SELF-INQUIRY; COMPARING PLATO AND PATANJALI

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Abstract

At its most effective my research hopes to re-affirm the central value and importance of *self-inquiry*. That is, I hope to echo the familiar call of the wise to *know thyself*. Of the many mouths and temple walls that have lent authority to this precept there is perhaps no mouth more important than one's own. To *know thyself* is the task and responsibility of the individual. In order to arrive at the point where I can re-affirm its value I explore the nature of self-inquiry with the help of Plato, Patanjali and a comparison between them. I propose two general senses in which we might understand self-inquiry and seek to bring out the core problems faced by each. We find an account of these two senses and the relationship between them in both Plato and Patanjali, so too, though less obviously, in the comparison between them. The comparison provides the opportunity for reflecting on the ground that it moves from and depends on, the common ground we assume between the two compared philosophers/ies. I contend that this ground is ultimately the comparer, one's self. The consequence is that the comparative project and the project of self-inquiry both meet and are mutually beneficial. The three together; Plato, Patanjali, and the comparison between them help us account for nature of self-inquiry in helping us to better understand the relationship between the two senses in which we can come to understand and think about it. In the first sense, self-inquiry is cast as the examination of one's life. In the second sense, we are invited to consider the possibility of an unmediated knowing of the examiner, an unmediated self-knowing. With a better understanding of what self-inquiry is I stand to conclude by re-affirming its value.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

T.S. Elliot; *Little Gidding: Four Quartets*

Two senses of self-inquiry

I suggest that there are two general senses in which we can understand self-inquiry. In the first sense it is the examination of one's life as it is. That is, what one values and why one values it, what one's deeply held commitments, convictions and axiomatic ideas about the world and one's self are, and ultimately how these shape one's activity in the world. It is the examination of the content of one's life so to speak. In the second sense self-inquiry is the examination of the examiner, the endeavour to know the one that knows. This endeavour faces most clearly the problem of looking for what's looking, the problem of knowing the knower. This second sense is the inquiry into the underlying reality of one's self, into one's true nature. Whereas the first sense has to do with the examination of one's ideas about the nature of the world and themselves the second sense of self-inquiry meets the inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality with the hope of knowing or realising for one's self. Self and world meet and intermingle in sometimes inextricable ways and indeed are taken in this second sense to ultimately share the same ground. A complete account of self-inquiry must speak to both senses. On the one hand there is the inevitably personal confrontation with one's self as one is in the world and then there is the ultimate goal of pure or unmediated self-knowing. The division between these two senses proves useful for our purposes though in reality it is perhaps less cleanly cut. Any insight that is had into one's character and the system of value that shapes one's activity in the world will ultimately be known by or become apparent to one's self. Inevitably, the momentum of the initial inward turning of self-inquiry begins to necessitate asking into the nature of the knower apart the object(s) of knowledge that are produced by this turning. The self in the unmediated sense cannot become an object of its own knowing for it is the one that knows, or simply, the knowing. This, more the second sense, is the more fundamental question of who or what one is apart from what one might come to learn about one's self by examining their life.

Locating value

My emphasis is on self-inquiry and the individual's relationship to this endeavour. A general and guiding idea here is that one moves toward that which one values. Activity and value are bound up in a mutually informing manner. A simple example; one's hunger leads to the increased evaluation of food and food then becomes that which one's activity is increasingly oriented toward until the hunger is satiated. Crucially, it is from where I locate value that my criteria of judgment for the use and benefit of everything else that I might know or encounter arises (*Rep*, 505b).[1] For I understand everything else in its relation to this primary source of value and how it helps in establishing or attaining it. The more hungry one becomes the more the world becomes either a means to food or not. It is ultimately value that shape one's activity. From the other way around activity then gives us insight into one's system of value. The importance of value to the shape of our lives cannot be overstated.

In the *Republic* Socrates casts the idea of the good, the idea of the highest value, as the most important study, for without it, the knowledge and possession of everything else is of no use or benefit (*Rep*, 505b). We understand the use and benefit of things by what they are useful for or beneficial to. Without knowing what *something* is useful or beneficial for we lose any profit we might have had in knowing or possessing it. As such, it is by our idea of the good, what we take to be of most value, and our examination of it that we come to understand the use and benefit of everything else. From the perspective of the first sense of self-inquiry; one has inevitably located value somewhere. Perhaps a set of competing values or one highest value. The content of one's life falls in order in terms of its use or benefit in helping us acquiring that value. Value just is that toward which one's activity ultimately tends. The good is that which everyone pursues and ultimately acts for the sake of (*Rep*, 505e). There are many ways to frame this core idea and how it relates to and informs the framework of one's understanding. I focus, though not exclusively, on the evaluative dimension and its role in informing and shaping one's activity in the world.

Inevitably, we locate value somewhere whether deliberately or as a consequence of where and how we were brought up.[2] This, more than anything, is what shapes our understanding and activity. Self-inquiry in the first sense, the examination of one's life as it is, involves inquiring into and discovering the system of value that *already* shapes one's activity in the world in the

[1] Plato and Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, second (Basic Books, 1991).
[2] This idea of inheritance, especially the inheritance of ideas and values, plays a prominent role in the *Republic*. Though the point is perhaps most familiar to us in our own lives.

broader arc that is one's life. The wording, examining one's life, is appropriate in the sense that those commitments and values that are held most deeply by us, and so are most influential in shaping our understanding and activity, are the ideas that shape this broader arc. We hold to these axiomatic ideas and values at a level of our being that is not immediately apparent to us. Such values and the map of operational understanding that they co-ordinate necessarily fall into the background which is what allows them to exercise the influence that they do. It is also what gives us stability in the world. As such, even to become aware of this operational framework of understanding requires the active investigation and examination of one's life as one excavates the ideas and values that shape it.

Why one would see the need for and indeed the value of such an endeavour is a crucial question for which the answer can vary in kind and degree. I am interested in both the initial turning toward one's self and the ultimate endeavour of seeking the knowledge of one's true nature. The initial turning is perhaps the harder to justify and indeed if the possibility of value in the endeavour is flatly denied then it is not clear where one could get a foothold in. What is more realistic is that I address at least the sense that self-inquiry is in some way worthwhile. Burnyeat (2006) makes a similar observation with regard to the moral arguments of the *Republic* and the *Nichomachean Ethics*; they are directed at 'well brought-up' individuals who at least have a sense of their value.[3] This goes to at least acknowledge that one could, if so inclined, flatly deny the use of any of this. It is not clear what can be said to this position though Socrates relating to Trasymachus in the *Republic* is perhaps a good model.

Initially, and perhaps most simply, we might turn because our activity in the world is marked by and increases our pain. Yet we must still ask why we assume the resolution of that pain or particularly harmful behaviour lies in self-inquiry? Why assume the source of harm arises from us and our activity and not the world? This is not an easy case to make but the basic and necessarily general wisdom of self-inquiry, and the value I hope to re-emphasise in this research, is that we stand to benefit from turning our attention inward as it is from ourselves that harmful activity arises and in our being that we are harmed. How one comes to recognise the value of self-inquiry, and so comes to turn their attention inward, is one of the core and more difficult questions explored here. We can utilise the first sense of self-inquiry to justify its value by saying that self-inquiry helps one gain insight into one's character, into the ideas and values that may be harming one's self or simply preventing one's happy functioning in the

[3] M. F. Burnyeat, "The Truth of Tripartition," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106 (2006): 1–23. p.4.

world. The insight then created by self-inquiry serves our living well. Though this may be true, or maybe in some cases untrue, it would be locating the value of self-inquiry in what it helps us achieve. I am attempting to make the more difficult case for the intrinsic value of self-inquiry, a value that is internal and does not depend on what it can or can't do for us, its consequence. This, more in the realm of the second sense of self-inquiry, has to do with the intrinsic value of self-knowing. We are more likely to come to a text like the *Yoga Sutras* with the sense that the goal of unmediated self-knowing is both possible and desirable as the achievement of this end is the explicit purpose of the text. Again, a full account of self-inquiry must address and appeal to both senses and their value. I appeal to three contexts in which we can both understand the mechanics of turning so to speak and the reasons for why we might need and want to.

Socrates famously declares in the *Apology* that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human (*Ap*. 38a).[4] This is a location of the utmost value in the activity of examining one's life and it is for this reason that he examined his own life and the lives of his fellow citizens even in the face of death. The basic effect of conversation with Socrates was *aporia,* realising one does not know what one thought one knew. Before being confronted with one's ignorance what one thought one knew shaped one's understanding and activity in the world and this is precisely the area in which we see the initial though somewhat extrinsic value of self-inquiry. Prior to examination, one's activity moved from ignorance, the presumption to knowledge that one does not have. In this research, I hope to make explicit the peculiar ability of Platonic philosophy to bring us to the realisation of both our relative and perhaps our absolute ignorance about what is of most value. However, we might ask why this is itself something worthwhile to do. Socrates would rather die than not do it but this doesn't seem to satisfy our question. Given how we perceive the character of Socrates this fact could quite as easily produce aversion, as it does appeal.

I am assuming both the possibility of and the intrinsic value self-knowing. This research is an attempt, with the help of Patanjali, Plato and a comparison between the two to arrive at and answer for why I might hold fast to this value and seek to re-emphasise and re-affirm it. The task is in a sense already beyond me in terms of the value I am attributing to self-knowing. That it is intrinsic, good for itself, means I cannot appeal to or justify it by a value that is outside of it without in some way denying the initial value I am attributing to it. This is a familiar

[4] Plato. *Complete Works*. Edited by J. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. 1997.

philosophical problem and one that launches the inquiry in the *Republic* from Book II onward as Glaucon and Adiemantus task Socrates with accounting for why justice is good to have for itself (*Rep*, 360).

The problem of justifying intrinsic value can also be cast as the problem of justifying a first principle. Usually, a first principle is a principle that one assumes and moves *from*. An idea that is presupposed in one's thought and activity. What characterises philosophical activity, at least in the Platonic and the yogic instance, is the turning toward and inquiring into such principles. Such principles are based on or find their justification in nothing higher than or prior to themselves but in themselves; they are the source of justification for what follows from them. So, one cannot give direct argument for such a principles' value or truth since an argument or justification as we usually think about them necessarily appeal to something else in order to establish that value or truth.[5] Since we derive truths from first principles, the first principles are then more true than what is derived from them. Thought works in this downward direction, it takes hypothesised principles, or first principles, as its beginning and moves toward the object(s) that it is directed (*Rep*, 510b). Importantly, the beginning, the hypothesised principle(s), both frames the possibility of what follows and acts as the source of justification for it. The 'arguments' that seek the justification of the first principle or value cannot work in any usual sense as *one is trying to arrive at one's beginning anew* so to speak. This goes only to indicate the difficulty encountered by trying to establish the value or truth of something that is intrinsically valuable, as I take what I am calling self-inquiry and self-knowing to be.[6]

The self-inquiry emphasis of this research brings a personal dimension to this problem that is otherwise hard to achieve. For in recognising the problem of arriving at intrinsic value or justifying a first principle in the context of self-inquiry and self-knowing, specifically through the problem of knowing the knower, we are faced with a situation where the principle that we either deny or affirm is ourselves. The self-inquiry emphasis of this research has the effect of bringing this more general philosophical problem home so to speak, such that if we pursue it we can't ignore its implications with much ease.

[5] Laurence Bloom, *The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form* (Lexington Books, 2017). p.1.

[6] Though I sometimes use them interchangeably, self-knowing just speaks to the possibility of knowing one's true nature, this possibility is more the emphasis of the second sense of self-inquiry.

Comparison

The comparative component of this research plays an important role. Its role or value is reflexive and two-fold. On the one hand in the very act of comparison we are invited to reflect on the ground from which we make the comparison. In the first sense, that common ground that we assume exists between the two things compared in order for us to compare them in that chosen respect. In the second sense, the common ground is the simple hypothesis of comparability that we implicate ourselves in by comparing. This turning toward the ground that we already move from and depend on is notoriously difficult yet it is important philosophically, it is perhaps a characteristic feature of philosophical activity as opposed to other intellectual endeavours. The other side of the value, the value for comparative philosophy, is that we are making this turn in the hope of establishing a justified ground of activity, comparative or otherwise. That is, comparison both provides the opportunity for the kind of turning required for self-inquiry and stands to benefit from being so turned in that such an endeavour might help us establish a justified ground for comparison specifically and activity generally. This ground, that ground that does not depend on something outside of itself for justification, is, I propose, self-knowing. Self-inquiry is the means by which we approach the possibility of establishing ourselves on such a ground.

Hongaladarom (2019) and Weber (2013 & 2014) help bring our attention to the fact that the comparative act involves a pre-comparative assumption or hypothesis of commonality between the things compared. Simply, and most generally, it is that comparison deems what it compares comparable prior to, in fact this is what makes possible, the comparison. Comparative philosophy moves from and depends on the hypothesis of comparability between what it compares. This is presupposed in the act of comparison, to take an interest in the justifiability of any specific comparative act or comparison in general is to inquire into this presupposed ground.

Initially the pre-comparative hypothesis of comparability seems to take the form of those assumptions or ideas that we encounter in the examination of our lives in the first sense of self-inquiry. If we do not examine our lives and the axiomatic ideas and values that shape it then these ideas serve as the source of the criteria by which we judge and understand what we encounter. They frame and create the world that we experience. The less examined this ground is that we move from the more we stand to impose it as the criteria or means through which we understand what we look to and move toward. The basic idea again is that if I am hungry, my vision becomes increasingly narrowed and food centred such that everything else begins to fall

out of frame. The world becomes food or not food. When we compare from an unexamined and unjustified ground we stand to impose the assumptions and values of that ground on what we compare. So, in this first sense we are encouraged to examine what we are assuming to be the connection between what we are comparing.

More generally, the very act of comparison implicates us in a very interesting idea, the hypothesis that the things compared are comparable. In order to see the two things together in some way we necessarily assume a common ground or an underlying sameness that they both exist on or speak to. It is the responsibility of the comparative philosopher, I contend, to examine and make explicit what this ground is in each specific comparison. More fundamentally, to establish a ground from which any comparative act could be justified. This ideally is the function that self-knowing can fill and where this reflective endeavour of comparative philosophy begins to meet the second sense of self-inquiry. The basic ground from which one might compare two philosophies is ultimately one's self. The task then, in seeking the ground of the justified comparative act, is to know thyself in both the first and perhaps the second senses.

It is toward this end of self-knowing that Plato, Patanjali and indeed comparative philosophy are our allies. Hongladarom (2019) and Weber (2013 & 2014) help us get a grip on the different analytical components of the comparative act and specifically on that common pre-comparatively assumed ground that Weber (2013) calls the '*teritum'* and Hongaladarom (2019) calls the 'object of study'. This case is made in Chapter 1. The basic insight is that the comparative act by its nature hypothesises and moves from this pre-comparative common ground. Establishing the necessity of this hypothesised ground is then a key part of the further argument I make for the existence of a shared assumption in the existent literature that makes a comparison between Plato and Patanjali. Simply by being comparative these projects are implicated in the hypothesis of comparability between the two. The particular form that the assumption seems to take however is some kind of agreement in the same fundamental orientation of both Plato and Patanjali. More often than not this shared orientation is framed in a soteriological manner. Both Plato and Patanjali are understood by the literature as being concerned with liberation where liberation means the realisation of their core Ideas, the good and *purusa*[7] respectively. In Chapter 1 I hope to become more clear on the nature of the pre-comparatively hypothesised ground, to identify what form it takes in the existent literature

[7] As I say here, it is the core Idea or organising principle of the yogic philosophical system. It can be understood as one's true nature or simply the self.

comparing Plato and Patanjali, and finally, which take us into Chapter 2, assess different ways in which we might attempt to justify it.

Harm and ignorance

One way in which we might begin to understand justified activity, including justified comparison, is that it is non-harmful. Conceivably, we first become aware of unjustified action by the harm that it causes. We might then use harm as a criteria from which we understand something as being justified or not. However, what we understand harm to be exactly is crucial as we stand to use our idea of what harm is as criteria by which we ironically or paradoxically inflict true harm. For 'true' harm is understood as this very imposition of an outside criteria or value on something else, specifically one's self. We see this comparatively in that we harm what we are comparing by imposing on it foreign values and criteria of judgement. In doing so we don't actually meet the two things we are comparing but we assess them according to the criteria of judgement and value that we favour. This distortion, the harm we inflict on the philosophers we compare, arises from the ground that we hypothesise in order to make the comparison. The ground is harmful in so far as it imposes itself as the standard from which we understand the compared philosophies. We must then ask if it is possible to compare, to look out at two things, without hypothesising a common ground between them that makes possible such looking. It would seem that the very act of comparing is harmful, as it seems necessarily to involve the assumption of a common ground. However, that we might seek and perhaps find a justified or non-harmful ground is precisely the idea that our comparison need not impose on and distort what it compares. This research is an inquiry into the possibility of establishing this justified and non-harmful ground. Self-knowing is the prime candidate only we need to inquire into and establish its possibility. It is here that the systems of Plato and Patanjali play the biggest role in the last Chapter 3 and 4.

