

Schrödinger and Indian Philosophy

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Schrödinger and Indian Philosophy: a Road Map

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Mind and Matter

- “Physical science (...) faces us with the impasse that mind *per se* cannot play the piano - mind *per se* cannot move a finger or a hand. Then the impasse meets us : the blank of the ‘how’ of mind’s leverage on matter”

E. Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter*, in: *What is life & Mind and Matter*, Cambridge University Press, 1967



Against Syncretism

- “To realise this is valuable, but it does not solve the problem. (...) scientific attitude would have to be rebuilt, science must be made anew. Care is needed”

Ibid.

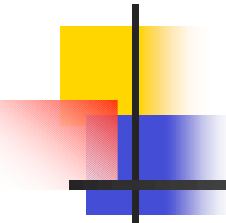
- “That will not be easy, we must beware of blunders - Blood transfusions always need great precaution to prevent clotting. We do not wish to lose the logical precision that our scientific thought has reached, and that is unparalleled anywhere at any epoch”

Ibid.



Unity and estrangement

- “It is certain that the earth will give birth to you again and again, for new struggles and for new sufferings. And not only in the future : it resuscitates you now, today, every day, not just once but several thousand times, exactly as it buries you every day several thousand times (...). (For) the present is the only thing which has no end” E. Schrödinger, *My view of the world*, Cambridge University Press, 1964
- “the human being who has never realised the strange features of his own condition has nothing to do with philosophy” Ibid.
- “(...) the reasoning is part of the overall phenomenon to be explained, not a tool for any genuine explanation” Ibid.



Human love, universal love and unity

- “ In the same way as a man in the arms of a beloved woman knows nothing of the difference between the internal and external world, somebody who is immersed in the fully lucid Atman knows nothing of the difference between the internal and external world. He is in the blissful state wherein any desire is fulfilled (...) wherein there is no desire any longer ”.Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad IV, 3, 21
- “Love a girl with all your heart and kiss her on her mouth : then time will stand still and space will cease to exist”. E. Schrödinger, 1919
- “I looked into your eyes and found all life there, that spirit which you said was no more you or me, but us, One mind, One being (...) For two months that common soul existed. (...) You can love me all your life, but we are Two now, not One” Sheila May. Quoted in: W. Moore, *Schrödinger, life and thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1989



Universality of conscious experience

- “It is by observing and thinking this way that one may suddenly experience the truth of the fundamental idea of Vedânta. It is impossible that this unity of knowledge, of feeling and of choice that you consider as YOURS was born a few years ago from nothingness. Actually, this knowledge, this feeling and this choice are, in their essence, eternal, immutable and numerically ONE in all men and in all living beings (...). The life that you are living presently is not only a fragment of the whole existence; it is in a certain sense, the WHOLE”

E. Schrödinger, *My view of the world*, op. cit.,



The illusion of plurality, the beauty of the illusion

- “what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of aspects of one thing, produced by deception (the Indian Mâyâ)”

E. Schrödinger, *What is life* (epilogue), in: *What is life & Mind and matter*, op. cit.

- “Myriads of suns, surrounded by possibly inhabited planets, multiplicity of galaxies, each one with its myriads of suns (...). According to me, all these things are Mâyâ, although a very interesting Mâyâ with regularities and laws”.

Ibid.



Arguments for the « doctrine of identity »

- “The doctrine of identity can claim that it is clinched by the empirical fact that consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. Not only has none of us even experienced more than one consciousness, but there is no trace of circumstantial evidence of this even happening anywhere in the world” E. Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter*, in: *What is life & Mind and matter*, op. cit.
- “When in the puppet-show of dreams we hold in hand the strings of quite a number of actors, controlling their actions and their speech, we are not aware of this being so. Only one of them is myself, the dreamer. In him, I act and speak immediately, while I may be awaiting eagerly and anxiously what another will reply (...). That I could really let him do and say whatever I please does not occur to me (...)”. Ibid.



Subjectivity and objectivity

- “we step with our own persons back into the part of an onlooker who does not belong to the world, which by this very procedure becomes an objective world”.

Ibid.

- “Colour and sound, heat and cold, are our immediate sensations. Small wonder that they are lacking in a world model from which we have removed our own mental person”.

Ibid.

- “The objective world has only been constructed at the price of taking the self, that is, mind, out of it, remaking it; mind is not part of it; obviously, therefore, it can neither act on it nor be acted on by any of its parts”.

Ibid.



Panpsychism?

- “(i) My body functions as a fine mechanism according to the laws of nature. (ii) Yet, I know by incontrovertible direct experience, that I am directing its motions”.
- “The only possible inference from these two facts is, I think, that I - I in the widest meaning of the word, that is to say every conscious mind that has ever said ‘I’ - am the person, if any, who controls the ‘motion of the atoms’ according to the laws of nature”. E. Schrödinger, *What is life* (epilogue), in: *What is life & Mind and matter*, op. cit.
- “An Indian metaphor refers to the plurality of almost identical aspects which the many facets of a diamond gives of a single object, say the sun” E. Schrödinger, *My view of the world*, op. cit.



Plausibility of unity, strangeness of separation

- “The personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal self”.
- “Atman equals Brahman”.

E. Schrödinger, *What is life* (epilogue), in: *What is life & Mind and matter*, op. cit.

- “Dear reader, recall the bright, joyful eyes with which your child beams upon you when you bring him a new toy, and then let the physicist tell you that in reality nothing emerges from these eyes; in reality their only objectively detectable function is, continually to be hit by and to receive light quanta. In reality, a strange reality ! Something seems to be missing in it”.

E. Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter*, in: *What is life & Mind and matter*, op. cit.



Non-Duality in consciousness

- “No single man can make a distinction between the realm of his perceptions and the realm of things that cause it, since however detailed the knowledge he may have acquired about the whole story, the story is occurring only once and not twice. the duplication is an allegory suggested mainly by communication with other beings and even with animals; which shows that their perceptions in the same situation seem to be very similar to his own, apart from insignificant differences in the point of view”

E. Schrödinger, *Mind and matter*, op. cit.



The ethical lacuna of science

- “(Science) gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously”.

E. Schrödinger, *Nature and the Greeks*, CUP, 1954



Time and (non-)death

- “I venture to call (the mind) indestructible, since it has a peculiar time-table, namely Mind is always now” E. Schrödinger, *Mind and matter*, op. cit.
- “(...) what we in our minds construct ourselves cannot, so I feel, have dictatorial power over our mind, neither the power of bringing it to the fore nor the power of annihilating it”. E. Schrödinger, *Mind and matter*, op. cit.
- “If you have to face the body of a deceased friend whom you sorely miss, is it not soothing to realise that this body was never *really* the seat of his personality, but only symbolically, ‘for practical reference’?”. E. Schrödinger, *Mind and matter*, op. cit.