

MINDFUL HEART

From NOWletter No. 48 November 1998

Rasa

I was listening to a tape recording of a lecture by Dr Phillip Groves which is entitled 'The Mote in the Brother's Eye' when I heard him to refer to something called Rasa which he went on to describe as the feeling of meaning. This rang a bell as I have long felt that the successful outcome of this whole enquiry depends on recovering a direct relationship with meaning or perhaps, more accurately, a reintegration with meaning.

What do I mean by 'meaning'. Well, that's tricky but what I don't mean is what we understand when we use it in the context of the 'meaning' of a word. I don't mean definition, a static bit of knowledge. I mean whatever it is that gives rise to the word, and in its full sense what gives rise to everything and the very arising. It is what stands under whatever is going on and which occasionally, if I am awake, arises as understanding.

It seemed to me that what Dr Groves was describing as the feeling of meaning was very close to my experience. I was fascinated as he went on to explain that the development of the capacity to apprehend meaning was a long established practice of the Javanese Sufis.

I then set out to find out more but my Internet skills proved inadequate. Fortunately, Barry Hora is much more creative in seeking solutions and he came up with a pile of information from which the following extracts are taken.

The source is a book called "Sumarah : A Study of the Art of Living" by David Gordon Howe phd.

Rasa is the sensing as well as the sense of being: the rasa you experience is what you receive of reality. But rasa is not something you control, rasa is the shared, common sense of being, the affective sea we are all fish in. To some extent, what you see depends on what you let in. Basically, the clearer your window, the more accurate your perspective because you can manipulate your reception, and knowingly or unknowingly distort what reaches you. Reflecting this is a receptivity continuum that stretches from spontaneity through various degrees of separation from what is here. Clear reception is termed rasa mumi 'The feeling of feeling—the uncensored reception of what the senses report—is a clear window on now.

I need hardly draw attention to the very close parallel with headlessness. I have felt for a long time that Dialogue and Headlessness were mutually supportive lines of enquiry and it is interesting to recall, in the context of this note,

Bohm's suggestion of the possibility of Dialogue allowing a free flow of meaning.

Here is another extract:

There is a subtle intensity to the Javanese that can be very wearing to Westerners. They are always watching. Their eyes do not glaze over as they tell you things. Their attention does not wander, they just stay here watching your response, the feeling you are together and the movement of rasa from moment to moment. They are conditioned to be sensitive to subtle signals, and to avoid showing signs that intrude on the experience of others. They are like a people who have sensitized their hearing by always speaking to one another very softly. The idea is to avoid departing from the quiet flow of rasa mumi and, more importantly, to avoid taking anyone with you if you do. If you make a big deal out of something, you distort it and blow it out of proportion to get attention, and make it harder to see it clearly together. How often do we indulge in such 'self-expression' in the West causing people to take sides and preventing problems from being seen clearly until we calm down and start seeing one another again, rather than causes.

There is a whole chapter on the subject of rasa which I am reading and re-reading and there is more and I think Francis is trying to email the whole book—I am fascinated to find that what we are trying to come upon in dialogue seems to be little different from what is regarded in Javanese culture, or part of Javanese culture, as the basic way of relating.

The Javanese are calm to start with and tend to depart only minimally from that state: they listen, they watch. There are two fundamental concerns in being here together: first, being what comes to you; and second, letting others be as they are. When the conditions are not simultaneous and present, you have a problem. The Javanese approach to this problem is to stay in the 'hole between' and live and suffer the being into the present. This is the rasa you share with others: the sensing of things together, the quietly united confrontation of what disturbs and keeps us apart; the being here together beginning and ending now. It requires a lot of respect and practice to see and be openly together. A lot of checking goes on when the differences in our senses of being are compared and the things that are interfering with reception are examined. Your feelings are not your isolated property; they are part of our capacity to confront reality and part of our problem being here with you. We share much if we feel our common sense. The relationship between sensing the world and creating a world with your senses is like that between hearing and talking. If you talk all the time you do not hear much, you do not exchange with others and you do not share with them the hearing of what is here. A brief aside: - when

/ was studying kung fu and a Chinese instructor asked me: 'If I did this, what would you do?' He then struck out at me, but he was a little too far away to reach. / went into a defensive position. Said he: 'Wrong. Do nothing. / am too far away. Do not commit yourself any more than you have to. Each movement limits the next.' The Javanese apply this same principle to behavior in general. Maximum capacity to respond to any situation demands complete attention which is this relaxed watchfulness.