The other benefit of making explicit the role of harm in these considerations and the project of self-inquiry is that it helps us better understand the ignorance that calls for the need of self-inquiry. When I am ignorant in terms of thinking I know what I do not know my activity carries with it this presumption to knowledge that I don't have. First, since I do not actually know what it is best for me to do, I only presume to know, I stand to harm myself by acting from this false knowledge. Second, the very fact that I have false knowledge, that I am ignorant, is indicative of the state of harm I am in. My false knowledge is the possession of ideas about myself, the world and what is valuable such that those ideas, which are externalised or simply not myself, become the criteria, the locus of value, by or from which I act in the world and know myself.

The harm of ignorance is the fact of this dislocation, the being other than one's self. To have one's activity and thought serve what one is not, like ideas and values that one has inherited, is the essential understanding of harm in the domain of self-inquiry and self-knowing.

Self-inquiry

Self-inquiry in both the first and second senses is a peculiar object of study over and above these two seemingly conflicting senses in which we might understand it. The peculiarity has to do mostly with the fact that what one is doing is looking for what's looking, trying to know that which is knowing. This involves two contrary but equally important dynamics. The first arises from the assumption we make that gives to the need for self-inquiry. That is, the assumption that we are in a state of ignorance regarding who we are. This means that our looking, the knowing that characterises the state of ignorance, is a distorted or conditioned kind of knowing as it moves from a ground other than itself, the ignorance. It is conditioned precisely by those presumptions to knowledge about things that we don't actually know that characterise our state of ignorance. Therefore, we find that in looking for what's looking we actually find, in a sense, what's looking in those ideas that have until then been what has informed our looking. We have seen the world as we have understood it and we have understood in the frame of understanding created by our axiomatic ideas and values. So, in this first sense, self-inquiry reveals to us the conditions of our knowing by exposing its co-ordinates, and chiefly for me, its implicit ideas of what is of value. So, when looking for what's looking in the first sense of self-inquiry we seem to actually find something.

Then, in the second sense and contrary to this first sense, we end up chasing our own tails so to speak. We are looking for what's looking and expecting to find something. Presumably, this expectation arises because we actually do find what is looking in the first sense of self-inquiry in terms of coming to recognise those internalised values that have until then informed our looking and acting. We should note that this first sense is in response to and so assumes the state of ignorance. If self-inquiry is to graduate to unmediated self-knowing such knowing cannot be of anything but itself. The expectation that something may be found, that self-inquiry will produce an object of knowledge, will perpetually beg the question of who it is that knows that object. The self can never become the object of its own knowledge, it is always that which knows.

We have an initial sense of the tension between these two senses of self-inquiry. The picture however, gets a little more complicated or at least we stand to benefit from bringing the tension

out a bit more. The first sense of self-inquiry as the examination of one's life produces the expectation that self-inquiry is an activity whereby I gain insight into my character and the ideas that most deeply influence it. That is, insight is a kind of production of some discernible, though previously concealed, part of my nature. And yet, any discernible, distinct or *discursive* idea of oneself that can be known by a distinct knower; or produced and reproduced, will always leave open the question of who it is that knows said knowledge as such and so frustrate the inquirer. What seems most crucial is the position that this first sense of self-inquiry takes as its start, the position of ignorance. Ignorance is active in the sense that it involves a kind of positing of a source of value, that which shapes one's activity, that is outside of one' self. Or simply, it is the ignorance of one's true nature and so the reality belonging to one's self is attributed to something that is not one's self. Ignorance involves hypothesising and then assuming the ground that is hypothesised as one's self such that the assumed ground becomes the origin of one's activity and movement in the world. Progress in response to this ignorance is then coming to recognise the mistake(s) one has made, the ground one has hypothesised and then assumed and then of course, ceasing from the mistake. What becomes discernible is what I thought I knew, the ground I had assumed, and since the result is that I don't actually know it, the idea disappears with the discernment as if it wasn't really there in the first place. It was only hypothetical. This is the increasingly peculiar nature of ignorance that I hope to bring out more in the process of writing though it should be said at the outset that it will continually confuse us as by its nature we cannot get a good grip on it.

Nonetheless, if we think of knowledge as a discursive relationship between the *knower* who *knows* the *known* we might then understand self-inquiry as being interested in the knower to the exclusion of what is known. If we carry the expectations of this discursive mode of knowing into the second sense of self-inquiry then we run the risk of reducing the knower to a discursive object, something to be known by a knower, and so fall into an infinite regress and fail in our self-knowing. In this second and ultimate sense the self cannot be an object of its own knowing as it is that which knows, or more accurately, the *knowing*. The expectation for a discernible object of knowledge that is developed by the discursive mode of knowing will perpetually be frustrated by this endeavour. We seem to avoid this problem that arises from the nature of discursive knowing by proposing a different mode of knowing that is appropriate to self-knowing. This is exactly what we find in both the Yogic and Platonic systems. A mode or modes of knowing that do not depend on or move from the basic distinction between the knower and the known. Such knowing cannot be *of* anything but is rather something more like

a knowing state of being. A kind of *knowing-being* where knower and known converge. Much of this research is about clarifying or accounting for this different mode of knowing, it is here that we seem to find the mode of knowing appropriate to self-knowing.

Some issues arise; the proposition is that one settles into the state of knowing that *is* the true nature of the knower. Instead of looking for what's looking one becomes content with the state of simply looking. However, this is precisely the attitude or mode in which ignorance operates and solidifies itself. For, if we open the doors to the possibility of the state of ignorance we are admitting that our knowing could be such that it is conditioned by our ignorance. The proposal seems to be that we then simply rest in our particular and harmed mode of knowing. Ignorance is what gives rise to the need for investigating the nature of this knowing, with it's conditioned criteria of judgement and attributions of value. If we are to submit too soon to the futility of looking for what's looking we then stand to leave untouched those seeds of ignorance that inform our particular mode of looking. We will in short remain ignorant though we will think that we have attained to self-knowing in an ultimate sense.

The need for self-inquiry as the active investigation of one's life arises from the recognition that my ignorance informs my mode of being such that its 'content' becomes nearly indistinguishable from myself. This is what allows the ideas and value attributions that co-ordinate my understanding to exercise the influence that they do. To reveal them requires making something discernible that was previously indiscernible or concealed. These ideas and their influence are attributed to my non-discursive holding of them. So, non-discursive knowing is not simply the end or ultimate goal of self-inquiry but it is also the means of self-inquiry. What I am getting at is perhaps the greatest source of difficulty and peculiarity in understanding the project of self-inquiry. It is the peculiar relationship we find between means and ends, we will return to it in different ways time and time again.

We see initially that the expectation for a graspable, discernible or discursive account as the product of self-inquiry must be loosened as we open the inquiry to other, or just an-other, mode of knowing. One in which we can say there is no distinct or discernible object of knowledge. This seamless *non-discursive* mode of knowing seems to be a solution to the problem posed to us by self-inquiry. It finds equivalents in the Platonic *nous*[8] and the Yogic *samadhi*[9]. However, two problems or further considerations arise. The first is that I hold ignorance in a non or at

[8] *Nous* is a mode of knowing distinct from *dianoia*, it is considered higher or more complete.
[9] This is the highest state of meditation in the yogic system and is translated as absorption or 'being at one with'. It is the state of collectedness or recollection.

least pre-discursively manner which is precisely what makes it so pernicious and influential. The second, which might be the solution to this first complication, is that both Plato and Patanjali invite us to consider the possibility of an Idea that is beyond even these non-discursive modes of knowing with the Ideas of the good and *purusa* respectively. For it is from the vantage point or the vision afforded by these Ideas that we rise above any possibility of ignorance. They are ideas that seem to point to a reality higher than the seamless modes of *knowing-being* we find in *samadhi* and *nous*. The difference between both philosophers is perhaps most clear in the relationship that they adopt toward these Ideas, once we establish the ground that justifies our considering them together at all we will have created the space in which we can consider this difference and how it might be beneficial to us in our own projects of self-inquiry.

The necessary pre-intellectual work of uncovering the impediments to free and open intellectual activity

The philosophical project is that which hopes to uncover those principles, ideas and values by which we already orientate ourselves. Uncovering these principles and engaging different principles of organisation is inherently disorientating work. It is not mere conceptual revamping; it is the investigation into those principles from which we make sense of the world and ourselves such that we might no longer be governed by them. These principles enmesh themselves in what we take ourselves to be and so require investigation and examination to begin to reveal. The self-inquiry focus of this research seeks to emphasise this inevitably personal dimension. We become disorientated by philosophical inquiry, or we might avoid it, precisely because of our personal investment in or attachment to those principles that help us make sense of and navigate through the world. Self-inquiry initially challenges the ground we already depend on and is deeply personal and destabilising in that it requires we loosen our dependence on such ground.

Further, even becoming aware of these principles is an achievement because of the way they enmesh themselves in our being in a pre-discursive and pre-reflective sense. The work is 'pre-intellectual' in that our relationship to these principles that frame our understanding of the world is one of significant investment in if not identification with which means that they become indistinguishable from ourselves, and so become related to us in a kind of pre-discursive or non-conscious way. Our attachment to a particular way of knowing and being is as strong as the stability and comfort we derive from that particular mode. More fatally than this, it is not that we derive stability from our understanding it is that our understanding is our

very stability. This all goes to say in an almost inevitably roundabout way that we are likely to be strongly attached to our particular mode of knowing. To have that mode disturbed, by questioning the very principle(s) that govern and organise it, is to be disturbed at the level of what one takes one's self to be. By its nature it is disorientating, and by our nature we exhibit pre-intellectual resistance to it. Further; such principles and presuppositions require active reflection and inquiry to even become aware of. So, our resistance is not only pre-intellectual in the sense that we are emotionally attached to the principles of organisation that we assume but that these principles become invisible or indiscernible to us by occupying this pre-discursive space. We find it hard to discern what they are. An others philosophy, or the comparison of philosophies, is a uniquely valuable endeavour in that by contrast and difference it gives us the opportunity to begin to see and examine our own assumptions. I quote from Bloom (2020) at length to emphasise this point.

> Philosophy engages with the truths about ourselves and the world that we are closest to and the most invested in. Thus, open philosophical thinking – inquiry – requires the most pre-thinking work. This is because philosophical thinking most properly moves toward – examines – the first principles and fundamental assumptions. To examine such principles requires the tough emotional step of actually being able to let go of the hold, and the stability, that such principles give us, especially if we are to examine a system of philosophy that is fundamentally different from our own. This can be a difficult and disorienting step. Indeed, since it requires our not even being able to hold on to our preconceived standards of orientation, it is disorienting in its very nature. Yet, if we are to take seriously another form of philosophical thinking – another way of arriving at those fundamental principles through which one can orient one's thinking – it is a step that we must be both willing and able to make. Thus, inquiry into orienting standards, which depends upon our acknowledgement and acceptance of our own ignorance of the certainty of such orienting standards, is the prerequisite for taking different forms of philosophy seriously. Plato's virtues, his account of what it means to become a complete person is just this becoming able to engage with other forms of thinking, other orienting values, on their own terms. This, I submit, is Plato's anti-dogma; Platonic philosophy opens issues rather than closing them. It is no mere literary flourish that Plato has Socrates

> prefer to die rather than to stop asking people about virtue (*Ap*. 37e9ff) – he is ever and fundamentally open to the knowledge of others.[10]

Bloom (2020) goes on to make a further point about the value of Platonic philosophy that will help orientate us throughout the inquiry that follows.

> What I find peculiarly valuable about Platonic philosophy – its unique and universal relevance – is the way in which it enables such admiration of the ideas of other's while avoiding the Scylla and Charybdis of losing oneself in either disorientation or dogmatism.[11]

'Between Scylla and Charybdis' is an idiom often meaning choosing the lesser of two evils. In this instance, Platonic Inquiry does not require we choose either dogmatism or disorientation; it helps us chart a course between the two. How it does so is explored in Chapter 3. For now, we note the extremes we would want to balance, disorientation and dogmatism. The next chapter on Comparison gives us a good sense of the relationship between the two as well as how they relate to the endeavour of self-inquiry.

CHAPTER 1: COMPARISON

In this chapter, with the help of Hongladarom (2019) and Weber (2013 & 2014), I give an analytical account of the necessary components of a comparative act. The emphasis is on the pre-comparative assumption, the assumption that is made on top of the hypothesis of comparability. Simply, the hypothesis is that the two things compared are comparable. Hongladarom (2019) and Weber (2013 & 2014) help us identify this further assumption, over and above the hypothesis of comparability, that is a pre-comparatively assumed 'common object' or ground that justifies or serves as the connecting term between what is compared. Both the hypothesis of comparability and pre-comparative assumption of commonality then help to establish the claim that the existent comparative literature between Plato and Patanjlai shares a common assumption as to what this pre-comparatively assumed commonality is. Specifically, it the assumption that Plato and Patanjali share a fundamental and soteriological orientation. In Chapter 2 I then explore two different ways in which we might seek to justify

[10] Laurence Bloom, "Reading Plato and Aristotle in Contemporary South Africa," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 39, no. 3 (2020). p.342.
[11] Bloom. p.343

both the general hypothesis of comparability, that philosophies are comparable, and the specific form this assumption takes in the relevant literature.

The nature of comparison and the pre-comparative assumption: the 'Tertium'[12] *or 'Object of study'*[13]

Weber (2013) lays out the analytical components of the comparative act below

> Comparative philosophy, simply by virtue of being "comparative", in one way or another involves a series of aspects, which may be analytically distinguished in just any comparison. At least four such aspects are distinguished in standard conceptualizations: (i) a comparison is always done by someone; (ii) at least two relata (*comparata*) are compared; (iii) the *comparata* are compared in some common respect (*tertium comparationis*); and (iv) the result of a comparison is a relation between the *comparata* based on the chosen respect.[14]

We are focusing on the common respect, the *tertium,* first. However, my claim is that the common respect between two philosophies is ultimately one's self, the one comparing. Nonetheless, this common respect, the *tertium*, is necessarily pre-comparative as it is what allows us to see the two *comparata* together. Hongladarom (2019) calls this the 'object of study'.

> …an adequacy condition for a fruitful undertaking of comparative philosophy is that both sides recognize that there exists at least an object in common. The object presents itself as the bedrock reality, so to speak, upon which different theorization about it can take place.[15]

This common object, the *tertium*, has to exist outside of or before the two *comparata*. The comparison is then about comparing the degree of sameness and difference in the *comparata* with respect to the common object as it is by this object that they are essentially related. Importantly, the comparison seems to get off the ground by assuming this commonality.

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[12] Ralph Weber, "Comparative Philosophy and the Tertium : Comparing What with What , and in What Respect?," *Dao* 13 (2014): 151–71.
[13] Soraj Hongladarom, "How to Understand the Identity of an Object of Study in Comparative Philosophy," *Comparative Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2019): 119–26.
[14] Ralph Weber, "' How to Compare ? ' – On the Methodological State of Comparative Philosophy" 7 (2013): 593–603. p 595-6.
[15] Hongladarom, "How to Understand the Identity of an Object of Study in Comparative Philosophy." p.119.

> In comparative studies, the necessity of such a point of commonality is usually taken for granted, and it is frequently acknowledged in introductions and compendia.[16]

The minimal attention or acknowledgement given to this necessary ground could be attributed to the difficulty of seeing it. Such an assumption operates largely undetected and so only begins to come to light when one turns and asks or inquiries into it. That we do not usually do this is not surprising as what marks the usual direction of the movement is outward from and not toward this ground. Nonetheless,

> The point is that "comparative philosophy," as it is understood by many, can lay claim to an independent status precisely because it rests on largely unquestioned conventional notions of comparison. [17]

Specifically, the hypothesis that two philosophies are comparable. Taking a philosophical interest in comparative philosophy itself requires asking into this assumed ground with an interest as to how we might justify it. There is a tension here between the particular common ground a specific comparative act assumes and the hypothesis of comparability in all comparative acts. The two necessarily intermingle in practice as the particular instance will be a form of the basic hypothesis. The task is to make the ground one is assuming as explicit as possible. In the ideal instance a comparison would carry no other content but itself, the idea that the two things compared are comparable. This is hard to get at, it is a kind of pre-supposed and underlying unity or sameness to what is being compared such that without this presupposition we not be able to compare. We would have no means to understand difference; we would not be able to see the two things together at all. The proposal here is that this ground is ultimately one's self. Whether it is possible to compare only from the hypothesis of comparability and so depend only on this 'content less'[18] presupposition of sameness is where the comparative project meets that of self-inquiry. As this 'content less' ground is the unmediated and undivided self that the second sense of self-inquiry hopes to know.

