

Akasha and Awareness

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Evan: Hi. Are you familiar with Ervin Laszlo and his popular topic about *akasha*? What do you think of these arguments? For me, it seems to me that his statement that *akasha* is a fundamental substance to everything is not correct. I guess there are some confusion here and that *akasha* and has been exaggerated in New Age movement about its role. The Sanskrit for what Laszlo translates as “space” is *ananda*, bliss. It’s not space. But the bliss does arise in the space of self-aware consciousness. An argument could be made for the precision of Laszlo’s translation, but I’d hardly call it misrepresentation. In the book *The Self-Actualizing Cosmos* Laszlo says: “At the beginning of creation there is only this *Akasha*.”

From the *Upanishads*: “All beings arise from space, and into space they return: space is indeed their beginning and space is their final end.”

Laszlo in the *Akasha Think* article, 2012, *Huffington Post*, quote:

“What Is Akasha Consciousness – For You?”

“What is *Akasha* consciousness for you, a dream – or a nightmare? Or could it be your own deep consciousness – ‘re-cognized’ for what it really is? Your answer could make a difference – a difference to you and to the world. See how you resonate with the 16 ideas that hallmark this consciousness.

“• I am part of the world. The world is not outside of me, and I am not outside of the world. The world is in me, and I am in the world.

“• I am part of nature, and nature is part of me. I am what I am in my communication and communion with all living things. I am an irreducible and coherent whole with the web of life on the planet.

“• I am part of society, and society is part of me. I am what I am in my communication and communion with my fellow humans. I am an irreducible and coherent whole with the community of humans on the planet.

“• I am more than a skin-and-bone material organism: my body and its cells and organs are manifestations of what is truly me: a self-sustaining, self-evolving, dynamic system arising, persisting and evolving in interaction with everything around me.

“• I am one of the highest, most evolved manifestations of the drive toward coherence and wholeness in the universe. All systems drive toward coherence and wholeness in interaction with all other systems, and my essence is this cosmic drive. It is the same essence, the same spirit that is inherent in all the things that arise and evolve in nature, whether on this planet or elsewhere in the infinite reaches of space and time.

“• There are no absolute boundaries and divisions in this world, only transition points where one set of relations yields prevalence to another. In me, in this self-maintaining and self-evolving coherence- and wholeness-oriented system, the relations that integrate the cells and organs of my body are prevalent. Beyond my body other relations gain prevalence: those that drive toward coherence and wholeness in society and in nature.

“• The separate identity I attach to other humans and other things is but a convenient convention that facilitates my interaction with them. My family and my community are just as much “me” as the organs of my body. My body and mind, my family and my community, are interacting and interpenetrating, variously prevalent elements in the network of relations that encompasses all things in nature and the human world.”

Ted: Hi, Evan. I had not heard before of Ervin Laszlo. His description of what he calls “*Akasha*” is generally akin to what Vedanta refers to as *karana-sharira*, the macrocosmic causal body, but also contains elements of *hiranyagarbha*, the macrocosmic subtle body, and *virat*, the macrocosmic gross body, or physical universe. The element that is lacking in his description is *brahman-atma*, pure awareness, which is at once both the *adhishtanam*, or substrate, of the entire manifest universe, including the macrocosmic causal body, and entirely independent of the entire shebang. In other words, though all objects depend on awareness for their existence, awareness is ever-free of all objects, for whether objects arise or do not arise awareness always is. And there can be no cause antecedent to awareness, for such would render awareness an object and yet leave unresolved the issue of the essential nature of the “field” of conscious existence in which it appeared. Moreover, the line of reasoning used to establish awareness as an object would ultimately devolve into the logical absurdity of an infinite regression of “awarenesses” with no fundamental reality, which is obviously not the case since existence is a self-evident fact and as a “something” (albeit an exceedingly subtle “something”), it cannot have come out of nothing.

Vedanta reveals *brahman-atma*, pure awareness, as the fundamental “substanceless substance” of which everything is made and the source out of which everything arises, in which everything abides and back into which everything resolves. This is not to say that *brahman-atma*, pure awareness, is a substance or that it is a willful entity with a desire to create or that it possesses any attributes that would enable it to enact such an inclination. Rather *brahman-atma* is simply the eternal conscious being on which everything depends for its existence.

Existing within *brahman-atma* is a deluding power referred to as *maya*, or ignorance. Ironic as it may seem, if limitless awareness did not have the power to apparently delude itself it would not be limitless. Though *maya* is referred to as ignorance it is actually the subtlest form of matter. The reason it is characterized as ignorance is because as a material substance (albeit an extremely subtle one) its nature is inertia, and that which is inert is neither conscious nor intelligent. Hence when *brahman-atma*, is conditioned by *maya* it is rendered “as though” not conscious, unintelligent or ignorant. Simply put, it forgets its true nature and seems to be something it is not.

Brahman-atma conditioned by *maya*, and thus wielding the power of projection is referred to as *Isvara*, or God the Creator. And the first thing *Isvara* creates, so to speak, is the macrocosmic causal body. The macrocosmic causal body is *avyakta*, the unmanifest realm of pure potentiality, in which all objects abide in a state of dormancy. We might think of it as the storehouse of the subtle “blueprints” for all the objects, both subtle and gross, that can appear as the manifest

universe. Though the macrocosmic causal body is an undifferentiated state and thus is neither a body nor a volitional entity, it is the source of all *nama-rupa*, objects with name, form and function, which is the reason it is conferred with causal status.

As mentioned, the macrocosmic causal body is the realm that Laszlo seems to be describing as the “fundamental substance to everything.” However, he proceeds from there to describe the functioning of the manifest universe and how it is one interconnected whole. This is true from the relative level – that is, within the context of the apparent reality. It is not true, however, that “I,” or *brahman-atma*, pure awareness, am the manifestation. This is a subtle point, but one that is vital to understanding the true nature of reality. We can make it a bit easier to digest by means of the analogy of light. While the appearance of all objects depends on light, light is entirely free of the objects it illumines. Just so, while all objects depend on awareness for their existence, awareness is entirely free of all objects. Moreover, awareness doesn’t “illumine” objects willfully. Thus while we can say that awareness is the “light” by means of which all objects are illumined and so is the only source of illumination, awareness is not the illuminator in that illumining objects is not an action performed by awareness. Illumining is simply the *svarupam*, or nature of awareness. Just as shining isn’t something the sun tries to do, so “illumining,” or lending existence to objects, isn’t an action that actionless awareness is capable of doing. Awareness is existence. And when existence is conditioned by *maya* objects appear. Awareness “shines” and objects are known. Awareness is the light “streaming” through the images on the film of *maya*.

Because the macrocosmic causal body is undifferentiated, it is a reflection of limitless *brahman-atma*, and in this sense gets equated with space and “bliss.” The limitlessness of *brahman-atma* is indicated in Sanskrit by the term “*ananta*,” which by extension becomes the fullness indicated by the term “*ananda*,” for what is limitless includes everything, and is thus full. Though *ananda* is often translated into English as “bliss,” it is vital to note that as an indicator of the essential nature of awareness it cannot refer to experiential happiness, for experiential happiness is an object, and pure awareness is non-objectifiable. Thus the “bliss” of the causal body is simply the reflection of the limitlessness of awareness sans the knowledge of awareness as its source and essential nature. Therefore if Laszlo is equating what he calls *Akasha* with space and *ananda*, or bliss, and is asserting that such is the fundamental substance of reality, then he is mistaken. He has correctly described the interconnectedness of the total manifestation, but doesn’t recognize awareness as its substratum and the sole self-dependent, self-luminous reality.

~ All the best, Ted