I am amazed and delighted to find a long established tradition which so closely matches my own two major areas of interest, Dialogue and Headlessness or 'Seeing'.

Sumarah: A Study of the Art of Living. David Gordon Howe Phd. web site.

<https://sumarah.tripod.com/>

Alan Mann

From NOWletter No. 152– January 2011

Vijnanabhairava & Kokoro from Alan Mann

With thanks to Graham Crosby

One of the benefits of the Capacitie website is that I meet interesting people who drop into the site to check up on some of the content because of their parallel interests. A good example of the Fellowship of the Mystery as Traherne describes this very loose and relatively small community. A recent visitor to the site, Graham Crosby, dropped in because of his interest in the writing of John Wren-Lewis and, as a consequence of hitting on the site, gained a bonus by way of an immediate grasp of what Douglas Harding is asking us to apprehend. Our subsequent cyber-meetings led to an exchange of CDs and reopened a subject which I reported in an article about a meeting I had with Wren-Lewis in NOWletter 144.

I had asked John about the suitability of the word 'source' to describe the wide-awake openness revealed by the (Harding) experiments as it seemed to be a step further than I had taken. I asked him to explain. I recorded his reply and sent him a copy to check whether I had understood his explanation:

You (JWL) said, in reply to my question, that you would respond from your professional position as a mathematical physicist. You suggested the best way to address the issue was to regard totality as a field in which matter, energy and the field all play a part. Your view about the nature of this mysterious field, which your profession is beginning to acknowledge in various ways, might be just as well described as consciousness as anything else. You base this on your own awakening to an understanding of your place in the Totality as a particular expression of that field in relationship to all

other manifestations. Consequently, you experience all such manifestations as a vibrating energy**, be they coffee tables, books, visitors or whatever.

Furthermore this energized 'glow' of so-called objective reality is reciprocal, there is a two-way apprehension, a mutuality of seer and seen. You went on to explain that the orthodox scientific approach excludes an essential element, that of feeling. And that this is certainly the case with supporters of the epiphenomenon viewpoint.

You find that awareness of this universal movement of being is accompanied by a feeling best described as love. In spite of the transcendence of what we normally regard as the personal, this wider apprehension of 'what is' somehow retains what can only be described as a personal flavour. This reminded me of a comment by Andrew Cohen to the effect that when we come upon the impersonal we find it to be the most personal of all, and you reminded me he is an old friend of yours! So, to my original question. I gather that you are perfectly happy to describe this awake-ness as Origin and this is confirmed by references in your articles, e.g., this from Dan Sutura's interview: "The Dark," he says that you say, "is constantly there, producing everything at every moment, from the big bang to the final whimper. When you die, the Dark in you lives on." John likens the whole space-time universe to a theatre in which eternity is playing out the "time game."

(You told me later that you would not have used the words vibrating energy to describe your experiencing of the world. You said it was a much more gentle business, rather as though the world around is saying 'Hello' in an atmosphere of love.)

I was very energized by this description and I had absolutely no doubt of its truth as it reflected the sense of a reciprocal exchange with objects and the environment which I had experienced in meditation and on occasions of spontaneous 'awakenings'. I told John that I would have been completely mystified by his explanation if I myself hadn't fallen, on a couple of occasions, into the actuality, which he described. I said I could not claim it to have been exactly same but the description of the reciprocal flow, a sense of the aliveness of things, combined with the feeling of love was unmistakable. I mentioned this to Graham Crosby who recognized this as something of which he was aware and commented as follows:

Thank you for directing me to your meeting with John Wren-Lewis. It is delightful to hear about the direct experiences of a contemporary Western mystic. When he talked about the universe constantly saying hello to him and your bewilderment about what he was hinting at particularly grabbed my attention. I know this happened in 2004 and all may have been revealed by now but it sent me off to look for a book that has been collecting dust in my bookcase for a while now but used to be a constant companion.

The book is Vijnanabhairava (Divine Consciousness), an 8th century text from the Kashmir Saivite tradition of Northern India which was only translated into English and published as late as 1979. It contains 112 dharanas, or centering techniques, or experiments, that will lead to the experience of the highest consciousness, the thought free state.

Dharana 82 states: 'Knowledge, desire etc. do not appear only within me, they appear everywhere in jars, trees, and other objects. Contemplating this, one becomes all-pervasive.'

