corpse lies on the dissection table of various religions, philosophies and systems of thought. Like those five blind men who went to see the elephant, numerous claims and counterclaims reverberate at the religious and secular scenarios. Since this arena is often controlled by fanatic diehards and the situation can turn out to be ugly and life threatening this present article will not attempt to prove or disprove any of those claims, revelations or assertions.

There existed, or fortunately still exists, within and without the confines of religions a certain kind of ‘eccentric’ people who refuse to divide and subdivide reality into bits and pieces. Their observations and

declarations were often controversial because it seems that they even enjoyed contradicting themselves and were full of paradoxes and lack of precision. While the orthodox religious persons shun them because they are dangerous and unpredictable, philosophers and scientists ridicule them as they are illogical and do not fit into their mathematical calculations and measurements (These ‘eccentrics’ find no problem in saying, for example, that one is equal to many and many are equal to one!). However, surprisingly these are a group of people who enjoy tremendous influence on the general public since they seem to possess a ‘heart’ that has got reasons which ‘heads’ of the religious hierarchy, philosophers and scientists fail to comprehend. These people who are strange and at times even bizarre are called mystics and the wisdom they wield is called mysticism.

#### **4. The Upanisadic Concept of a Human Person**

*Chandogya Upanisad*, part six relates the story of Svetaketu who returned home proud and arrogant after twelve years of astute Vedic studies. His father Uddalaka Aruni confronted him with a series of questions that bewildered him to the core. Uddalaka slowly but surely led his son to the ultimate knowledge which eluded him even after completing his Vedic studies. Svetaketu was informed that “In the beginning this universe was Being (*Sat*) alone, One only without a second. This Being (*Brahman*) decided to evolve and multiply and as a result everything seen and unseen came into existence.” He continues to explain how various beings thus came to existence supported and sustained each other by becoming the food for each other. Aruni, then, elucidates how the very same food contributes to the development of various aspects of a person. According to him, just as the same milk gives rise to various milk products, and the same clay takes shape into various household utensils, the food we consume produces our flesh, blood, mind, life energy (*prana*), and the rest. According to Aruni a person consists of sixteen parts. He arranges for his son a hands-on experience so that he may have a firsthand knowledge of what he was being taught. He was asked to refrain from eating for the next fifteen days. Then, he came to his father and said: “What, Sir, shall I recite?” His father said: “The Rg, Yajur and Sama verses.” He replied: “They do not occur to me, Sir.” His father said to him: “Just as, my dear, of a great blazing fire a single coal, the size of a firefly, may be left, which would not burn much more than that, even so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only one part (*prana*) alone is left; and therefore with that one part

you do not remember the Vedas. Now go and eat and you will understand me.” Uddalaka continued his awe-inspiring instruction (a technique which is far superior to the peripatetic method of Socrates!) in order to lead his son to the realization that all creatures have their root in Being, they dwell in Being, and finally they rest in Being. He was made to understand that in a seed a tree is subtly present and like salt in the water Brahman is omnipresent. Like guiding a blindfolded person to his native country Uddalaka led his son through the thicket of ignorance to the ultimate liberation of realizing ‘that thou art’ (*tat tvam asi*).

### **5. The Buddhist Understanding of a Human Person**

Buddha accepted the basic Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and karma, as well as the notion that the ultimate goal of the religious life is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth. Buddha asserted that what keeps us bound to the death-rebirth process is desire, desire in the sense of wanting or craving anything in the world. Hence, the goal of getting off the wheel of reincarnation necessarily involves freeing oneself from desire. *Nirvana* is the Buddhist term for liberation. *Nirvana* literally means extinction, and it refers to the extinction of all cravings, an extinction that allows one to become liberated. Where Buddha departed most radically from Hinduism was his doctrine of *anatta*, the notion that individuals do not possess eternal souls. Instead of eternal souls, individuals consist of a ‘bundle’ of habits, memories, sensations, desires, and so forth, which together delude one into thinking that he or she consists of a stable, lasting self. Despite its transitory nature, this false self hangs together as a unit, and even reincarnates in body after body. In Buddhism, life in a corporeal body is the source of all suffering. Hence, the goal is to obtain release. In Buddhism, this calls for abandoning the false sense of self, so that the bundle of memories and impulses disintegrates, leaving nothing to reincarnate and hence nothing to experience pain.