First, we are to uncover those ideas, values or connecting objects that we are assuming are held in common and so imposing as the common ground between what we compare. In the second

[16] Weber, "Comparative Philosophy and the Tertium : Comparing What with What , and in What Respect?" p.152-3.
[17] Weber. p.154.
[18] It is content less in that it is not the assumption of some common object or common content. It is the presupposition that the two things are comparable which just is the idea that they have an underlying and presupposed sameness to them such that without it we would not be able to see the *comparata* together at all.

sense, with regard to the hypothesis of comparability, we must ask into its justifiability for we can't compare without it. The space in which two philosophies are compared, if we have done the work in the first sense of removing the assumptions to a common ground that impede our open inquiry, cannot be anything other than one's self. One is the underlying sameness between two philosophies that makes possible the comparison of those philosophies with each other. To deny comparability is to deny one's self. Importantly, the work required for getting a grip on those pre-comparatively assumed objects, that are not one's self, but that serve as the assumed common ground for the particular comparative act is significant. If one can manage to hold no pre-comparatively assumed common object as the justification of the comparison all that remains is the hypothesis of comparability and the one that is comparing. Comparative philosophy can both facilitate our self-inquiry and be benefited by it.

When comparing two philosophies one is comparing two systems that communicate their own standards and criteria of judgment. To study a philosophy is to take seriously another system of establishing and locating value. In comparing two philosophies, ideally, one would seek a ground of comparison that does not carry its own content, that does not impose a standard or set of values on what is being compared. For one is not then engaging the philosophies but subjecting them to one's chosen criteria of judgement. The first principle would be the hypothesis of comparability, as to why this is justified, is as we saw a question of self-affirmation or denial. For to deny that there an underlying sameness to the two philosophies one is comparing is to deny the one comparing them.

The more defined or explicit the *tertium* is the cleaner the comparison it produces will *seem* to be. For there is a clear model or object from which one can judge and understand what one has assumed to be instances of that pre-comparatively assumed object/model. Sameness and difference in this instance is then just a kind of calculation of common properties. The clearer the model prior to the comparison the clearer the criteria for judgement are. Such a comparison, though perfectly okay for its own purposes, is insufficient for a justified ground of comparative philosophy. For we are seeking to avoid imposing a pre-established model or set of criteria on what we compare. Besides the arbitrariness of the object or model that we privilege as the standard from which we judge what we compare, a philosophy is just that kind of thing that establishes its own criteria and standards. So, the pre-comparative imposition will harm the understanding of the philosophy, necessarily.

All one seems to be doing in the apparently clear example of a comparison is producing a comparison between three instead of two *comparata* whilst biasing the one that one has chosen as the standard from which the others are to be judged. One has in effect applied a model to two different things to see how they fit. This only helps us understand how these two things relate to the model and then from the model to each other. It does not help us understand either thing for itself nor how they relate to each other outside of the conditions created by one's preferred criteria of judgment.

If all one hopes to do is to see how X and Y compare to Z in terms of there sameness and difference then this method is fine. Indeed, it is clean. However, one has merely applied a model or criteria of judgement Z to X and Y and so has not truly accounted for either X or Y, nor has one really produced a comparison between them. Z makes it possible to see X and Y together. However, if Z is too sharply defined and imposed than one is no longer looking at X and Y for themselves but in their relation to or through the lens of Z.

Of course, I might claim and argue for Z as the justified criteria of judgement and become *dogmatic* about its validity as the appropriate criteria for judgement. This not only precludes us from actually encountering X and Y but it is also arbitrary. However, if I am to compare at all I cannot deny and indeed I depend upon a basis for comparison. Something that allows me to see X and Y together. To deny the possibility of this is to swing too far toward *disorientation* such that one can't make sense of comparison at all. Invariably, by comparing, I am hypothesising the comparability of what I compare. We see here the tension between the extremes of dogmatism and disorientation.

If the common ground is *post* the hypothesis of comparison that means that it is the positing of some further 'common object' as the common term between what is being compared. In this instance I necessarily impose Z onto X and Y. If the commonality or sameness that allows for the comparison is prior to the hypothesis of comparability it is then prior to the possibility of harming what is compared by imposing something like object Z on it. I would then be able to compare X and Y without the need for any other justificatory connection or means by which I can view them together. Importantly though, we must affirm this underlying unity that the hypothesis of comparability presupposes. I am speaking of this underlying unity as one's self. That which gives rise to the possibility of comparison at all.

Nonetheless, as Weber (2013) notes the *tertium* or common respect is hardly ever clearly acknowledged if only mentioned in 'compendia and introductions'. The argument I am

pursuing then seems to be an uphill battle for the preliminary work is often not done. Our work in the first sense, paralleling the first sense of self-inquiry, is to examine this content. It is to become aware of, be explicit about, and to clearly define the model that we are using if that is the kind of comparison we want to make. Though as we have seen, some other word than comparison might be more appropriate as one is then just applying a standard. The ease with which we assume 'common objects', and the little attention we give them, goes to show the nature of the idea/ideas that the turning of self-inquiry seeks to know. They are by nature somewhat concealed in that they are the foundations of our habitual habits of thinking. The 'turning' is the turning toward these ideas such that we can become aware of them and possibly let them go. Seeking to justify and not condition our activity is one reason to let them go.

The current literature and comparative philosophy in general then seems not to stand up to the standard we might want to hold in terms of the work in the first sense. As Weber (2013) notes, the *tertium* is often only briefly mentioned in introductions or compendia. However, we can understand this lack of address because of the nature of the idea(s) at play. If anything it helps us appreciate the ease with which make these initial assumptions and then come to depend on them such that they become largely invisible to us. Also, often a comparison might be carried out in order to try and help further understand something so it is not surprising that the thing that we are seeking a better understanding of through comparison is not clearly defined at the outset. However, that we and why we assume that there is a common 'thing' at all at the outset, is the whole point and question.

Again, it is one's self as that underlying unity between two philosophies that ultimately justifies the hypothesis of comparability. For this reason, comparative philosophy should also be interested in self-inquiry and the possibility of unmediated self-knowing.

Comparisons aimed at Contrast:

In their comparative analysis of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (*YS*) and Plato's *Republic* (*Rep*) and the core ideas of ignorance[19] and opinion/common belief[20] Stevanovic & Teodorski (2016) adopt a method of contrast or 'reciprocal illumination' where the comparison is used to help define more clearly the limits of each thing compared as opposed to forward claims of interconnectedness.[21] The desire is to simply put two philosophies next to each other with no

[19] Avidya
[20] doxa
[21] Marko Teodorski and Lada Stevanović, "Avidya I Doxa : Reciprocal Illumination of Plato and Patanjali," *International Scientific Yoga Journal Sense* 6, no. 6 (2016): 22–34. p.22.

further attempt to connect them other them putting them side by side. Difference is supposed to produce sharper definition in each. A comparison that is more interested in contrast is still comparative and by implication involved in the idea that the two things are comparable, even if specific claims of interconnection are not being put forward. The fact of comparison deems what is compared, comparable.

Even though Stevanovic and Teodorski (2016) claim not to be interested in pursuing claims of 'interconnectedness' but rather seek to clearly define differences for the sake of 'reciprocal illumination' they end up concluding by saying that

> … while the western European philosophy, rooted in Plato's dialogues, stays imprisoned in mind constructs of the ratio, the Indian philosophy offers a possibility of experience of their transcendence.[22]

Simply, they are saying that Patanjali, and Indian Philosophy in general, can take us further. That is, that Plato and Patanjali are speaking to the same thing and Plato's method derived from the dialogues leaves us imprisoned in the rational constructs that Patanjali's philosophy can liberate us from. Regardless of the content of their argument, what is relevant for us now is that, even though their method of 'contrast' claims not to be interested in putting forward claims of interconnectedness, they conclude with a strong claim of difference that can only be understood on the 'more and less successful' spectrum that they conclude with if we presuppose that they are 'more or less successful' with respect to some or the same thing. Difference is only understood as difference because of the underlying assumption of sameness. Even if we don't want to forward claims in this regard we implicate ourselves in them. It is better, I propose, that we seek to make explicit exactly how we deem what we compare comparable so as not to let an assumption to some common though unexamined object govern the nature of our comparison.

Anticipating the incommensurability/incomparability rebuttal.

As we have seen by comparing one is committed to the hypothesis of comparability. What would we say to the denial of this hypothesis? I locate this denial in the incommensurability or incomparability thesis below.

The incommensurability or incomparability thesis is not interested in making comparison nor does it see comparison as possible. It is the idea of the impossibility of comparing something

[22] Teodorski and Stevanović. p.22.

like two philosophies in that we cannot translate them into a common language or symbol that makes them commensurable with each other. To quantify something for instance is to render it commensurable with any other quantifiable thing. So, to be incommensurable is to in a sense be unquantifiable or untranslatable into a common language and therefore be incomparable.[23] One might go further with incommensurability and say that even positing a common language like number is itself imposing a language on to the studied phenomena and so not really studying those phenomena but fitting them to one's language. (Of course, comparing number with number is just mathematics). Rather than mathematics being a common language the claim is that one has then just added another language that requires converting the studied phenomena into number. And so on into absurdity with any attempt to make a common ground.

It might not be so absurd. Or, there is some merit in it in that it seeks not to make distorting impositions on the studied phenomena. The hope is not to harm what is compared by imposing a foreign standard. To want to make things commensurable would be to want to subject them to quantification, quantification is then ones standard of understanding. What about unquantifiable phenomena? We necessarily distort them in seeking to make them commensurable. It is similar comparatively; if we impose a standard or common object we distort what we are looking to by subjecting them to that standard and so are really just studying the standard. This I suggest is the case when comparison moves from a common object that is assumed *post*, or after the fact of the hypothesis of comparability. That is, justifying the comparison on an object that depends itself on the hypothesis. We have already entertained the idea that comparison need not move from any other ground but the hypothesis of comparability. One need not seek or impose any further connecting term if one can justify the hypothesis.

As to the justifiability of the hypothesis of comparability; if we seek not to impose, which is the merit of the incomparability/incommensurable thesis, then it has been suggested that the underlying sameness that justifies comparison must be sought prior to the hypothesis of comparability. We are pressed now with having to justify this underlying unity. How can we know it to be so? The short answer is that it is presupposed by the very hypothesis of comparability. I have suggested that we understand this ground as one's self. The effect being that to deny comparability is to deny the one that comparison moves from, to deny one's self. This is at least how the comparative project links with that of self-inquiry. By pursuing self-inquiry and the possibility of unmediated self-knowing, of coming to know the underlying

[23] This is perhaps the nightmare of the qualitative dimension of experience to modern physical sciences.

unity that makes comparison possible, we stand to justify this hypothesis of comparability. The two, comparative philosophy and self-inquiry are mutually beneficial.

The ideal comparison is a seeing together in which the sight is not itself informed by an object or way of seeing, but is simply seeing. A comparing that does not deny the underlying and presupposed sameness that makes possible comparison and does not impose further assumption *as* the justifying common ground. Bloom (2020) brings our attention to how Platonic inquiry is valuable in it helping us cultivate this capacity for intellectual openness. We explore this in more detail in Chapter 3. From the yogic perspective, in the state of liberation in the yogic system the knower is 'seated in their own true nature', which is the 'proper basis of intelligence' (*Y.S*, IV:34). For the intellect to be a 'well-cut jewel' in its precision and clarity the knower must be seated in and move from their true nature (*Y.S,* I:41). The alternative, to be 'dislocated' from one's self or to have distorted vision, is too look out from some articulable and externalised position. Identifying and assuming a position outside of one's self distorts intellectual activity because that position inevitably carries its own criteria and value judgments that condition and distort the functioning of intelligence. The goal is to move from self-knowing which by its nature assumes no value outside of itself that could create the criteria and conditions that would distort its knowing.

The pre-comparative assumption in existing comparative literature between Plato and Patanjali

My argument for the existence of a shared assumption in the comparative literature comparing Plato and Patanjali rests mostly on the account of comparison explored above. The force of the argument is that the very act of comparison involves the hypothesis of comparability. By being comparative, the literature comparing Plato and Patanjali shares in in this idea. Over and above this, in the literature a further assumption is made. Plato and Patanjali are assumed comparable with respect to what is alluded to as a shared and essentially soteriological orientation. Below I identify this assumption in the relevant literature.

Both Plato and Patanjali are deeply influential figures who constructed systems that have exercised a persistent and deep influence on humanities' thought about itself. As such we find passing reference in a number of places to the idea that there may be a significant connection to be made between them, that they are fundamentally relevant to each other. The fact that a fundamental connection between them is readily assumed speaks to the ease with which we deem them comparable. I am in part investigating why we readily make this assumption. The

papers I discuss below however all make the comparison their specific focus and so I focus exclusively on them.

'The Shape of Ancient Thought' Mc Evilley (2002).[24]

In his comparative study of ancient Greek and Indian philosophies, Mc Evilley (2002) makes a number of direct comparisons between Plato and Patanjali, as we well other sources of yogic philosophy. Like with many of the accounts I will be mentioning in this second section of the chapter there is a definite trend of utilising the affinity of Platonic philosophy with yogic philosophy in order to free up our modern scholarly thinking about Plato. Such thinking is charged with significantly 'taming' Plato or attempting to 'button him down' in order to make him more like us.[25] Mostly this has to do with the nature of the higher or special knowledge that is often thought to be uncomfortably mystical or even ecstatic for modern academic philosophical sensibilities.[26] Both figures were perhaps more similar to each other than either are to us in a modern context. Scholarly consideration of the yogic side however is more comfortable with the less tamed dimension of yogic thought and practice. An example of this general trend can be seen in Gold's (1996) *Plato in the Light of Yoga* where the light of yoga is used to re-emphasise a theme that modern scholarship on Plato tends to ignore or under-acknowledge, in this instance its soteriological dimension.[27]

Of all the existent comparative attempts made between the two Mc Evilley's (2002) study perhaps makes the most numerous parallels. The study is a great gift to an emerging literature that is making the connection between the two their special interest.

Chapter 6 of his work starts by brining attention to a common and instructive tension in comparisons between East and West. The difference between a pure and autonomous philosophy and philosophy that serves some further goal like liberation.[28] On the pure/autonomous view philosophy is only truly done when done for its own sake, for no other end or further goal but itself. Mc Evilley (2002) locates the originator of this view as Aristotle. We will see how the reading of Plato pursued here is of a similar nature. That is, Platonic inquiry is only done properly when done for its own sake. When not pursued for the sake of some other goal like perhaps the ultimate goal we want to read in to Plato, liberation. This is

[24] Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparitive Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002).
[25] McEvilley. p.186.
[26] McEvilley. p.186-7.
[27] Jeffrey Gold, "Plato in the Light of Yoga," *Philosophy East and West* 46, no. 1 (1996): 17–32.
[28] McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparitive Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*. p.177.

its internal and unique value that as an activity inquiry is itself complete and serves no other end. If philosophy were to have a goal, or was pursued with a goal in mind, then the activity would serve and so be shaped by the idea that we have of what that goal is. Its value would not be intrinsic to it but located in the goal. The trope from the other side is that philosophy is only valuable or meaningful if it serves some greater end like liberation. Interestingly, Mc Evilley (2002) puts Plato in the camp of the philosophy orientated toward liberation. From this perspective, philosophy done for its own sake is shallow and useless.

I suggest that both Plato and Patanjali significantly muddy such a quick and clear delineation of camps. Part of the brilliance of both their systems has to do with how the core means or activities relate to and in some sense are their ends. The relationship between means and ends that we find in both we will say for now is non-standard and not so easy to sort out in any particular direction. We stand to benefit from not camping either on either side too quickly. Platonic inquiry for instance is ultimately inquiry into the good. In a sense then it serves the good. However, we harm ourselves in our ability to inquire precisely by assuming we know what the good is for then we are not inquiring into it but pursuing our idea of what the good is. Pursuit of the idea requires of course that we assume what it is first and so limit our inquiry by that assumption. Our inquiry cannot be framed or directed by pre-conceived knowledge because if it is it is no longer open and free. Yet, it still carries the assumption that it is toward the good that our activity is best oriented. So, the life of inquiry promoted by Plato was in a sense for its own sake and free. And yet at the same time oriented by the good and so externalised in some way. On the other hand Patanjali's system, and yoga in general, is more obviously or at least explicitly liberation oriented. The *Yoga Sutras* are the description of a technique that casts liberation, the realisation of *purusa*, as its goal.[29] In this way it seems to be neatly orientated toward a goal greater than it, some further end. However, we notice that the nature of its central activity and so we would assume its means, meditation, is itself something that is only pursued or done correctly when done for its own sake, as an end in itself. This produces the peculiar situation where the apparent end of the yogic system, *samadhi* which is highest state of meditation, later becomes the means toward a more ultimate end, though this end cannot be effected directly.[30] This confusing dynamic between the ends and the means of both Plato and Patanjali's systems is at the crux of this research, something that we will return to from the perspective of both contexts.

[29] McEvilley. p.179.
[30] We pick this argument up again in Chapter 4 with the help of Rukmani (1996) and Watson (1982).

For now we note that it is Mc Evilley's (2002) casting of Platonic philosophy as essentially soteriological in nature that ultimately justifies him comparing it with yoga in general and with Patanjali's yoga specifically. This is the *tertium,* the guiding and pre-comparative assumption that justifies his comparative efforts. This, or a form of this basic assumption is what I claim is shared by the other comparative projects.