The explanatory notes that follow say: In this verse, iccha or desire has reference to action. This verse points out the fact that jnana and kriya are not the monopoly only of the human being. They are universal, that is, common to everything in the universe. This dharana suggests that if one contemplates over the fact of knowledge (jnana) and kriya (desire) being common to every existent in the universe, he will acquire the consciousness of unity. Man usually thinks that there is nothing in common between him and a jar, or tree, but if he comes to realize that jnana and kriya are the common characteristics of all manifestation, (animate, or inanimate) that all are co-sharers of this divine gift, he will shed his insularity and feel his kinship with all.

The sage Somananda of this tradition then goes on to say: "The jar is one with myself at the time of my desire to know, and therefore knows as one with myself. I am one with the jar in knowing. It is Siva himself who abides knowing Himself through all the existents." (The universe saying hello?)

Perhaps this accounts for your affinity with tree trunks, and vases. I once had the a very close encounter with an apple.

As this exchange with Graham was going on I listened to a Philosopher's Zone programme on the ABC in which I heard reference to a Japanese version of this phenomena. Here is an extract which covers the reference to Kokoro.

Alan Saunders: Well, we've been talking about world views. I want to look now at the indigenous philosophy of Japan. In many ways, Shinto was overshadowed by Buddhist and Confucian thought, but around the 18th century, there was a revival with the development of native studies. The scholar Motoori Norinaga was the driving force behind his. Can you tell us a little about him and his thinking?

Thomas Kasulis: Yes. He was first of all religiously strongly Shinto, down to the point of he believed that his parents who didn't have a child had prayed every day at a Shinto shrine and out of that he was born and seeing his very birth as sort of an act of the kami, or the gods. But the thing about him, in terms of sort of his thinking, is that he was trained as a philologist and a great scholar of the earliest forms of Japanese literature, much of which had been written in a writing system that most Japanese, in fact 99% of Japanese could have no idea what it said. And he sort of decoded this ancient language as a philologist and did remarkable work. But the reason he did this was, and this goes back to sort of

his philosophical ideas, is that because he believed that language when it starts, is somehow this kind of conferring with reality, rather than referring to it. And if we could get at the original sense of what words meant, we could feel this kind of animistic immersion in what he called kokoro, a traditional Japanese word.

Kokoro is a kind of responsiveness that's built into everything. We are responsive, things are responsive, and even words are responsive. So that when we write a poem, it's somehow the coming together of my responsiveness, the subject matter's responsiveness, and the word's responsiveness. And this idea that became a basis for both his aesthetics and religious point of view, is that what we have to do is engage in this kind of responsive field, so that we can confer with and express reality with reality.

Alan Saunders: Well it sounds as though kokoro is not a word that lends itself to easy translation.

Thomas Kasulis: That's right. I mean the best I could do if I have to translate it, and I usually try not to, is to call it something like either a field of responsiveness, or from the personal standpoint of a person would be something like the mindful heart. So that there's the mist on the mountain, and you have to be aware of that mist, be mindful of it, and the mist is calling out to be expressed, and you have to be open to doing that, and then somehow the words come to you of their own.

The full transcript of the interview is available at:

<https://www.abc.net.au/rn/philosopherszone/stories/2010/3017934.htm>

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I tend to look Eastwards for examples but the exchanges with Graham reminded me of the words Shakespeare put into the mouth of Duke Senior in *As You Like It*. (Act2 Scene 2)

Duke S. Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference; as, the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
'This is no flattery: these are counsellors

That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.
I would not change it.

And here is David Bohm, in the famous interview with Rene Weber, putting forward another scientific proposal which is not unlike the Wren-Lewis version:

Bohm: Yes. So let me propose that also for consciousness: let me propose that consciousness is basically in the implicate order as all matter is and therefore it's not that consciousness is one thing and matter is another. Rather consciousness is a material process and consciousness is itself in the implicate order, as is all matter, and consciousness manifests in some explicate order, as does matter.

Weber: The difference between what we call matter and consciousness would be the state of density or subtlety?

Bohm: The state of subtlety. Consciousness is possibly a more subtle form of matter and movement, a more subtle aspect of the holomovement. In the non-manifests order there is no separation in space and time. In ordinary matter this is so and it's even more so for this subtle matter which is consciousness. Therefore, if we are separate it is because we are sticking largely to the manifest world as the basic reality where the whole point is to have separate units, relatively separate anyway, but interacting. In non-manifest reality it's all interpenetrating, interconnected, one. So we say deep down the consciousness of mankind is one. This is a virtual certainty because even in the vacuum matter is one; and if we don't see this is because we are blinding ourselves to it.