### **6. The Jewish Understanding of Human Person**

Unlike many other religions, Judaism does not focus much on abstract cosmological concepts. However, in Jewish circles, uncertainty prevailed concerning the constitution of a human person. The Sadducees were materialists, denying immortality and all spiritual existence. The Pharisees maintained these doctrines, adding belief in pre-existence and transmigration. The psychology of the Rabbis is founded on the Sacred Books, particularly the account of the creation of man in Genesis. Three

terms are used for the soul: *nephesh*, *nuah*, and *neshamah*; the first refers to the animal and vegetative nature, the second to the ethical principle, the third to the purely spiritual intelligence. At all events, it is evident that the Old Testament throughout either asserts or implies the distinct reality of the soul. An important contribution to later Jewish thought was the infusion of Platonism into it by Philo of Alexandria. He taught the Divine origin of the soul, its pre-existence and transmigration; he contrasts the *pneuma* or spiritual essence, with the soul proper, the source of vital phenomena, whose seat is the blood; finally, he revived the old Platonic Dualism, attributing the origin of sin and evil to the union of spirit with matter.

Although Jews have certainly considered the nature of God, man, the universe, life and the afterlife at great length, there is no mandated, official, definitive belief on these subjects, outside of the very general concepts. There is substantial room for personal opinion on all of these matters because Judaism is more concerned about actions than beliefs. In *Kabbalah* as well as other systems of Jewish mysticism, the soul occupies a prominent position. Mysticism's centre of gravity is the close kinship between the human and the Divine; and the only avenue through which this kinship can become real to us is the soul. *Zohar*<sup>1</sup> claims that there was originally one 'Universal Soul', which broke itself up and encased itself in individual bodies. All individual souls are, hence, fragments of the 'Universal Soul' so that although they are distinct from one another they are, in reality, all *one*. Every human being possesses a soul which, in its pristine form, is 'pure'. The soul is a trinity. It comprises three elements, viz., (a) *Neshāmāh*, the rational element which is the highest phase of existence; (b) *Ruah*, the moral element, the seat of good and evil, the ethical qualities; (c) *Nefesh*, the gross side of spirit, the vital element which is *en rapport* with the body, and the mainspring of all the movements, instincts, and cravings of the physical life. In these three – i.e., *Neshāmāh*, *Ruah*, *Nefesh* – we find an exact image (*diyūkna*) of what is above in the celestial world. For *all three* form only *one* soul, one being, where all is *one*. The soul's most visible, most tangible, most perceivable

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<sup>1</sup>*Zohar* (Hebrew: זֹהָר; lit., *splendour* or *radiance*) is widely considered the most important work of *Kabbalah* or Jewish mysticism. It is a mystical commentary on the Torah (the five books of Moses), written in medieval Aramaic. It contains a mystical discussion of the nature of God, the origin and structure of the universe, the nature of soul, sin, redemption, good and evil, and the relationship between God and man. The *Zohar* is not one book, but a group of books.

quality is love. The soul is the root of love. Love is the symbol of the soul. According to the *Zohar*, the soul in its most exalted state as *Neshāmāh* can only enjoy the love inherent in its union with its source after it has freed itself from the contamination of earthly bodies. It is nevertheless possible, under certain conditions, to realise this ecstatic love while the soul is in the living body of an individual. One of these conditions is *the act of serving God*, the chief outward concomitant of which is *prayer*. The service of God, emerging out of love, leads the soul into union with the place of its origin, and it gives it, as it were, a foretaste of the ineffable felicity which awaits it in its highest condition as *Neshāmāh*.

Just as there are variations in the physical qualities of men, so there are corresponding variations in their souls. Hence, there are souls which are good and souls which are bad and souls of all the shades of value which lie between these two extremes. The verse “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One” (Deut. 6:4) hints, says the *Zohar*, at this blending of the soul into a Unity. When the soul has completed the cycle of its earthly career and hurries back to become blended with the Universal soul, it revels in ecstasies of love, which the *Zohar* describes with a wealth of poetic phraseology. The soul is received in what is termed a ‘treasury of life’ or, sometimes, a ‘temple of love’, and one of its crowning joys is to contemplate the Divine Presence through a ‘shining mirror’ since a direct vision of God is impossible.