Otherwise, the other striking connections Mc Evilley (2002) draws out are worth noting in helping us frame our comparison of the two and the different directions that are taken by other comparative projects. In general the connections have to do with affinity in life style, which serves the necessary intellectual activities of both, the nature of these intellectual activities and the kind of knowledge that they can be said to arrive at or cultivate.

There is a mutual requirement for 'withdrawal from the senses' in both Plato and Patanjali for the sake of undistracted intellectual activity.[31] The process of bringing the soul to concentrate on itself by itself. Interestingly, Descartes expresses the same impulse in his *Meditations* though he is charged by Mc Evilley (2002) as sullying his meditations with discursive thought and so Descarte's 'reasoning with himself' is framed as not achieving the heights of Platonic and Yogic inquiry in that these two become non-discursive.[32] Mc Evilley (2002) asks us to consider the special nature of the higher knowledge in Plato. Something less like discursive or rational thinking and more like 'ecstatic', trance-like and mystical experience.[33] The nature of this special knowledge is the place where modern scholarship is taken as taming Plato though it's special and 'yogic' or *samadhi* like nature is something undeniable for Mc Evilley (2002) who points to central passages in numerous Platonic dialogues to make his case.[34] The chief distinction in the kinds of knowledge alluded to is that the higher kind is of what purely is and does not change whereas the lower knowledge is of what changes, that which comes in and out of being. So rather than knowledge ending or being perfected in a mathematical type reasoning Mc Evilley (2002) finds an account in Platonic thought of knowledge reaching to something higher, less articulable but more knowable.

The significance of much of this perhaps cannot be brought out fully in the short references and allusions I am making. It goes only to indicate and nuance the place in which Mc Evilley's (2002) seeing of sameness between the two intensifies. There is a special knowledge that both

[31] McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparitive Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*. p.179.
[32] McEvilley. p.180.
[33] McEvilley. p.186-7.
[34] McEvilley. p.186.

Plato and Patanjali seem to direct us to and in doing so hope to liberate us. Approaching it requires the re-adjustment and re-organisation of one's life and the qualities and dispositions that make it up.[35] We must order ourselves and our lives, learn to withdraw intelligence from sensory experience, and 'concentrate the soul on itself by itself' if we are to attain such knowledge. The systems inform the shape of our lives by bringing it to centre on an activity that is itself complete, that serves or is not aimed at something other than itself. And yet, there is the assumption that even this still in some peculiar or non-obvious way 'serves' the ultimate goal of liberation. We stand to determine whether this is just contradictory thinking or whether there is something else at play.

'Plato and Yoga' Bussanich (2016).[36]

In Bussanich's (2016) *Plato and Yoga* the connection made between the two serves to illustrate the importance of practices of inwardness and tranquillity to the life of the platonic philosopher. Bussanich (2016) makes this claim by demonstrating affinities between the Platonic philosophical lifestyle and South Asian meditative praxis (predominantly the yoga of Patanjali's *Sutras*).[37] Acknowledgement of or engagement in these practices is something Bussanich (2016) considers to be lacking in current Platonic scholarship.[38] He starts the paper by stating that Plato and various South Asian traditions espouse the same soteriological goals as well as sharing striking similarities in the methods they propose for attaining them.[39] In his own words.

> Platonists and Indian yogis embrace a way of life that integrates cognitive and affective aspects of human nature on a path that eliminates ignorance and suffering through the purification and simplification of consciousness.[40]

The pre-comparative assumption lies more in his starting point which he leaves largely untouched. His comparison assumes a shared end between Platonic philosophers and yogis. It is ultimately some conception of a shared goal, again in this instance it is a soteriological one. It is spoken here as 'the elimination of ignorance and suffering'. The ways of life of the yogi and the Platonic philosopher are embraced so that this end might be achieved, so that

[35] McEvilley. p.182.
[36] John Bussanich, "Plato and Yoga," in *Universe and Inner Self in Early Indian and Early Greek Thought*, ed. Richard Seaford (Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
[37] Bussanich. p.88.
[38] Bussanich. p.96.
[39] Bussanich. p.88.
[40] Bussanich. p.87.

consciousness might be purified and simplified. Bussanich (2016) in his work hopes primarily to bring our attention to the affinities and similarities in the ways of life that practitioners in these traditions embrace. Although it is not at the forefront of this work, it is this idea of basic sameness in orientation that allows us to see the similarity in the ways of life and practice. That aspects of the Platonic philosopher's lifestyle share affinities or similarities with south Asian meditative praxis is a point of connection whose relevance derives from the idea that those lifestyles are such because they are orientated around what they hope to ultimately achieve.

'Plato in the Light of Yoga' Gold (1996).[41]

Gold's (1996) *Plato in the Light of Yoga* is in a similar spirit to Bussanich's (2016) more recent *Plato and Yoga*. In his paper Gold (1996) seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of interpreting Plato through the lens of or in the light of yoga philosophy.[42] The need comes in part from his sense that certain themes in Plato are ignored or don't receive due attention from Platonic scholars. In his own words

> One of the major themes in the *Phaedo* that receives little attention from scholars is the theme of liberation. Interpreters of Patanjali are far more likely to emphasize the concept of liberation than interpreters of Plato. That liberation is a prominent theme in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra* is acknowledged by scholars of Yoga. In contrast, Plato's attention to the theme of liberation in the *Phaedo* has received considerably less attention from Plato scholars. I shall attempt to fill that lacuna by discussing the role of liberation in Plato's philosophy, paying special attention to the *Phaedo*. If we see liberation as a central theme in that dialogue, other passages, often neglected and overlooked by scholars (e.g., the geo-graphical section mentioned above), begin to make more sense in the context of the *Phaedo*.[43]

The light of yoga helps the Platonic theme of liberation stand out. In this way Gold (1996) is using Patanjali and yogic philosophy as a lens or light that will help us see more clearly the central theme of liberation in Plato. Central to this endeavour is this idea of a shared orientation toward liberation. In this instance, the light of yoga with its emphasis on this end helps us see this neglected theme/orientation in Plato. If there was not the assumption of this underlying

[41] Jeffrey Gold, "Plato in the Light of Yoga."
[42] Jeffrey Gold. p.17.
[43] Jeffrey Gold. 23, The geographical section he is referring to is in the myth of the true earth that comes towards the end of the Phaedo. Socrates paints a picture of various hollows in the earth.

sameness Patanjali would be irrelevant to Plato and the comparison would not illuminate anything about Plato for us.

'Wisdom and Method: Yoga in the Platonic Dialogues' Saltzman (2005).[44]

In *Wisdom and Method: Yoga in the Platonic Dialogues* Saltzman (2005) identifies yoga as a technique of liberation of which there are four kinds (*jnana*: the seeking of knowledge as higher wisdom, *karma*: action, the purifying of behaviour, *bhakti*: devotion through love, and *raja*: the' kingly mystery of meditation') that she argues are all present in the Platonic dialogues. The main authorities for yoga here are the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Again, the fundamental connection between the disciplines is that they are methods of liberation. It is by Saltzman's (2005) reading of Plato as sharing this goal of liberation that she is able to read the different forms of yoga into the different Platonic dialogues.[45]

'Avidya I Doxa: Reciprocal illumination of Plato and Patanjali' Stevanovic and Teodorski (2016).[46]

In this study the authors indicate they are not particularly interested in claims of interconnectedness but are comparing for the sake of 'reciprocal illumination' or contrast. We saw in a previous section how their conclusion, saying Patanjali was more successful at releasing us from self-contained cognitions than Plato, involves them in the idea of relevance between the projects and thought of the two thinkers.

'Maharishi, Plato and the TM-Siddhi Programme on the Innate Structure of Consciousness' Shear (1981).[47]

> The Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI) has been developed by Maharishi as an empirical discipline to study the various aspects of consciousness, both as it exists in itself and as it unfolds in thought and action. Of particular interest to philosophy is its claim that there exists a systematic technology (embodied in the techniques of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program) to explore the nature of the mind from its surface activity to its inner source, a technology which allows us, independently of all prior belief and expectation, first to discover and then to corroborate intersubjectively the

[44] Judy Salztman, "Wisdom and Method: Yoga in the Platonic Dialogues," in *Practice and Theory of Yoga; Essays in Honour of Gerald Larson* (BRILL, 2005).
[45] A warm thank you to Dr Saltzman for given me access to this book chapter.
[46] Teodorski and Stevanović, "Avidya I Doxa : Reciprocal Illumination of Plato and Patanjali."
[47] Jonathan Shear, "Maharishi, Plato and the TM-Sidhi Program on Innate Structures of Consciousness," *Metaphilosophy* 12, no. 1 (1981): 72–84.

> existence of specific states, structures, and processes of consciousness. If this claim is true SCI offers philosophy the prospect of being able to evaluate major philosophical questions from an expanded base of empirical data.[48]

The meditative techniques Shear (1981) is speaking about were developed by Maharishi Yogi with the help of the 'pole-star' sutra of the *Yoga Sutras*.[49] Shear (1981) establishes that Plato's myths like the myth of *Er* at the end of the *Republic* are a kind of attempt to explain or describe form(s). Specifically the structure of a whorl[50] that Plato has Socrates describe in much detail in the myth of *Er* (*Rep*, 616-617). Shears (1981) proposal, that for him is empirically verifiable, is that this structure is experience-able through the 'pole-star' meditative technique.

This is an interesting proposal. One that warranted this qualification by the editor of the journal it was published in.

> (Editor's note: This is a very unusual article. It was read at a number major universities in the United States (Dartmouth, Johns Hopkin Emory University, and so on) where it was given a mixed, but generally positive, reception. Some considered it a major breakthrough in Platonic scholarship, others a most unusual proposal, still others thought it far-fetched, though well done. I leave it to the reader to decide for himself.)[51]

Such a qualification is similar to the self-qualification that Gold (1996) prefaces his yogic-physiology informed interpretation of the geographical description in the myth of the new earth in the *Phaedo*.[52] This interpretation has much fruit to bare; its ability to explain an otherwise peculiar geographical description that has caused confusion amongst scholars, how it links to teachings of *Tantra*, *Kundalini* and the human energetic system and finally the suggestion that there exist meditative techniques whereby we might experience the forms for ourselves as Shear (1989) suggests. All this is perhaps interesting and fruitful enough to warrant further scholarly consideration. Such proposals significantly 'un-tame' our scholarly thinking about Plato and so seem to warrant the quoted editorial note and the self-qualification of Gold (1996). The nature of the connection being moved toward, that centres on the individual as the

[48] Shear. p.72.
[49] Shear. p.74.
[50] An umbrella like geometric structure.
[51] Shear, "Maharishi, Plato and the TM-Sidhi Program on Innate Structures of Consciousness." p.72.
[52] Jeffrey Gold, "Plato in the Light of Yoga." p.24.

connecting term, is fruitful and important work and something echoed in the self-inquiry emphasis of this research.

In terms of the pre-comparative assumption, Shear (1989) is explicit in suggesting meditative techniques exist whereby one might experience the forms of Plato. As these structures are taken to be innate to consciousness both Platonic inquiry and the yogic meditative techniques are understood as the means by which we realise them. The assumption of sameness is explicit and something he casts the technique as being able to help us justify.

CHAPTER 2; Two methods for justifying the pre-comparative assumption and the hypothesis of comparability.

We have encountered something about the comparative act; that it involves one at minimum in the hypothesis of comparability. In comparing we presuppose a ground of underlying sameness and unity to what is compared. Such a presupposition makes possible the act of comparison. In the existent literature comparing Plato and Patanjali, the two are taken not only to be comparable but to be fundamentally relevant to each other in terms of their shared and basically soteriological orientation. In this instance the hypothesis takes on the further content or assumption of liberation which is assumed to be the common ground between the two thinkers. I now look to how we might come to justify this assumption and hypothesis that is prior to it through two methods.

The first method proves unsatisfactory because it involves something like assuming the very principle or idea one wants to justify. A version of starting from the ground you want to arrive at. I go into this below. The second and preferred method of justification is preferable over and above the dissatisfaction with the first. It proves more helpful in coming to justify the original hypothesis of comparability, a problem that weds the comparative project with that of self-inquiry and self-knowing. Since the comparison inevitably moves from one's self it is in self-knowing that we find the justificatory ground for the comparative act. The question is then whether or how we might come to know ourselves, hence the link with self-inquiry and the reason for centralising the problem of knowing the knower in the second method.

Method 1; 'The Good and Purusa are One and the Same'… and why it may be unsatisfactory

If we were to try to get a grip on this pre-comparative assumption of sameness between Plato and Patanjali, to try to give it some or the other content other than 'liberation' so that we might

speak about it effectively, we would be pressed to name and describe the ultimate ends/goals of the yogic and Platonic systems. Negatively, we could say freedom from ignorance and bondage. Positively, we would need to account for the Ideas of the good and *purusa* for it is in the realisation of these Ideas that one finds liberation and the end of ignorance. The assumption of a shared soteriological orientation can then be formulated as; *the good and purusa are one and the same*.

This is a statement or formalisation of an assumption that is in the background of the existent comparative literature, mostly spoken about or alluded to as liberation or a shared soteriological orientation. The statement is an attempt to give a content to the soteriological end we assume they share. Stated in this way this assumption seems more like a conclusion, based on other more fundamental or prior premises. The discursive argument that would bring us to this conclusion is as follows.

1. The Good is One
2. Purusa is One
3. Each 'instance' of One is one and the same with every other 'instance', for there can only be one One.

Therefore; the good and *purusa* are one and the same.

It is a successful discursive argument. However, we have not arrived anywhere helpful. I have just pushed the problem. The work to be done here would seem to be to show that the good is One and then that *purusa* is One. That is, to justify the premises. This would fall short or descend into an unhelpful circularity as my answer to what One is would inevitably be the good or *purusa.* This is why it is unsatisfactory; we have got nowhere in terms of what the One is, other than that both Plato and Patanjali *seem* to take it as the reality the good and *purusa* point to.

Both Plato and Patanjali, in the *Republic* and the *Yoga Sutras* seem more interested in how we relate to and possibly realise their core Ideas than they are with speculating about and trying to describe what they are in themselves. The most we seem to get from Plato are analogies and allegories through the character Socrates. Patanjali matter of factly describes the state as 'all-oneness' but goes no further in his description. This might be because something that is simply one is too simple to describe. How or why should we think reality to be so? What other choice but the authority of these authors, these systems and our own assumption do we have for

accepting the reality of this core Idea, the Idea that we assume justifies our comparison between the two?

To follow this method towards a justification would be in essence to start from that which you hope to arrive at and justify. This is the peculiar nature of seeking to arrive at the ground that one already depends on. What would be more fruitful would be to bring out more why it is or how it is that we already depend on and presuppose this ground. To do so we look to the problem of knowing the knower, a problem that helps us understand better our relationship to the presupposed unity that makes possible the very act of comparison. The problem of knowing the knower, if we can make sense of its resolution with the help of Plato and Patanjali, will help us arrive at our beginning, though this time anew.

Method 2; centralising the problem of knowing the knower

This problem most clearly defines the general tension that exists between means and ends in both the Platonic and yogic systems. If we cannot makes sense of how means meet end, of how we achieve what we assume to be the ultimate goal of each systems, then we are unjustified in thinking that it is sameness in ultimate goal that justifies our comparison between them.

As we have two senses of self-inquiry there are correspondingly two perspectives on the core problem that faces it.

General statement of the problem and its apparent but incomplete solution.

> "By what means can one know the knower?" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.4.13).[53]

As we saw in the introduction how we approach the problem of 'knowing the knower' hinges on the kind of knowing that we expect self-knowing to be. Usually, we understand and speak about knowledge *discursively*. That is, knowing happens between a knower and a known, the *knower knows* the *known*. When turned toward the self we are then in the situation of looking for what's looking and expecting to find something. Which of course, in the first sense of self-inquiry as the examination of our lives, we do. We come to insight into what we value and what ideas shape our understanding and activity. These formative values and ideas, though we seem to hold them non-discursively prior to examination can by means of such inquiry become the object of our knowing, become discursive. This discernment is what begins to loosen their hold on us and it is how we distance ourselves from them and their influence. Consequently, self-inquiry in this first sense is about distilling what we are apart from all this. This involves

[53] Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (New York: North Point Press, 2007). p.154.

coming to know in a discursive and objective manner what one's deeply held commitments and values, the axiomatic ideas of one's understanding, are. Self-inquiry in the second sense is interested not in what can be distilled from us but in what remains, what cannot be separated from ourselves, the true nature of the knower. The problem of knowing the knower occurs in both senses. What frustrates our endeavours in the second sense is carrying the expectation developed by the first sense for a discursive object of knowledge. The knower itself will never become the object of its own knowing for it will always be that which knows. Self-knowing must then be the undistorted and unmediated 'knowing of knowing'. This is at least a snapshot of what the situation seems to be.

> For the same is both to know and to be.
>
> (*Parmenides*,fragment B 3)[54]

This fragment attributed to *Parmenides* captures the idea of the 'unity of knowing and being'. It is in this idea that we find a non-discursive mode of knowing. This other higher mode, *nous,* occurs somewhere like the convergence of the ontological and the epistemic. So, rather than an object of knowledge that might be grasped by the knower, *nous* is a '*knowing state of being'*. The question then becomes *how* we cultivate this state, how we become knowable. It is for these reasons that the problem of knowing one's self, self-inquiry, was a *life-shaping* problem for Plato and Patanjali. What each offer is a lived praxis concerned with the cultivation and transformation of the individual into a knower. The centre of which in both cases is an activity that is itself complete.

If we 'de-essentialise' this idea of the unity of knowing and being we find in it a description of a more familiar state of affairs that helps us appreciate part of our predicament. Ideas are not just those articulable objects that we can manipulate discursively, rather, in their more complete forms they are the principles that inform our very being in the world such that we might say to know is to be. What we know, our understanding, is in a sense inextricable from our being. This is an attempt to get at, or at least point to, the pre-reflective and pre-discursive realm where we hold those convictions and ideas that are most influential in terms of our activity in the world. In our ignorance of our true nature this pre-discursive though epistemic structure of our being informs who or what we are and what we takes ourselves to be. The less substantial, the more contradictory, these ideas that one holds pre-discursively are the less knowable one

[54] Translated by Laurence Bloom in, *The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form* (Lexington Books, 2017). p.1.

become to themselves. One holds contradicting values and convictions in one's being such that they become or are indistinguishable from one's self meaning one's self becomes in a sense contradictory, contradiction is carried in one's being.

The problem is that I think I know what I don't know. Progress is coming to know that I do not know what I thought I knew. This perplexing result has the effect of loosening the conviction with which I held to the false knowledge that had previously informed my activity and being. The falseness derives from the contradictory nature of these ideas and the being they inform, as well as from the manner in which they were taken to be indiscernible from one's self, from what one is. For if they are discernible they are not essential to one's self but are something that can be apprehended by one's self.

Socrates requires of his interlocutors only that they say what they believe and that they remain consistent with what they have said.[55] He then examines these commitments and derives their negation from the answerers own beliefs/commitments.[56] The soul is turned by means of contradiction (*Rep,* 521c). The erosion of these commitments through refutation and the exposure of contradiction is not achieved by any knowledge Socrates brings to the table for his only conviction is that he knows nothing. It is from the existence of contradiction in the interlocutor that the possibility for the perplexing result of *aporia* is possible. That most stable commitment that Socrates seems to find, or at least the one I would like to highlight here, is the pursuit of and the acting for the sake of the good. It is therefore by refining our idea of the good that we come to see how it contradicts with our activity. Put another way, we inevitably locate value somewhere. Since we do not know what is most valuable an ideal in this regard helps us to recognise by contrast the value attributions and judgements that we have inevitably and mistakenly made. Again, it is these value attributions and judgements that inform our lives and activities.

The positive result the process of refutation in general is that one has the opportunity to rid their being of contradictory commitments and ideas. That which is contradictory is less knowable than that which is not. The interlocutor then, with Socrates help, undoes himself or herself. The less contradicting elements, values, convictions that I hold in my being the less

[55] Gregory Vlastos, "Elenchus and Mathematics : A Turning-Point in Plato ' s Philosophical Development," *The American Journal of Philology* 109, no. 3 (1988): 362–96. p.366.
[56] Vlastos. p.366.

contradictory my being is and so the more knowable I am to myself. In the first sense of self-inquiry, I must examine and become knowable to myself in this way.

This idea of '*degrees of reality*' (*Rep*. 475a-480a) where something or someone can be to more or less of a degree helps us understand how we might be more or less knowable to ourselves depending on our state of being and the state of our knowing. The degree to which something *is* the extent to which that thing can be known, things are 'known' to the extent that they *are. Being itself* is then the most knowable thing because it *is* most fully. If I have not identified myself with anything but my being then I have identified myself with what is most knowable about me. However, my being only becomes knowable when it is not informed by unexamined ideas. So, it is less an identification with being than it is a un-identifying with those ideas that inform my being. The opposite of being is non-being which is the least knowable thing because it *is not*. The confusing middle that we have just explored by 'de-essentialising' the unity of knowing and being is in Platonic philosophy, *becoming*. *Becoming* is where things are "rolling around as intermediates between what is not and what purely is" (*Rep,* 479c5-9).[57] This, it seems is where we are as embodied beings. The soul that finds itself in the state of becoming, and so in a state of relative ignorance, is the soul that the inquiry of the *Republic* pays most attention to (*Rep.* 611b-612a). Patanjali's technique of liberation detailed in the *Yoga Sutras* is similarly addressed to the soul or individual that is in a state of ignorance. As such, the first sense of self-inquiry is taken to be crucial to the turning and lifting of the individual from this initial and assumed harmed state.

The unity of knowing and being only becomes essentially true in the perfection of each. We would benefit however, from not 'essentialising' our thinking about this idea too quickly as it has helped us capture a peculiar fact about our psychology and the deep interconnection between our epistemic and ontological states. Nonetheless, in its ultimate and perhaps only or true form the unity of knowing and being gives us the standard of perfection in the spheres of both knowing and being such that they are only complete when they come together. The name for this indivisible coming together is *nous. Nous* is the knowing 'of' being, the knowing of what purely is. It is the perfection of knowledge because it is knowledge of the most knowable thing. More accurately, it is not knowledge 'of' anything for knowing in this sense *is* being. Being alternatively is in its innermost nature knowable, or its nature is *knowing*. In the ultimate

[57] Bloom, *The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form*. p.105.

or second sense of self-inquiry this is the mode of knowing that unmediated self-knowing would seem to be interested in.

As we have seen we find a near equivalent of the *noetic* 'to know is to be' in the *samadhi* of yogic philosophy. *Samadhi* is the culmination of the yogic meditative practice and the subject of the first book of the *Yoga Sutras. Samadhi* is translated as 'together-put', 'put-together', 'collect together'. It is the state of *recollection* or absorption. What is collected together with itself in the state of *samadhi* is the knower and the known. It is the knower coming to recollect itself in what is knowable of what is known. How *samadhi* arises and what it is is described in the following sutra;

> Upon exercising a complete purity of recollection (achieved through "stoppage" [restraint/cessation][58]), there arises a non-speculative state, which is as if void of subjectivity and illuminated by the meaning only (*Y.S,* I:43).[59]

The three-fold succession of states that constitutes the full 'movement' of yogic meditation are as follows. First, there is the developed capacity for 'attentiveness'[60] where the mind is restricted and held on a particular field of interest (*Y.S,* III:1). 'Contemplation'[61] is then the 'single-threadedness' of an attention so held (*Y.S*, III:2). Lastly, 'collectedness/active recollection' or *samadhi*

> … is such contemplation when illuminated by nothing but the directly perceived meaning and as if void of subjectivity (*Y.S,* III.3).

Taken as a whole this three-fold succession of states is called 'full recollection'. The culmination of this succession is 'active re-collection'. In this state one's awareness, 'as if void of subjectivity', is illuminated by nothing other than the 'directly perceived meaning'. That is, the discursively distinct knower and the thing known collapse into a *seamless knowing*. What is knowable in the object meditated on becomes knowable to itself as the 'directly perceived meaning'. Being, in the state of *samadh*i, is re-collected with itself. Prior to this, it is apart from or other than itself. This ability to discern, divide and separate is precisely what makes it possible to discern and separate things that were previously enmeshed in our being but not

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[58] [*Square brackets are my own inclusions from here on out.* I use them to offer translations of new or unfamiliar terminology].
"Stoppage" or '*nirodha'* is the fundamental yogic practice of 'checking' ones mental involvements with the intention of 'stopping' the mind in some settled state.
[59] J.H.M Whiteman, *Aphorisms on Spiritual Method* (Colin Smythe Limited, 1993). p.141.
[60] *dharana*
[61] *dhyana*

essential to it. For by coming to recollect something of my true nature I am able to discern what is not essential to my being as that is what falls away in order to make such recollection possible.

The insight into the nature of attention that we can draw from the sates of yogic meditation is very instructive. Attention is brought to rest or held on a particular field of interest, when unbroken the quality of the held attention becomes contemplative, in contemplation there is still thing contemplated and contemplator though the connection is single threaded. It is the next transition that is crucial. This then slips into an absorption or recollection where the distinction collapses, *knower becomes known* in a seamless state of *knowing*. One might think of it as having penetrated the inmost nature of the object meditated on. However, the peculiar insight is that the inmost nature, the most knowable nature of the thing known, is shared by or simply is that same nature in the knower, their shared being. The being of the object of meditation is the being of the meditator and is used by the meditator to re-collect themselves. The inmost nature of what is seen should be sought out for the purpose of awakening one's own intelligible being (*Y.S.* II:21).

We are now in a position to get confused again by the nature of ignorance. My ignorance, specifically from the yogic perspective, has to do with what I have taken myself to be. The ignorance is tied up with my starting point. So, recollection would seem not to sink further than that understanding. If the understanding itself is a miss-understanding or miss-identification then this is what is recollected. This is the pre-discursive nature of the principles and values that one most deeply holds. This is not a small problem for I am likely to perpetuate a degree of ignorance, or mediation of my true nature, if I have not before that time fully recollected its reality. If I do not know my true nature before I know it I cannot come to know it.

These more deeply held convictions are such that they only really become apparent when recollected and so it is only in this state of recollection that it becomes possible to discern the convictions or ideas as being other than one's self. The fact of discernment then disrupts the recollection. The idea of how ignorance is eventually rooted out is that the more that one familiarises one's self with the state of *knowing-being* what is not essential to it will eventually become apparent as it does not have the permanence of what one is apart from it.

Nonetheless, in the absorption and recollection of the yogi we find a model of knowing that is 'non-discursive' and that seems to be of the same nature as the 'to know is to be' of *nous*. We were led to considering these alternative modes of knowing by the central problem of self-

inquiry, knowing the knower, specifically with how it relates to the first sense of self-inquiry. Initially these different modes of knowing got us away from the expectation for a discursive knowledge of ourselves. As such these non-discursive modes of knowing seem to provide a kind of solution to the problem from the perspective of the first sense of self-inquiry in that we do away with the expectation of finding something when we are looking for what is looking and we settle in the state of simply looking. Free of this expectation for a discursive account we familiarise ourselves with this state of *knowing-being,* the distilled product of our examination such that all that remains is this absorption in knowing. This seems to settle the problem of looking for what's looking and expecting to find something but there are two ways in which we might consider it to complicate matters. The first complication that we have explored above has to do with the peculiar nature of ignorance. It has to do with how we are meant to know what we cannot know if we don't already know it. That is, the peculiarity of the position of ignorance. If we concede to ignorance we have no way of knowing when we have absolutely distilled the self from everything that it is not for we only have the ground that we stand on as our reference point. How we are to become aware of our ignorance if our ignorance is what conceals our ability to become aware of it? This would be answered in part by what we would assume is a self-evident quality of self-knowing. Though again, that our ignorance appears self-evident is precisely why we don't usually question it.

The second complication that we have yet to discuss is in trying to understand the relation of the states of *samadhi* and *nous* to the ideas of *purusa* and the good. For in both systems we have the idea that these Ideas are something over and above the states of perfected, non-discursive and seamless knowing. It is in the philosopher and the yogis relation to the Ideas of the good and *purusa* that we see the purest form of the problem of knowing the knower. The problem as it applies to the second sense of self-inquiry. The fact of these Ideas suggests that there is a perspective or vantage point from which we can come to 'know' even the perfected knowing. For this reason, our focus on self-inquiry requires that we confront these Ideas and our relation to them. For if we can make sense of their reality we would seem to have found the ground of a true and unmediated self-knowing.

An introductory look at the Ideas

In the *Republic* Socrates is notoriously coy about making any definite pronouncement about what the good is exactly. The form or the idea of the good is both 'the most important thing to learn about' and something that 'we [can] have no adequate knowledge of' (*Rep*, 505a). Socrates supplies a wealth of images, analogies and allegories to help us though he never says

what it is exactly for he seems to think it unjust to talk about what one does not know as though one knew it (*Rep*. 506c).

Our inability to grasp the good has to do with its 'non-local positioning'. It precedes and enables or gives the power to know to the knower and is the know-ability of the thing known (*Rep*. 508e). The good precedes, is prior to the knower, and so cannot be grasped by the knower by virtue of where the knower 'moves' from. This is true especially for the discursive knower who depends on the distinction between knower and known. But it also seems true for the noetic knowing whose knowing is prior to this distinction.

Contrast our inability to adequately grasp just what the good is with Bryant's (2007) reflections on the mind's attempts to grasp *purusa.*

> Obviously, the mind cannot know *puruṣa* in its own true nature, as *Śaṅkara* points out, since it is inanimate and *puruṣa* is more subtle than the mind. Things can grasp or perceive only things grosser than themselves: the senses can grasp only the sense objects, but not vice versa; the mind can perceive the senses, but not vice versa; and the *puruṣa* can perceive the mind, but not vice versa. This is a favourite trope of the *Upaniṣads*: "That which one cannot grasp with one's mind [ātman/Brahman], by which, they say, the mind is grasped" (*Kena* I.5).[62]

The mind or the knower cannot grasp what precedes it. That which one cannot grasp with one's mind' but that 'by which the mind is grasped'. The good and *purusa* precede or underlie both the mind and what the mind is able to grasp. The only place from which mind could be grasped/known is then from this ultimate Idea. What are we to make of these Ideas? They give an answer to the means by which the knower is ultimately known. However, they are in a sense defined by our inability to grasp them. Socrates's sun analogy helps us see this same problem.

> [the sun] is what I called the offspring of the good, which the good begot as its analogue. What the latter is in the intelligible realm in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the former is in the visible realm in relation to sight and visible things (*Rep*, 508c).

The good is the source of the intelligibility of the known and the power of intelligence of the knower though it would not be right to consider it either. It reserves a place of yet higher

[62] Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. p,154.

honour. The point is that even that most perfected ‘knowing of being’ is subordinated by the good. For the good is to the knower and the things known as the sun/light is to sight and things seen. It is not them but without it the would not be. Sight can only see what is see-able by virtue of the medium of light. Though the sun is not light but its source. The knower can know the known by their shared intelligibility/being. The good is not that intelligibility/being but its source.

So, bringing one’s self to *samadhi* or *nous* is a step closer but not the goal itself. Since these states and the activities that foster them, inquiry and meditation, are by nature end-like or complete in themselves we are left with no direct recourse to the apprehension or realistion of these Ideas. And yet if we want to makes sense of the reality of these Ideas we must in some way consider these ends, *nous* and *samadhi,* also to be a kind of means. Otherwise, we are left with no recourse and so cannot solve the problem of knowing the knower as it is faced by the second sense of self-inquiry, the possibility of ultimate or unmediated self-knowing.

If we can’t make sense of how we actually realise or attain to either the good or *purusa* then we are unjustified in using them as the common object that justifies our comparison between Plato and Patanjali. So, for the sake of justifying comparison, but more so for the sake of our own unmediated self-knowing, we must determine how our self-inquiry relates to these Ideas.

CHAPTER 3: PLATO

In this chapter I account for the two senses of self-inquiry from the Platonic perspective with the help of the *Republic*. Roughly, these two senses and the relationship between them appear in the relationship between the divided soul of Book IV and the indivisible soul of Book X. The divided soul, constituted of discernible parts, is what we can hope to achieve justice for as justice is a right ordering and harmony (non-interference) between parts (*Rep,* 434a). The indivisible soul of Book X is the ‘object’ of nous. Of course, it is not a discursive or discernible object of knowledge like the divided soul. *Nous* is that seamless pre and non-discursive *knowing-being*.

In Book IV in order to divide the soul into its constitutive parts Plato has Socrates hypothesise the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) (*Rep*, 436b-c). This hypothesised principle and its relation to both the divided soul and the *noetic* is what centres the following considerations, as it is here that we can see the two modes of self-inquiry and the relation between them most clearly.

In the first sense of self-inquiry, there is the divided soul for which we can achieve justice and by achieving justice become *more* knowable to ourselves, as the state of justice is that state of mutual non-interference between parts. To be just is to carry less internal opposition and contradiction in one's being. To value justice is to value this state of being. Our concern, being interested in self-inquiry and self-knowing, is then in how we are to achieve or cultivate justice. Another way to frame this would be to ask, as Glaucon and Adiemantus do at the beginning of Book II, why we should hold justice as something valuable to have for itself (*Rep*, 360). This is the peculiar and in a sense impossible challenge put to Socrates at the beginning of Book II. Two extremes are brought out to highlight what is being asked; on the one side they want to know why justice is still more choice worthy even when one can merely appear just but not be just and still accrue all the worldly benefit for appearing so.[63] On the other extreme, it is asked why it would be better to hold to justice even if one appears completely unjust and suffers the reputation for seeming so. In short, thy want to know why justice is good for itself, they want Socrates to strengthen their existent but not complete conviction in the intrinsic value of justice.[64]

The dilemma here is the common thread running through this research. It is the dilemma of arriving at one's beginning, anew. From the perspective of value; justifying the intrinsic value of something by what it is good *for*, by what it can do for us, is to locate the value outside of the thing. It is important that Glaucon and Adiemantus don't deny the value of justice or that it is virtue, as Trasymachus does (*Rep*, 348). They only want their existent conviction in it strengthened. This is the dilemma faced by self-inquiry in the first sense, it requires at the outset a sense of its value. Though we might want to extend or externalise the value in terms of what self-inquiry or the cultivation of justice can do for us, like ground non-harmful activity or help us live well, we in the end want to affirm its intrinsic value and not need to appeal elsewhere for reason of its choice-worthiness. All this goes to say, like with the *noetic*, that the account or argument that brings us to the value of justice cannot be a usual discursive argument for with such an argument the truth or value of where one arrives, the conclusion, is derived from something prior or more true than it. We are interested here in the original value(s) or truth(s) from which others are derived.