## 7. The Christian Understanding of Human Person

Christianity, after centuries of debate and deliberation, consolidated various theories of past and brought their scattered elements of truth into focus. The Catholic doctrine on the nature, unity, substantiality, spirituality, and origin of human person holds that the body and soul mutually compenetrates in their activities. Man is two and one, a divisible but a vital unity. The general focus of Christ’s teaching was on the spiritual side of the human being; the salvation or loss of the soul was the great issue of existence. The Gospel language is popular, not technical. *Psyche* and *pneuma* are used indifferently either for the principle of natural life or for spirit in the strict sense. Body and soul are recognized as two different entities and their values contrasted: “Fear you not them that kill the body ... but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Lk. 12:5).

In St. Paul we find a more technical phraseology employed with great consistency. *Psyche* is now appropriated to the purely natural life; *pneuma* to the life of supernatural religion, the principle of which is the Holy Spirit, dwelling and operating in the heart. The opposition of flesh and spirit is accentuated afresh (Rom. 1:18). This Pauline system, presented to a world already prepossessed in favour of a quasi-Platonic dualism, occasioned the emergence of the doctrine of trichotomy. According to this, man, perfect man (*teleios*) consists of three parts: body, soul, spirit (*soma, psyche, pneuma*). Body and soul come by natural birth; spirit is given to the 'born-again' Christian alone. Thus, the "newness of life," of which St. Paul speaks, was conceived by some as a superadded entity, a kind of 'higher-soul' sublimating the 'natural man' into a higher species.

### **8. The Islamic Understanding of Human Person**

The concepts of mind, self, soul, and spirit are closely related in the Holy Qur'an. The discussion of the human soul, its existence, nature, ultimate objective and eternity occupies a highly important position in Islamic thought and forms its main focus. The soul consists of different parts and those parts in unison work for one final goal, happiness. Muslim philosophers on the whole agree that the soul consists of non-rational and rational parts. The non-rational part they divide into the plant and animal souls, the rational part into the practical and the theoretical intellects. The non-rational part is linked essentially to the body, but some consider the rational part as separate from the body by nature and others that all the parts of the soul are by nature material. The Islamic philosophers agree that, while the soul is in the body and its non-rational part is to manage the body, its practical intellect is to manage worldly affairs, including those of the body through apprehension of particular things so that it can do the good and avoid the bad. Its theoretical intellect is to know the eternal aspects of the universe. They thought that the ultimate end or happiness of the soul depends on its ability to separate itself from the demands of the body and to focus on grasping the eternal aspects of the universe. All believe that the non-rational soul comes into being and unavoidably perishes. Some, like al-Farabi, believe that the rational soul may or may not survive eternally; others, like Ibn Sina, believe that it has no beginning and no end; still others, such as Ibn Rushd, believe that the soul with all its individual parts comes into existence and is eventually destroyed.



## 9. Scientific Understanding of Human Person

The ancient world held different internal organs such as stomach, liver, etc., as the source of thoughts and feelings. Improved anatomical information led them to settle for ‘heart’ for quite a while. It was in 1600, a young English doctor William Harvey (1578-1657) eventually discovered that the ‘heart sends blood through the body in a loop’ and functioned basically as a pump. This sent out philosophical shockwaves. Harvey began teaching his theories to some of the students, including a young man named Thomas Willis. Harvey continued his experimental methods and traced the course of blood through the body, while his student Willis eventually tracked the flow of blood to the brain. In attempting to understand its function there, he gave the first account of the network of nerves and blood vessels on which our understanding of that organ is based.

The human brain has the same general structure as the brains of other mammals, but is over five times as large as the ‘average brain’ of a mammal with the same body size. Most of the expansion comes from the cerebral cortex, a convoluted layer of neural tissue that covers the surface of the forebrain. Especially expanded are the frontal lobes, which are involved in executive functions such as self-control, planning, reasoning, and abstract thought. The portion of the brain devoted to vision is also greatly enlarged in humans, and some regions of the human brain, such as those devoted to language, have no clear counterparts in the brains of other animals. Human brain evolution, from the earliest shrew like mammals through primates to hominids, is marked by a steady increase in encephalization, or the ratio of brain to body size. The human brain has been estimated to contain one hundred billion neurons. Each neuron has on average about  $7 \times 10^3$  (seven thousand) synaptic connections. A three-year old child has about  $10^{16}$  synapses (10 quadrillion), but this happily decreases with age to a more manageable number between  $10^{15}$  to  $5 \times 10^{15}$  synapses (1 to 5 quadrillion).

## 10. The Mind: Material or Immaterial?

It is amazing to verify that even after several centuries of philosophical reflections, hard dedication to brain research and remarkable advances in the field of neuroscience, the concept of mind still remains obscure, controversial and impossible to define within the limits of our language. One strongly held view is that the mind is an entity distinct from the brain

with different and undefined physical character. In this theory the mind was seen as synonymous with the soul, forming an integral part of the prevailing religious culture. For example, René Descartes (1596-1650), the French philosopher, perpetuated Plato's (428-348 BC) mind-body dualism, philosophically separating the mind and the body. His ideas permeated philosophical and scientific views right up to the present day, changing the way in which mainstream research approached the problem of self. Since the mind and brain were now usually viewed as isolated entities, research into these areas was inherently separate: while biochemists concerned themselves with objective somatic mechanisms, psychologists wrestled with the subjective properties of the mind; philosophers and theologians carried with them the spirit and the soul.

In connection with the investigation of our mental operations there arises the question, whether these are to be deemed coextensive with consciousness. Are there unconscious mental processes? In recent years, the phenomena of hypnotism, 'multiple personality', and abnormal forms of mental life have brought the question of the relation between the unconscious and the conscious processes in the human organism into greater prominence. It was established that all forms of mental life, e.g., perception, thought, feeling, and volition are profoundly affected by vital activities and may not always emerge into the strata of conscious life. If the mind be identified with the soul, and if the latter be allowed to be the principle of vegetative life, there can be no valid reason for denying that the principle of our mental life may be also the subject of unconscious activities. But if we confine the term mind to the soul, viewed as conscious, or as the subject of intellectual operations, then by definition we exclude unconscious states from the sphere of mind. Still whatever terminology we may find convenient to adopt, the fact remains that our most purely intellectual operations are profoundly influenced by changes which take place below the surface of consciousness.

### **11. Soul: Temporal or Eternal?**

History is filled with attempts to prove that the soul is real. In 1921 physician Duncan MacDougall devised the famous '21 grams' experiment to detect the exit of the soul from the body by measuring how a person's weight changes immediately after death. He monitored six deaths and reported that the people lost anywhere between 11 and 43 grams at death (not always 21 grams as is popularly reported), which he took as the material weight of the soul. Follow-up experiments failed to replicate

MacDougall’s findings, and some researchers attributed the weight loss to straightforward processes like the evaporation of water from the body. Researchers in England, the Netherlands, and the United States of America are searching for the soul in a different way, focusing on experiential as well as material evidence. At places like the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California, researchers examine various aspects of consciousness to see if it functions independently of the physical brain, implying the existence of an independent life spirit.

It is true that the question of the reality of the soul and its distinction from the body is among the most important problems of philosophy, for with it is bound up the doctrine of a future life. A general understanding of the soul is that it is present in a living being and survives after the death of the living being. The soul may be defined as the ultimate internal principle by which we think, feel, and will, and by which our bodies are animated. The term ‘mind’ usually denotes this principle as the subject of our conscious states, while ‘soul’ denotes the source of our vegetative activities as well. That our vital activities proceed from a principle capable of subsisting in itself is the thesis of the substantiality of the soul: that this principle is not itself composite, extended, corporeal, or essentially and intrinsically dependent on the body is the doctrine of spirituality. If there be a life after death, clearly the agent or subject of our vital activities must be capable of an existence separate from the body. The belief in an animating principle in some sense distinct from the body is an almost inevitable inference from the observed facts of life. More and more we are realizing that the brain is complex enough to account for the mysteries of learning, memory, emotion, creativity, consciousness, mystical-religious experience and madness.

## **12. Critique of Science and Theology**

Definitions in science are not static. They keep on changing as new knowledge accumulates. Scientists talk only about concepts recognised by science, using terminology recognised by it. They often move in the preset grooves and attitudes. This can result in remaining stuck to those grooves. Once a scientist finds that the grooves are impeding the advancement of science, not allowing it to look at unexplained facts from new angles, he will be forced to have a hard look at the grooves, move out of them, and tread a new path. When he walks along that path, he may find walking alone. Then, maybe after his death, others start following the path, find it

worthwhile, and it becomes a thoroughfare. It becomes part of the scientific grooves. That is how science has grown. Some examples of the now discarded grooves are the theory of earth being the central point of the solar system, theory of indivisibility of the atom and the theory of indestructibility of matter.