More to the second sense of self-inquiry; we approach our relationship to the *noetic* through the account of the divided soul and establish its division; by hypothesising the PNC. Both the

[63] This situation is brought out in story of the ring of Gyges.
[64] Burnyeat, "The Truth of Tripartition." p.3.

account of the divided soul and the limit of our discursive reach that the PNC helps establish bring our attention to what precedes or underlies this act of division and the principle that governs it. We come to a kind of apprehension of the *noetic* by becoming aware that we presuppose it in our use of the PNC and in the division of the soul in Book IV.[65] Bloom's (2017) scholarship helps make this case; the PNC is used in the *Republic* to lead us 'toward' and provide a kind of justification for the *noetic*, for form. Once we have explored this we will then be in a positon to consider again the relation between the *noetic*, the idea of the good and the good itself.

> "lets certainly not imagine that in its truest nature a soul is the sort of thing that's filled with lots of variety, non-uniformity and difference within itself" (*Re*p, 611b13). That is, the soul as it is in its immortal, "true" state is simple or at least indivisible. It is only in association with the body and the desires that the soul becomes filled with difference and variety. It is thus only in its embodied state that the soul has any possibility of injustice- the mutual interference of its parts.[66]

The *Republic,* as with the *Sutras,* is addressing the soul in its embodied state. In the state characterised by ignorance of its true nature and in the state in which justice and injustice are possible for it.

Two accounts of the soul in the Republic and their relationship to PNC

Socrates divides the soul with the *hypothesised* principle of non-contradiction (*Rep*, 436b-c). As a hypothesis anything resulting from it is hypothetical or depends on it and so falls if it itself proves to be ungrounded or unjustifiable (*Rep*, 437a).[67] Therefore, the account of a divided soul, a soul for which justice is possible, is a hypothetical account. If we ever come to the point where we doubt the hypothesis that gives rise to it then this account falls along with the definition of justice as right ordering that we might want to apply to it. Or at least the truth of the division is contextualised as hypothetical. This moment in the text is crucial for a host of reasons. Burnyeat (2006) casts its importance as follows

> If the divided soul rests on hypothesising the Principle of Opposites [PNC], and the account of the virtues in Book IV rests on the divided soul, then the

[65] Bloom's (2017) scholarship makes this argument.
[66] Bloom, *The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form*. p.17.
[67] Bloom. xx

> proof that justice ensures happiness likewise rests on a hypothesis. Indeed, all the moral arguments of the *Republic* rest on hypothesis and the interlocutor's agreement. (So too does the further soul division, between reason and sense-perception, brought in for Book X's theory of art.)[68]

Burnyeat (2006) however does not hover too long on the implications of this moment. Rather he seeks to strengthen the account of the tripartite soul that we are given in the *Republic* with reasons of his own.[69] His rationale for doing so is he considers the arguments given for the souls division in the *Republic* to be weak.[70] The relative weakness of these arguments and the fact that Plato and Socrates bring our attention to the fact that these arguments are hypothetical can be read as a purposeful feature of the text. That is, they are designed to catch our attention and turn it toward an idea or mode of knowing that is hard to account for and justify in any usual sense. This difficulty again is owed to the usual direction of thought as moving from hypotheses as opposed to toward and possibly beyond them. Bloom (2017) spends a lot more time considering the significance and implications of this moment and in it he finds an account or argument for form, *nous*. It is not, and cannot be a usual discursive argument owed to the 'direction', it must travel to reach the idea that it is hoping to establish. The idea is presupposed in our very attempts to establish or reach it.

The use of the PNC and making explicit that it is hypothesised brings, at minimum, our attention to the role of hypothesis in our knowing. It is by hypotheses, or rather the relation to hypotheses, that we come to distinguish between the two types of knowledge (*Rep.* 510b3-8).[71]

> *Dianoia*, the lesser of two forms of knowledge, is based on or follows from hypotheses and, therefore, deals with less "real" entities; geometry and the other branches of mathematics are Socrates paradigmatic examples of this type of knowledge. *Nous*, on the other hand, is the stronger or higher form of knowledge. Such knowledge is not based on hypotheses and grasps the most real of entities: the forms themselves.[72]

Mathematics and specifically geometry are paradigmatic examples in the clarity they afford. Thought in geometry moves from it's hypotheses exploring the space or frame created by them.

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[68] Burnyeat, "The Truth of Tripartition." p.3
[69] Burnyeat. p.1-2.
[70] Burnyeat. p.68.
[71] Bloom, *The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form*. xx
[72] Bloom. xx

Using hypotheses as a beginning and pursuing the objects pointed to. This thinking is based on and moves from hypotheses, it is in or from the hypotheses that the truth of the rest of the system or movement of thought is derived and demonstrated. *Nous* has a different relationship to hypotheses. It is not based on them and so is able to 'grasp' what precedes them, or simply is what precedes them. In the argument pursued by Bloom (2017) the fact that it is brought to our attention that the PNC and the divided soul that the it helps establish are hypothetical prompts just this very asking into what precedes them. That which is found to precede them*, nous,* is necessarily presupposed by them.

> The argument for form [nous] arises both out of the division of the soul… and the self-conscious inadequacy of dianoetic reasoning. In both these cases form [nous] is necessitated not as the conclusion of an argument but rather as something that is being presupposed. We noticed in chapter 2 that some one underlying thing or unity of the soul was a necessary presupposition for even the opposite conclusion: that the soul is a plurality… We can see that the hidden assumption of an underlying unity is there even in just noting that *it* is a plurality: in identifying an *it*, a something, that is plural, we are identifying an overarching unity to the thing with multiple parts. That is, the application of the PNC to the soul, the very principle of division, shows the soul to be or have an underlying unity that is 'beyond' the principle, both in the sense of not being within the scope of and yet allowing for the application of the principle. This unity is the noetic unity of form.[73]

How do we arrive at the divided soul through the use of the PNC?

"Reason is set over the whole, it identifies unities in the world".[74] Reason is that faculty that can identify unities both composite and perhaps simple and by doing so it can determine or think about the relationship between what it identifies. The PNC appears in the *Republic* as follows

> It is clear that the same will not be willing to do or suffer opposites with the same and toward the same simultaneously. Such that if we should ever find

[73] Bloom. p.174.
[74] Bloom. p.20.

> these sames occurring in ourselves, we will know that it is not the same but a plurality. (*Rep*, 436b-c)[75]

The peculiar use of the word same suggests that a thing that is not the same as itself, a thing that is contradictory, is not one thing but a plurality.[76] To be self-same is to be singular or unified. Regardless, the principle is such that if when looking to something and it is clear that the thing is suffering opposites with the same and toward the same simultaneously we will know that that thing is not the same but a plurality, it is not simply one thing. Either it is two things or it is a thing with two parts.

The contradiction that is perceived is solved by creating a division or distinction in the object that appeared contradictory. The contradiction was that the same thing was doing or going in opposite directions simultaneously. In order to make sense of this we make the opposing forces distinct from each other. This solves the initial contradiction but we notice, say if we look at the soul, opposing parts can be contained in the same whole. The principle solves the contradiction by creating a division though what we are left with, if the parts are still contained, is opposition. The soul with parts that are opposed to and interfering with each other is the unjust soul. Prior to as well as after the act of division what is presupposed is a unity.

We will use an example used by Plato to achieve more clarity. The soul that desires both to drink and not to drink appears contradictory (*Rep*, 437e). With the application of the PNC to this soul we can solve or account for the contradiction by distinguishing different parts of the soul, one that desires drink and one that rules not drink. There is no contradiction because the part that desires for drink is different from the part that orders not to drink. We should note that even when we make this division that solves the contradiction we are still left with opposition. The parts can only oppose each-other if we recognise the over-arching unity they belong to. If there were not this unity each part would go its separate way, though this is not the case. We either drink or not drink.

In order for there to be a contradiction in the soul we must presuppose an underlying to it. The ‘thing’ that is contradictory. Though the very fact of the contradiction is what makes the limits of that thing hard to define or see such that we can’t really get a grasp of just what it is. The PNC helps us achieve a better grasp by delimiting different parts. Yet still, these parts can only contradict or oppose if they exist in what now seems an overarching as opposed to what was

[75] Bloom. p.20.
[76] Bloom. p.20.

prior to the division a presupposed unity. In order for there to be a contradiction at all we presuppose a unity. Prior to the division, in order to see contradiction at all we have to presuppose something in which there is contradiction. Post division, in order for parts to oppose and not simply cause two distinct and different activities simultaneously there must be an overarching unity to that of which they are parts.

The indivisible soul; nous

This underlying and overarching unity that is 'beyond' the PNC is the *noetic*. It is here that we 'locate' the indivisible soul. Book X of the *Republic* has a series of arguments for the souls' immortality and indivisibility. If we do not appreciate the contextualisation and hypothetical nature of the souls division in Book IV this appears inconsistent or contradictory. Further,

> What might appear as an assumption of unity in the immortality argument [of Book X] is necessitated, not excluded by the account of the souls division in Book IV. The unity in question is not an assumption and is not really hypothetical. It is rather the account of the soul as divided that is the hypothetical account, explicitly so in the text in fact. The soul's unity is beyond any division because it is beyond even the principle of division; it is beyond even the principle of non-contradiction.[77]

And so

> It [nous/form] is what is being presupposed by the very possibility of normal discursive argumentation. We have seen it in relation to the division of the soul argument but that does not entail that it could not be found lurking just behind the curtain in other, perhaps all other, dianoetic arguments. This particular argument, the one for which the PNC is explicitly hypothesised in the text and the one that is directed at the very soul of the knower who is thinking through the argument, certainly, is a special case for Plato.[78]

Indeed, we should not be surprised to find this limit to discursive or dianoetic knowing made apparent by the PNC in other or perhaps all other dianoetic or discursive arguments. That Plato brings our attention to the limit in the soul of the knower is significant. We have encountered the same limit in the comparative act. In order to discern two distinct things and deem them

[77] Bloom. p.174
[78] Bloom. p174.

comparable I must presuppose a common ground or underlying unity or sameness between them. Without this I would not be able to see them together and so compare them at all. It is not this underlying unity that is hypothetical but the idea of hypothesis of comparability. The hypothesis of comparability presupposes an underlying unity or sameness to what is compared, the vary act of comparison is made possible by this presupposition. Discursively justifying or even naming this presupposed 'ground' is uniquely difficult owing to its pre and non-discursive nature. It is known by a different order or mode of knowing. We cannot get a satisfactory grip on it *dianoetically* or discursively, and that is the whole point. It precedes and is presupposed by the activity that hypothesises on it. By turning our thought toward hypotheses and seeking what is 'beyond' them, what the limit of hypothetical or discursive thinking is, we catch a glimpse of the *noetic* by means of the limit of the *dianoetic*.

We need not always make a beginning of hypotheses, this is the proposal of *nous* or *samadhi* and the idea that we can come to recollect and move from this presupposed 'spaces'. Activity with its origin here will not be dependent on hypothesis but will find its origin in the unity that underlies or is prior to all hypotheses. This is perhaps an unusual suggestion given how fundamental the hypotheses of comparability and contradiction/division seem to be to the usual operation of our thought and activity. The proposal is not that we cease from the use of such hypotheses only the way in which we use them changes. To depend on our move from hypotheses and in turn from what is assumed on top of and so dependent on them creates a conditioned, hypothetical or mediated mode of knowing. As we have seen, the condition of being follows or is synonymous with the condition of one's knowing. The possibility of unmediated self-knowing just is that possibility of finding the origin of our thought and activity in nous as opposed to hypothesis.

If we hope to 'approach' or apprehend this underlying unity, if only by the recognition of our limited capacity to do so, we must completely turn the usual way in which we use and relate to hypotheses (*Rep*, 518). Hypotheses are not our beginning used to make a way toward some end, but are the 'stepping stones' by which we make our way toward a beginning (*Rep*. 511d).

To locate the limit of dianoetic knowing in the soul of the knower as Plato does is to emphasise the problem by its personal dimension. It is for this reason I have given this research the self-inquiry emphasis. To deny what precedes the act of comparison or division is to deny one's self. However, once we open the door to the *noetic* in its entirety it is no more your being than it is my being. It is our shared being, as well as the being of all that is. That goes to say that we

need not encounter it by self-inquiry but can 'reach' the same presupposition by inquiry into the world. The *noetic* is precisely the domain where such divisions between self and world are eroded or are simply non-existent. As such, it can presumably be found beyond the limit of how we demarcate each with the use of hypothetical thinking. By emphasising the personal dimension, which the self-inquiry focus does, one brings the problem home so to speak such that the implications of the underlying unity we come to recognise are not as easy to shake off.

In the context of comparison, any further assumption one makes on top of the hypothesis of comparability is itself something that then comes to be compared with what one was hoping to compare. To prevent this distortion we seek at minimum to move just from the hypothesis of comparison itself without assuming any further ground. The hypothesis itself brings our attention to what is necessarily presupposed by it, an underlying unity or sameness that makes possible the seeing of the two things together at all. To deny this is deny the possibility of comparison which will then fail to explain the fact of comparison. If looking for what this underlying sameness is, the common ground that makes comparison between two philosophies possible, one is pressed to answer that it is one's self, one's being, 'known *noetically*'. If one affirms this underlying unity one can benefit from comparison that need not depend on any other ground but the hypothesis of comparability.

Justice, harm and function

The divided soul as we have seen is the soul capable of injustice and justice as justice in the soul has to do with the nature of the relationship between its parts. We became aware of the relationship between parts through opposition or contradiction. One way to understand injustice is as 'suffering opposites'. To bring the soul out of this internal conflict and tension would be to direct or organise it such its constituents do not pull in opposite directions, nor do they interfere with each other, but they work together. Justice is this mutual non-interference and harmony between parts such that the whole can do what it does. Here is the catch, or the emphasis that guides most of what follows, in order for the parts to come together in a mutually beneficial manner, they need to come together around some shared end or function. That is, we need an organising principle around which the parts can find their order. Put another way, we need a highest value toward or around which the parts of the soul can organise themselves in the pursuit of.

The idea that justice is valuable for itself is the idea that it can serve as that end that justifies and gives order to the soul. The state of injustice or disorder is a state of harm; it is to suffer

opposites in one's being, to be pulled in different directions simultaneously. Apart from the intrinsic undesirability of such a state we noted in the context of self-inquiry and the idea of *degrees of reality* that such a state renders one in a sense unknowable to one's self. By its nature a contradiction cannot be known for it both is and isn't some or the other thing. When disorder or injustice takes over the soul that soul becomes unknowable to itself. Alternatively, that justice is desirable or choice-worthy is in a sense to say that to be or to live well is desirable or choice-worthy. For to be just is to be to more of a degree, it is to be unharmed and non-harmful. From the perspective of self-inquiry, the just soul is more knowable or transparent to itself.

The question might persist as to how we cultivate justice in our souls. Or indeed, whether or why we might think justice is valuable in this way. Whether it is truly choice-worthy and desirable above other goods, even those of power and honour/reputation. Why it is better to have even if one's suffers the reputation for its opposite, injustice.

Below I look first to the unharmed and non-harmful nature of justice. This then leads into the consideration of how justice is cultivated which has to do with the nature of our activity and what guides it, where it is orientated. The question of function is what function we might pursue, what end or value we might order ourselves around, such that we do not harm but benefit ourselves. Meaning, such that we cultivate justice as opposed to injustice. This becomes the question of what we are to ultimately value.

Justice never harms

The idea that justice never harms comes out early in the conversation of Book I. Socrates assumes this idea in his refutation of Cephalus's definition of justice as 'speaking the truth and paying one's debts' (*Rep*, 331). Socrates asks Cephalus to consider whether it is just to return a weapon to a friend and tell them the whole truth when they demand it back in a mad state (*Rep*, 331c). That this be considered unjust is because doing so might cause harm, the implicit idea being that justice never harms.[79] This commitment to the non-harmfulness of justice is presupposed at the very beginning and plays a role throughout, 'it is never just to harm anyone' (*Rep,* 335e). As we have seen, to be harmed is to be made unjust.

We get a better sense of this picture and what is meant by harm and justice by looking at function. Each thing that is has a function or a 'work'. The work of each thing is what it alone can do, or can do more finely than other things (*Rep*, 353a). In many ways, the work of a thing

[79] A thanks to L. Bloom for pointing this out.

is that which makes that particular thing the thing that it is, as it is by doing its work that the thing becomes what it is. On the Platonic view, and some would contend Aristotelian too, a thing is what it is by virtue of the end that its parts are organised around. The end or organising principle gives shape to and organises the parts of the thing in service of its fulfilment. From the perspective of knowledge, to know a thing is to know its end, its organising principle or function. The ability of a thing to fulfil its function well or excellently is virtue. We see this clearly with Socrates' example of a pruning knife (*Rep*, 353a). One could cut vines with a dagger or some other instrument, but a pruning knife made for the exclusive purpose of pruning, does the job of pruning best. The very shape of the pruning knife, how its parts come together, is formed by this function of pruning vines. So it is with all things, the function of a thing gives it its shape/form. The shape of the thing serves the fulfilment of the function and the excellent fulfilment of that function is virtue. The virtue of a thing is the doing well or excellently of the work of the thing (*Rep*, 353b). The virtue of the pruning knife is to prune well.

> Then, do we say that there is also some virtue of a soul?" "We do." "Then, Thrasymachus, will a soul ever accomplish its work well if deprived of its virtue, or is that impossible?" "Impossible." "Then a bad soul necessarily rules and manages badly while a good one does all these things well." "Necessarily." "Didn't we agree that justice is virtue of soul, and injustice, vice?" "We did so agree." "Then the just soul and the just man will have a good life and the unjust man a bad one." (*Rep*, 353e).

Socrates carries out the implications that the just man is happy opposed to the unjust man who is wretched, further noting that it is more profitable to be happy than to be wretched (*Rep*, 354a). The work of the soul is to live, to live well is virtue, and human virtue is justice. Therefore, to be just is to live well. The crucial missing piece that seems to slide in undetected or empty again is the question of what one's function or work is, how one is to cultivate justice. That is, what end or function I can orientate myself around so that I might live justly. What is the just end? In order for this picture to work this is what we need to know. It is a question of what is worthwhile to pursue, where can I locate value and orientate myself such that I do not cause harm and am not harmed? The result is that we are impressed by the need for this function but we also note that we do not know what it is. This seemingly lacking crucial piece is perhaps why Book I ends as it does

> For in my opinion, I am just like the gluttons who grab at whatever is set before them to get a taste of it, before they have in proper measure enjoyed what went before. Before finding out what we were considering at first—what the just is—I let go of that and pursued the consideration of whether it is vice and lack of learning, or wisdom and virtue. And later, when in its turn an argument that injustice is more profitable than justice fell in my way, I could not restrain myself from leaving the other one and going after this one, so that now as a result of the discussion I know nothing. So long as I do not know what the just is, I shall hardly know whether it is a virtue or not and whether the one who has it is unhappy or happy. *(Rep*, 354b)

This is a conclusion typical to what is often categorised as an 'early' Platonic dialogue.[80] A kind of *aporia* where ignorance is proclaimed about the thing that has just been discussed at length. Since they do not know what justice itself is they cannot be sure whether it is virtue or vice, or whether it makes one who has it happy or unhappy. What Socrates claims to be lacking is knowledge of what the just is, without this he cannot know anything else about it.

The just function/end? And the relationship between value and activity

To be just, to know the just, we must pursue our function excellently, but to do that we must know what that function is. The crucial point is that we do not know what this function is, what it is best for us to pursue. Without this knowledge we cannot be just, we do not know what justice is, and so we move from and engender harm.

The whole thing comes together around the end/function, something of which we are ignorant. Importantly, our ignorance of the just function is not just a void. In the process of Book I there were three operational ideas of the nature of justice that were refuted. These ideas, though through refutation proved insubstantial, were such that they informed the activities and understanding of those who held them. We think we know what we don't know. We are already organised by some or the other function, that end around or toward which our activity already tends. Ultimately, our lives already have a principle or highest good that organises them. The good in this instance 'is what every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything' (*Rep*, 505e). One's activity in the world is already guided by or organised around what one takes to be of most value.

[80] Plato and C.D.C Reeve, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004). IX, the reader may look here to find an early, middle and late categorisation of the dialogues.

A strong addiction or desire is a good example. For an addiction to become strong, to disrupt one's life, is for one's activity to become increasingly colonised by the pursuit of the desired object until all of one's activity serves the end of acquiring that particular object. So much so that a severe addiction can be described along these lines. [Particular object of addiction] is what the soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything (*Rep,* 505e).

The fault or the harm of the addiction is in the location of ultimate value in the object of addiction. Why would the addict, in the midst of the seeming destruction of their lives, still pursue the object of their addiction? The answer from this perspective is because they value its acquisition, we know this because that is the effect of their activity. That we might denounce our addictions and desires in speech and thought, and yet still act toward their acquisition or fulfilment is a good example and expression of a contradiction or mutual interference in our soul. Such a circumstance as we have seen is how Socrates reaches the account of the divided soul in Book IV with the use of the PNC.

In the example of an addict we may want to say that they know their particular addictive behaviour is harmful though that their activity is still guided by the acquisition of that particular object reveals a deeper held conviction about the choice-worthiness of that object and the activity that leads to it. They 'suffer opposites' at a deep level of their being. It does not however seem to be a strictly linear relationship of location of value and then pursuit of end. The object of one's desire accrues in value the more that one's activity is directed towards or around it just as the more it is valued the more one's activity tends toward it. In fact, and in step with the Platonic notion of desire, we might not want to create too strict a distinction between the object and the desire as they both occur together. Desire is always of something, of some particular object. Value becomes that which shapes the world, one's self and one's activity in a co-constitutive manner. Value and activity are enmeshed in a way that might be inextricable.

To become ruled by an object/desire is to have the location of value that shapes one's activity and being be located in that object/desire. Example of objects can be drink or more subtly power and honour. The more centred the particular value becomes the more it shapes the life that holds it. The paradigmatic example of injustice is the state where a desire comes to rule over the rational faculty such that the rational faculty falls into service of and is ruled by that desire.

Where then do we locate value? What is it worthwhile to pursue? Again, the question of the just function has eluded us.

Our situation and the Platonic recommendation

We are such that we inevitably take the good to be something; to act in the world implicates us in an assumption to knowledge of this kind for our activity is understood as being shaped by value. We think we know what we don't or perhaps can't know.

> [the good] is what every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything. The soul divines that it is something but is at a loss about it and unable to get a sufficient grasp of just what it is or to have a stable trust such as it has about the rest. And because this is so, the soul loses any profit there might have been in the rest (*Rep*, 505d-e).

Without the good we cannot know the use or benefit of anything else for we do not know what they are useful or beneficial for (*Rep,* 505a). We divine that the good must be something as our activity and lives are shaped by what we take it to be, though when we ask into it we are unable to grasp just what it is. We may be content with enjoying the reputation for things that seem just and beautiful but are not yet we despise above all else being mistaking about what is good and in this seek not what seems but what is (*Rep*, 505d). We enjoy the worldly benefit of seeming just, but when our lives are shaped by something that seems good but is not, we are left with a life that has been fundamentally misguided. It is here, where we attribute the most value, the idea that most shapes our lives, that we most despise being wrong for to be mistaken about this is to have the whole framework of one's understanding and life be pulled away from beneath them.

We see this better by way of an example. One enjoys seeming but not being just if it helps achieve something else that we value more than justice, like power/influence or honour for instance. If we value honour most, justice becomes useful and beneficial to us in how it helps us achieve honour. We would then be content with what seems just as opposed to what is actually just as what we really value is honour. If we are mistaken about what is of most value, if we come to see that honour was not the most important thing, then it takes out this centre piece on which the whole framework of our understanding and activity rested. For we previously understood the use and benefit, the value, of everything else in how it related to or helped us attain honour. To realise the good is not honour is to lose the profit one we had in

everything else that served in attaining honour. Without knowledge of the good we lose whatever profit there might have been in everything else (*Rep*, 505d).

This also helps point to the internal or intrinsic value of justice, it is not good to have for any other thing, but for itself. This is why one is to pursue justice even if one is to seem or appear unjust (*Rep*, 612b). Justice is good to have for itself.

What then is the just end? How is one to act? We cannot grasp what the good itself is. We are such that we seek the good. We must have some end to order ourselves around, and yet we cannot know what the good, the useful and just, end is. The Platonic solution, upon recognising the importance of having a function, and seeing that one is perpetually ignorant of what the highest good and the choice-worthy function is, results in the positing of inquiry into the highest good as ones function. Inquiry into the highest good as the highest value and organising principle of one's life (1) acts as a function/a highest good by which we can order ourselves and our activity and (2) cannot harm us because it involves no assumption to knowledge of what the highest good is. This, presuming to know what we don't know, is how we harm ourselves. Locating the highest value in the open inquiry into highest values is dogmatic and stable as an end around which we might order ourselves such that it helps us answer the question of what we are to do. We are to act in such a way that makes possible open and free inquiry. It is then undogmatic and open as it does not make an assumption to knowledge that we cannot have and by definition opens us to other orienting values.[81]

Inquiry as a way of life

Inquiry into the highest good as a substitute highest good is a solution for two key reasons. First, it functions as a highest good around which we can orientate and organise ourselves. Second, it requires no assumption to knowledge of what the highest good is and so does not harm us as it is by our presuming to know this that we harm ourselves.

> Thereby, I submit, Platonic philosophy provides us with an argument for becoming the sort of people who study all forms of philosophy on their own terms as much as is possible – as a way of being open to influence without losing ourselves. In addition to this, this philosophy also provides us with, if not a method for doing so, at least an account of what it would mean to be the sort of people who can do so, or so I have suggested. Yet Platonic inquiry

[81] For more on how inquiry functions as the substitute highest good see Blooms (2017 and 2020) scholarship.

> is relevant in still another way: Not only is free and open inquiry difficult emotionally because, in demanding our openness, it leads to a sort of existential disorientation, it is also, as an end-in-itself, a way of dealing with that disorientation. To put it simply, it does so by making open inquiry into orienting values itself serve as the orienting value. We have seen how already: The reason revolves around the fact that it is difficult to become the sort of person who can inquire. This is significant as it entails that inquiry can itself serve as an end or function that we can strive towards and, therefore, an end around which we can order ourselves and our lives. Indeed, because it is such an end, inquiry also serves as a way of distinguishing "right" and "wrong", or the better from the worse, as any end should be able to do. In other words, openness to inquiry is not a synonym for indecisiveness (or loss of self). On the contrary, it itself selves as the criterion of decision: We choose the path that allows for open and free thought, that reduces our emotional barriers to inquiry, as opposed to the one that is dogmatic, myopic and leads to further entrenchment of views. This is significant because it is a way of dealing with the disorientation that results from losing one's assumptions – itself one of the most devastating impediments to free and honest inquiry.[82]

Open, free and honest inquiry is something that is hard to achieve and something that we can aim for. The process of cultivating this is personal in the first sense of self-inquiry in that one is to examine their lives and assumptions and loosen their grip on those assumptions and values that have until then orientated them. Inquiry into the highest good *as* the highest good can then serve as the organising principle that guides one in the disorientation that is the result of losing one's assumptions. As an orienting value it then helps us chart the course between dogmatism and disorientation.

Inquiry is then the most just end. Without a centre, orienting principle there is nothing around which the parts of one's self can find order. On the other hand, if I presume to know what that centre is I am presuming to have knowledge to something like the highest value to which I can only cling dogmatically. Such clinging, the ruthless pursuit of an assumed good, produces a different form of injustice to that of the scattering of disorientation. It is an order that has

[82] Bloom, "Reading Plato and Aristotle in Contemporary South Africa." p.343.

become too ordered, too defined, and so dis-ordered. The easy example would be the domination of a life by something like money, drugs or power. The point is that in this instance injustice takes the form of hyper-organisation or order around an end. What makes possible this extreme of too much order is having a solid idea of what the good is, what it is best to have all one's activity oriented toward.

What about the noetic and the good? A lead into Patanjali

As we have just seen, inquiry is that end most appropriate for the divided soul. For the divided soul is that soul that needs to achieve order between its parts. This is the soul in human life that must act and make decisions of 'right' and 'wrong', better and worse, by its activity. By activity the soul casts its vote for what is most choice-worthy. What of the *noetic*, our relationship to it, and its relation to the good itself and the idea of the good?

Inquiry is the substitute highest good in our ignorance of the highest good itself. In this way it is penultimate. An important thing to note about the penultimate good is that it exists in relation to the highest good. So, in order to take on the central value of inquiry as an organising principle in one's life one has to be open to the possibility of an ultimate good but closed to the possibility of knowing it. It might be that holding to this two-folded value of inquiry requires a kind, though only in half measure, of denial of the ultimate good. For inquiry as an organising principle necessitates ignorance of the highest good and, more subtly, as a consequence, involves positing the possibility of a highest good. From the Platonic perspective, the possibility of knowing the good itself is denied though the good itself, its reality, is not. We can know and learn about the idea of the good and come to know it as something in it being the cause of knowledge and truth (being) (*Rep,* 508e), but this is to know it as an *idea*. What it itself is cannot be known, it is not an idea. As such we can only reach to it with analogy and the like.

The idea of this same status in the yogic system is *purusa*. We suffer a similar kind of ignorance with regard to it and our not being able to grasp it only Patanjali is less ambivalent about the possibility of attaining to it, the system expressly serves this end. This is perhaps the chief, though tentative, difference we might want to make between the two. That is, the relation or positon they take up with regard to their core Ideas, the good and *purusa.* We will get more clarity on the yogic position in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Inquiry as an organising principle and highest value can produce the free and open state that would justify activity. As it involves freeing one's self of the impediments to open and free inquiry. These impediments are those assumptions to knowledge that we hold that we impose on the world in our activity. Inquiry as an organising principle, an end in itself, makes it possible for us to cultivate the state where open inquiry is possible. Where our activity does not carry such imposition. As such, it will help produce justified comparison. It is a justified ground achieved through what we might call the perfection of the first sense of self-inquiry. The conditions for developing the capacity for free and open inquiry are such that we must free ourselves from the influence of our own assumptions and presuppositions. In the process of refuting these presuppositions, commitments and values, one comes to free one's self of their influence. The means by which refutation occurs is by contradiction and so in the process one cultivates a state of being that suffers less internal conflict. The endeavour or goal in this first sense is to free one's self of those ideas and presumptions to knowledge that are insubstantial or contradictory as they inform an equivalent mode of being. For instance in my presuming to know what the good is I act in service of this idea delimiting the use and benefit of everything else by it. I must first come to see what I have mistaken the good to be before I can inquire into the good itself. The way in which I come to see all the possible ways in which I may be mistaken about the good is by coming to recognise my inability to grasp what the good is in itself, my perpetual ignorance of it. That is, I come to know my ignorance first in the presumptions to knowledge that I don't have that I already make and secondly in my inability to know what is to be valued most.

To perfect one's ignorance, to come to know that one does not know, is to be able to inquire freely and openly. The question from the perspective of the second sense of self-inquiry; is this knowing of one's ignorance itself a position that distorts and so mediates self-knowing. For one knows one's self as the one who knows nothing. Or, is it the position that makes possible unmediated self-knowing in that it is a position that frees itself of further impediments or distortions in the forms of assumptions to knowledge we can't have?

CHAPTER 4: PATANJALI

Patanjali and the Yoga Sutras (Y.S)

Patanjali's Classical yoga is one of what would later come to be known as the six schools of Indian or classical philosophy.[83] It uses the metaphysical and conceptual scaffolding of the *Samkhya* school, another one of the six classical schools. *Samkhya* is an enumerative account of the nature of reality and its constituents.

> While there are minor differences between the two traditions, *Sāṅkhya*[84] provides the metaphysical or theoretical basis for the realization of *puruṣa,* and Yoga offers the technique or practice itself.[85]

The nature of the *Y.S* as text is telling both in terms of its intent and in its relation to its Ideal, the goal at which the technique aims, *purusa*.

> Patañjali's text is not so much a philosophical treatise as a psychosomatic technique of meditative practice… Patañjali's text reads more like a manual for the practitioner interested in plumbing the depths of human consciousness than a philosophical exposition.[86]

As a text it's emphasis is on the technique or activity to be adopted by the individual that will lead to the realisation of *purusa*, one's true or underlying reality as it is described in the *Samkhya* system. Both schools are widely held to be dualistic in the fundamental distinction they make between self (*purusa*) and world (*prakrtri)*, referred to by Bryant (2007) as consciousness and matter.[87] *Purusa*, one's true nature, is the power of awareness/seeing/knowing that illuminates and animates the world. It itself is alone, immutable and chiefly, distinct from the world. This is the fundamental distinction that renders the dualistic readings of both schools. The world, what the self is distilled and distinct from, extends from its most subtle manifestation, *intelligence*, outward into grosser elements in their different combinations. The process of yoga is the distilling and extracting of the self from the world until it stands alone by itself undisturbed by the churning qualities of the world. This emphasis on distillation and extraction is what leads to the dualistic readings of the text and the

[83] Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. p.32.
[84] Sankhya or Samkhya is acceptable. I prefer the prefix *sam* as it is widely used in the *Y.S* and helps us understand the relationship between key ideas.
[85] Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. p.33.
[86] Bryant.p.32.
[87] This rendering of *purusa* as self and *prakrtr*i as world is right enough. It (1) serves my purposes and helps me achieve more consistency and (2) does not harm but rather contributes to our understanding.

systems. The dualism can be understood as functional, the text addresses the soul that is in a state of ignorance/bondage, and so it lifts it out of this state by a series of discernments that produce the 'distillation'. The final and most important of which is the discernment of the difference between *purusa* and intellect, for the one who acknowledges the difference omniscience and omnipotence accrue (*Y.S* III.49). The proper basis of intelligence, the source or the knowing power that animates intelligence, is *purusa*, the true nature or seat of the self. The final ignorance that the yogic practice hopes to address and remedy is the attribution of the power of knowing to intelligence. Intelligence is the *instrument* of knowing and *purusa* the source or power of knowing. The difference between the two is the final and most important distinction to make.