Whether the soul is a scientific concept or not depends on what our concept of science is. If by science we mean the existing scientific knowledge neatly packed in science textbooks, journals and laboratories, then such science is a dead science. It may be science today, but not necessarily tomorrow. Within our present concept of science, soul may not be a scientific concept. But, if by science we mean a package including the above, plus all the unexplained observations waiting for an answer, along with the theories to explain them, then soul may be termed a scientific concept or, may be a candidate for scientific concept. When the hypothesis gathers enough evidence it becomes a theory, and the candidate concept becomes an accepted concept. Such science is dynamic and alive. Within such science, the concept of soul would be a valid concept, to be discussed, debated, observed, experimented and proven, if possible (there are limits to scientific experimentation and observation; in certain situations, the very act of observation changes what is being observed).

It is immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if our mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of electrons in our brain, we have no reason to suppose that our beliefs are true. In order to escape from this necessity of sawing away the branch on which we are sitting, we are compelled to believe that mind is not wholly conditioned by matter. Moreover, this is a rather depressing view as it would mean that we as unique and sentient individuals do not really exist. We are merely the products of inert matter and energy randomly thrown together by the cosmic winds blowing for an infinite time as a roomful of monkeys bashing at keyboards would eventually type the complete works of Shakespeare. The random emergence of even the simplest cell within a specified time span is itself dubious emergence of a well-structured universe within comparatively a limited period without the aid of a powerful mastermind is all the more difficult to conceive.

Human beings are emotional beings. We feel joy, sorrow, anger, fear, etc. Though we try to balance these with logic it is hard to deny that we are ultimately driven by our emotions. But to mere automaton, which is what we are without a distinct mind or soul, emotion would be redundant and deleterious. Likewise, our art, music, literature, aesthetics and other human

expressions and qualities will lack lustre and relevance.

Despite centuries of modern philosophical and scientific research into the nature of the mind, at present there is no technology that detects the presence or absence of any kind of consciousness, for scientists do not even know what exactly is to be measured. Strictly speaking, at present there is no scientific evidence even for the existence of consciousness. All the direct evidence we have consists of non-scientific, first-person accounts of being conscious. First-person accounts of anything do not count as adequate evidence in science. These need to be correlated and corroborated by other evidences.

### **13. Mysticism: The Matrix to Transcend Divisions**

Technological advances and the knowledge that humanity acquired about the universe during the last thirty years is staggering. However, the progress achieved and the emphasis given to the field of science and technology sidelined certain other aspects of human wellbeing, which is evident from our behaviour towards ourselves, our fellow human beings, the other living organisms, and the entire planet in general. While conducting researches on the origin of the universe, the human being is unaware of his subtle nature beyond the physical aspects. Technology does not only fail to bring in peace, harmony and happiness, but leads to ecological and other disasters. Where division and competition are considered as the way forward, suffering is a natural consequence.

Mysticism has a unique *inclusive* way of looking at everything: the material and the immaterial, the physical and the spiritual, from the cell to the human to the universe, and always in terms of the oneness or consciousness paradigm. It is a vision that could lift the world out of its present impasse. Such a vision has been prevalent in almost every tradition, though the way of its articulation varied from culture to culture, religion to religion, underpinning the Hindu wisdom *ekam sat vipra behudha vadanti* (meaning, “Reality is one, the learned people speak of it differently”).

Mystics invite us to an inner adventure which should be experienced rather than known through intellectual pursuit. However, they do not shun logic or science in their search for the really real. They do not want to be limited by the limits of these disciplines either. It is evident that in the present situation science lacks an adequate metaphysics for incorporating brain, mind, and soul while mysticism is potent to do so convincingly well.

Mysticism is capable of going beyond reductionism and materialism. The concept of ‘emergence’ says that *the whole is more than the sum of its parts*. Mind is an ‘emergent’ phenomenon. Mind cannot exist without a functional brain, but we could never predict consciousness on the basis of an exhaustive reductionist description of the brain. We can learn a lot of interesting things about a brain cell by studying its parts and its chemistry; yet, a brain cannot be adequately understood by listing its parts. Human body is not the sum total of its organs. Mind-brain really is not capable of doing anything by itself. To reach its potential, a mind-brain requires an entire body, vocal chords, oppositional thumbs, tools, languages, families, societies, cultures, and nature. Once individuals acquire their personal identity from the sea of people around them may at times be elevated into a different identity, a being that transcends the ordinary self. Poets and philosophers named it as ‘awakening’ and every sacred tradition is based largely upon it. Saints and sages have claimed that we can realize an identity beyond our personal history, an elevation from the ‘mean self’ to a ‘great self’. The realization of an identity that transcends the constraints of ordinary selfhood has been celebrated by mystics of every religion. The German mystic Meister Eckhart was of the opinion that the ground of God and the ground of soul are one and the same. He dared to say that the eye with which he sees God is the same eye with which God sees him. The supreme identity represented in this statement is recognized by those who experienced it. Does this experience pertain only to the human world and stop within the realm of human beings? Humanity is not a blind alley. This experience has to proceed further.

In most general terms, we propose that to be a mystic means to be occupied with the ‘really real’ in one’s own being. Here we must now differentiate two completely different kinds of mysticism that appear in the world: mysticism through identification and mysticism through relationship. Hinduism and Buddhism could be acknowledged as examples for the identification mysticism where one identifies or becomes one with *brahman* (*aham brahmasmi*, “I am God”) or *nirvana/sunyata* (nothingness). We find the relationship mysticism in all three Semitic religions: in the Jewish *Kabbalah*, in the Muslim *Sufism* and also the in Christian mysticism. They all are stamped by the fact that the mystics look for a relationship with God or with the God-image hidden within themselves. A Christian or Sufi mystic would stress the relationship aspect. Such a mystic remains human and does not identify with the divine.

## 14. Conclusion

Scientists claim that visible matter represents only a very small part of this uni(multi)verse. We are like an iceberg that floats on the ocean. The greatest part of us, and also the most fascinating, remains hidden in the invisible part of our totality. There is not only matter in the universe; there is also energy in various identified and unidentified forms. There is only very little knowledge of consciousness which also could be understood in terms of energy. Though the human attempt to deal with consciousness has a long history, our knowledge of it is meagre. It brings to us an extraordinary hope of discovering infinite possibilities in new energies. We have a wonderful future before us if the concept of unity in all things predominates in all our researches.

A craving to find unity in the seeming multiplicity of experience has led many thinkers to accept a monistic explanation, in which the apparent duality of mind and matter is reduced to a single underlying principle or substratum. Materialistic monism considers matter itself – body material substance – as this principle. For the materialist, mind, feelings, thoughts, and volitions are but “functions” or “aspects” of matter; mental life is an *epiphenomenon*, a by-product in the working of the Universe, which can in no way interfere with the course of physical changes or modify the movement of any particle of matter in the world; indeed, in strict consistency it should be held that successive mental acts do not influence or condition each other, but that thoughts and volitions are mere incidental appendages of certain nerve processes in the brain; and these latter are determined exclusively and completely by antecedent material processes. In other words, the materialistic theory, when consistently thought out, leads invariably to the startling conclusion that the human mind has had no real influence on the history of the human race.

On the other hand, the idealistic monist denies altogether the existence of any extra-mental, independent material world. So, far from mind being a mere aspect or *epiphenomenon* attached to matter, the material universe is a creation of the mind and is entirely dependent on it. It exists only in and for the mind. Our ideas are the only things of which we can be truly certain. Indeed, if we were compelled to embrace monism, it seems to us that there can be little doubt as to the logical superiority of the idealistic position. There is, however, no philosophical compulsion to adopt either a materialistic or an idealistic monism. The conviction of the common sense of humankind, the assumption of physical science that there are two orders

of being in the universe, mind and matter, distinct from each other yet interacting and influencing each other, and the assurance that the human mind can obtain a limited yet true knowledge of the material world which really exists outside and independently of it occupying a space of three dimensions, which is the common teaching of the scholastic philosophy and Catholic thinkers, does not in any way contradict the mystical vision of reality. Mysticism finds relationships and unity wherever divisions are found. Mysticism finds cooperation wherever competition for the survival of the fittest is the rule. It will generate within us an awareness of ourselves in relationship with the world that surrounds us. In no other discipline we find a better understanding of the universal link that brings everything together. The development of a mystical consciousness among people will increase our collective possibilities to find solutions so that life on earth, guided by the behaviour of humanity, will move towards the betterment and protection of all.