We might notice the first problem that harks back to the PNC. If anything, intelligence is the instrument of division and discernment. So, by what means is it meant to be discerned as being distinct from itself or one's self? We saw how the PNC and the use of discursive reason can help us appreciate its own limit. In appreciating its limit we come to a sense of what is presupposed by it, the *noetic*. However, the discursive is not the means by which the *noetic* is 'known'. It is the means by which we see the limit of what it itself can apprehend and so in this way get a glimpse of what lies 'beyond' it. The *noetic*, *samadhi*, is that state of knowing-being such that knower and known are inseparable. Though this is hopefully a familiar picture by now it does not explain fully how after apprehending the limit we are to cease being contained by it.

The *Y.S*, like the *Republic*, assumes and addresses the soul that is in a state of ignorance and harm. The soul in its many forms in human life. The technique, the yogic method, is a means of remedying this harm, of bringing the soul out of ignorance and into the recollection of its true nature. The harm or the nature of the ignorance yoga seeks to address is the conflation of this knowing power, the self*/purusa*, with what it is not. As such, the process is a distillation or extraction. A ceasing from the conflation. In the final instance, this depends on recognising the difference between intelligence and the self.

We see here the first similarity in the Ideas, organising principles/values, of the Platonic and the yogic systems. The process of Platonic inquiry can also be understood as extracting or distilling our idea of what the good is from what it is not, from all that we have mistaken it to be. The good itself however in the Platonic systems seems to remain 'eternally different',

forever out of grasp.[88] Moreover, it seems it must remain so if we are to hold to inquiry as the substitute highest good for this depends on the unknowability of the good. The apparent difference in the yogic system is that *purusa*, the organising principle of the yogic system, is cast as the explicitly realisable or attainable goal of the yogi. The text itself is a kind of manual for practice aimed at this end. Even so, we encounter a central and inevitable problem in understanding how the realisation of this Idea is meant to happen. It is a tension between the means and the ends of the system such that we should doubt the possibility of our being able to know *purusa*. Since the system assumes ignorance as its beginning the self that has mistaken itself for intellectual and other mental activity. The soul in the state of ignorance, is cast as having to discern itself from itself by means of itself. This peculiarity will become more clear when we look more closely at the relationship between means and ends.

Rukmani (1997), Whicher (1998) and Watson (1982) all have their analyses gravitate around this tension between means and ends in various ways.[89] In what follows, with their help, I hope to make the tension explicit, to bring the problem out, so that we might consider what Patanjali recommends we do upon recognising it. His recommendation has to do with what we attend to in our meditative and intellectual activity and the manner in which we attend to it. We are to orientate ourselves toward *purusa* with reverence, what this means and whether *purusa* remains perpetually an Idea will be how we conclude this chapter.

Defining Yoga

The second of the 195 sutras is, '*yoga-citta-vrtti-nirodha' (Y.S* I:2). Whiteman (1993) translates this sutra; 'Yoga [is] the "checking" of mental "involvement"', Bryant (2007), "Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of mind", and Watson (1982), 'mental-movement-stopping'. Outside of semantic difference in this sutra we find a preliminary sense of the means, the end, the process and the nature of the harm/error in the yogic system. The means is *cessation*, which is the activity of restraining from ignorance. Ignorance is a kind of misidentification with the activity of mind and its assumed source. The goal is that state of total restraint, full and continuous recollection of one's true nature achieved by the cessation of identifying one's self with what one is not. This is the theoretical picture of yoga.

[88] Whiteman, *Aphorisms on Spiritual Method*. p.171.
[89] Ian Whicher, "Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patanjali's Classical Yoga," *Philosophy East and West* 48, no. 2 (1998): 272–322; Ian Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras," *Philosophy East and West* 32, no. 1` (1982): 77–90; T.S Rukmani, "Tension Between 'Vyutthana' and 'Nirodha' in the Yoga-Sutras," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25, no. 6 (1997): 613–28.

> *Nirodha* [restraint] and *Vyutthana* [involvement/identification] are two key words in the *Yogasutras* (YS.) of Patañjali. They are like opposite poles and in 1.3 and 1.4 Patañjali brings out this distinction clearly. While in the stage of *nirodha* [restraint] the seer abides in itself, in the *vyutthana* [identification] stage, even though *purusa* [self] or *citisakti* [knowing power] is the same without change, it does not seem to be so, as it has the same form as the modification of the mind.[90]

In the fully released state, where restraint is perfected, the 'knower'[91] abides in itself' (*Y.S*, I:3). Otherwise, if there is involvement or identification with the turnings and activities of mind, the knower seems to take on the form of those modifications and so seems to be separate, other than or not the same as itself. When there is identification with the involvement (*Y.S,* I:4) the need for yoga arises as a response to this fundamental ignorance and harm. To practice is then to check and restrain from involvement with the goal of settling in the fully restrained or 'stopped' state (*Y.S*, 1:3).

Importantly, in reality the seer itself, *purusa*, remains without change and only *seems* to take on the modifications of mind. We, identifying ourselves with the modifications and activities of mind, with intelligence, are in a state of ignorance. It is from this position of ignorance that we can make sense of seeking the recognition of our true nature. It is the assumption of ignorance that conceals *purusa*, *purusa* in itself remains without change.

Means to end confusion

This all appears clear theoretically, however, it quickly becomes complicated when considering the relation between means and end, and the nature of the activity designed to bring one into a stopped or settled state.

> Yoga is defined as the 'restraint of the modifications of the mind'. Yoga is also used for both types of *samàdhi* [together-put/ the state of absorption/recollection]. *Samàdh*i is also the last means to yoga. Thus, *samàdhi* stands for two kinds of *samàdhi* and also denotes both the means and the end. In addition having two stages of *samàdhi (samprajñáta* and

[90] Rukmani, "Tension Between 'Vyutthana' and 'Nirodha' in the Yoga-Sutras." p.613.
[91] Knower and seer, as well as knowing and seeing are used interchangeably. For the most part I favour knower and knowing.

> *asamprajñáta*)[92] and relegating *samprajñáta* to a state of *vyutthana* [involvement/identification] in comparison with *asamprajñáta* further complicates matters. There have been attempts to get over some of these problems. Thus, some commentators have tried to explain these difficulties but not always in the same way. The various interpretations only reinforced the belief that yoga was a practical path which, if done systematically, would lead to *kaivalya* [liberation] at the end. It was difficult unambiguously to lay down the different stages without getting into some semantic and etymological problems. In experience the transition from *vyutthàna* [involvement/identification] to *nirodha* [restraint] was perhaps smooth. But the same, when spelt out in ordinary language, (even when it is the *devavànï* Sanskrit) gives rise to many problems.[93]

This confusion, the conflict between core concepts, is inevitable at a point. It touches on an issue that resonates through the system and is apparent right at the beginning as well as just before the end. We have seen it in this research in how *samadhi* seems to be a solution to the problem faced by the first sense of self-inquiry that expects a discursive and discernible object of self-knowledge. *Samadhi* is a mode of knowing that does not depend on the distinction between knower and known and so seems to be what we expect and want from self-knowing in the unmediated sense. However, in relation to the ultimate goal, the realisation of *purusa*, such *samadhi* is itself subordinate. It is involved or tainted by ignorance and the means by which we approach that goal. It is then both the end of restraint and the means by which I approach the ultimate end. The tension is inevitable.

When I restrain from identifying with the activity of mind and intelligence I begin recollecting what I am prior to and apart from mind and its contents. This state of recollection is *samadhi*. *Samadhi*, the goal of the practice of restraint is then at the same time the means by which I approach the ultimate state of full and continuous recollection. *Samadhi* is both means and end. The distinction made between the types of *samadhi* (like *samprajanata* and *asamprajanta*)[94]

[92] I encourage the reader not to be dismayed by new terminology here, we will have covered the meaning by the end of the chapter. I use those words that help express key ideas and make explicit key distinctions. Otherwise, I endeavour to keep the terminology as consistent as possible though it is challenging in such a project. The key point here is that there is a distinction to be made between kinds of *samadhi*.
[93] Rukmani, "Tension Between 'Vyutthana' and 'Nirodha' in the Yoga-Sutras." p.613.
[94] The distinction will be clarified in a later section titled by these terms

helps us to see that there is a difference to be discerned between the two though it does not help us understand how we are meant to move from the one to the other.

The nature of ignorance

The chief ignorance or 'un-wisdom' is both how we are harmed and the position from which we further harm ourselves

> Un-wisdom consists in taking the transient to be what is lasting… (*Y.S,* II:5).

So, for instance, taking one's self, the knowing power itself to be the instrument of knowing which is then wrapped up in the purposes and potentialities of the objects of knowing. The self-centred form of ignorance is

> … a uniting, so to speak, of the knowing power of the seer with the potentialities of the object presented. (*Y.S*, II:6).

Ultimately, we are harmed by or in our ignorance of our true nature. This first lack of discernment causes (*Y.S* II:24) further conjunction or fusion (*Y.S*, II:23) whereby one takes on what is learnt with the instrument of knowing as belonging to or being in service of the purposes that accrue around that instrument. Which, given the state of ignorance, is taken to be one's self. So, the purpose of what one knows are conceived as one's own purposes, hence the self-centeredness. The absence of this conjunction and specifically of the original ignorance that causes it is the 'all-oneness' of the perceiver (*Y.S* II:25). Both the taking on of the purposes and potentials of the objects of one's knowing and this original ignorance are to be done away with through the activity of cessation or restraint.

By taking the instrument of knowledge to be myself, failing to distinguish it from *purusa*, I create a centre around that instrument that further ignorance or conjunctions can attach to. The instrumental knowing power then serves the purposes that collect around this assumed centre; it serves what I take to be the appropriate ends or choice worthy objects and activities. This is all in reference to and orientating around a misidentification, a state of ignorance.

The activity of cessation

Cessation is the activity designed to address this state of harm/ignorance. The 'knowing power', the seer, is restrained from sinking into the instrument of knowing and further mental activities and processes. It is not the activity of the instrument of knowing that is stopped but the identification with it. This is a crucial point; cessation is a cessation from identification

rather than a cessation of activity and so the completely restrained or free state is not non-active but unharmed. The instrument of knowing works more finely when it is free from the purposes of an assumed identity that co-opts the purposes and potentialities of the objects that the intellect can wield and manipulate. Whicher (1998) addresses a common misunderstanding of the nature of cessation [*nirodha*] below.

> I am suggesting that any attempt to interpret Patanjali's Yoga as a practice that seeks to annihilate or suppress the mind and its modifications for the purpose of gaining spiritual liberation distorts the intended meaning of Yoga as defined by Patanjali. In regard to the process of *nirodha* [cessation], the wide range of methods in the YS indicates an emphasis on the ongoing application of yogic techniques, not a deadening of the mental faculties wherein the operations of consciousness, including our perceptual and ethical natures, are switched off or abandoned. By defining *nirodha* as "cessation," I mean to imply the "undoing" of the conjunction (*samyoga*) between *purusa*, the "Seer" …, and *prakrti*, the "seeable" …, the conjunction that Vyasa explains as a mental superimposition … resulting in the confusion of identity between *purusa* and the mental processes (*vrtti*). Our sense of self becomes misidentified with the mental processes (*vrtti*), thereby creating, in the words of Vyasa, "a mental self out of delusion".[95]

Cessation undoes the identification with the mental processes. Such identification starts from the un-wisdom of not discerning the difference between *purusa* and intelligence and then begins to solidify as it co-opts what the intellect knows into its own purposes. What is restrained from is the knowing power of the individual taking on these involvements *as* itself. It is a matter of conflation, involvement and identification. So, restraint or cessation is more of a dis-identification or non-attachment with the activity of mind than it is a cessation of activity. As such, whether activity is harmed or not harmed has to do with whether there is identification with it or not (*Y.S*, I:5).

Is the activity of cessation harmed?

To see the need for yoga is to assume one's ignorance which means that one's activity is assumed to arise from that state of ignorance. Such activity inevitably carries with it the harm that is its assumed origin. This must also be true for the activity of restraint or cessation. I

[95] Whicher, "Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patanjali's Classical Yoga." p.273.

undertake the activity of cessation from this position of ignorance and as such that activity carries with it this harm. For me to perceive liberation by the realisation of *purusa* as a valuable end to pursue is for that end to accord with some purpose that arises in a motivational structure of activity centred on a miss-identification, on ignorance. This means that even this activity of cessation and restraint is itself harmed and so as long as one pursues it one is subtly re-enforcing that position of ignorance. This does not seem to be too much of a problem for Patanjali as he notes that the residual habit that follows from continued practice aimed at restraint eventually frees one from this core mistake (*Y.S*, I:18). It is a gradual purification or distillation where one becomes less identified with the mistake until the habit or activity seemingly drops itself. The core yogic activity of checking and restraining is then an involvement that is designed to prune away other harms and involvements.

> Upon the checking of even that releasing habit, all habitual reactions being then checked, there arise the state of collectedness without seed, [otherwise called continuous recollection]. (*Y.S*, I.52)

That is, in our practice of restraint we begin to recollect something of our true nature. When such recollection is active, the product of motivated activity, then the recollection of our true nature carries this final impulse, otherwise called a seed or a taint (the taint of ignorance that is apparent in the very motivation for the action that brought about the recollection). This impulse or habit of checking that serves us well through the practice in pruning away other identifications and impulses toward involvement is then in the final instance something that also needs to be 'checked' and pruned. Upon the checking of even this releasing habit the ultimate state of continuous, unmediated and uninterrupted recollection of one's true nature ensues. The question, if we stay with the tension, is what is meant to check the habit of checking?

The crucial point for us for the time being is that there seems to be nothing that is in the domain of motivated action that we can do about the release of this final involvement. In fact, if we take seriously the assumption of ignorance, all motivated activity arising from it seems only to perpetuate it. We adopt the yogic practice of cessation on the idea that we have fallen into a state of ignorance for this is what the practice of cessation addresses. In order to realise the state of continuous recollection the impulse for even this activity of checking and restraining cannot arise for in it is the concession to ignorance. Again, it is not activity nor even motivated activity that is the problem. The problem is in the kind of activity, the nature of its motivation.

One way to understand this harmed activity apart from its base in ignorance is its evaluative dimension. *It carries with it an idea or sense of what the ultimate goal is,* or even that there is an ultimate goal. It is a motivation for action of this kind that has the power to disrupt recollection for the disruption is the idea or sense that there is something either more ultimate, or more basic to one's self than the recollected state. This very prompting 'to move out of and toward' is what in the final instance obstructs the seer from resting in itself. In the final instance it is the evaluative action where the state/object moved toward is valued higher than the state that one is in that has the power to disrupt recollection. Undisrupted recollection is the state of liberation.

Understanding Platonic Inquiry from this perspective

Though a slight side note it will be valuable here to consider this from the Platonic perspective of inquiry into the highest good *as* one's highest good. This is a penultimate good subordinated by the ultimate good. *Purusa*, and the state of liberation that is its realisation, is an ultimate good. Of course, the good itself in the Platonic system is ultimate only we cannot know it. By taking inquiry as one's highest value one is required to take that position that positions itself in a sense as being other than the highest value. Inquiry does not deny the possibility of a highest value as it orientates itself by its inquiry into it. Yet, as we have just seen from the yogic perspective, it is precisely this posturing of one's self as ignorant of the highest good which gives rise to activity toward the highest good. This is the kind of activity with the power to disrupt the state of recollection. It is an motivated activity where what one is prompted to move toward or inquire into is evaluated as more ultimate than the position from which one makes the inquiry.

The seeming difference is instructive though not final nor necessarily completely accurate, we will return to it or at least the relationship between the two later in the chapter and in the conclusion. For we have not yet been able to make sense of whether or how we might realise *purusa*. In fact, our ignorance in this regard is proving the more likely which casts the yogi in a similar relation to their highest good as the Platonic philosopher. We explore this dynamic below in the difference between *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata samadhi*.

Samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi; ways of knowing one's self

> *Samprajnata*: From *jna* (to know), with *sam* (together) and *pra* (forward), "know forward together".[96]

There are four general ways in which we can know or recollect ourselves in the domain of *samprajnata samadhi*. *Samprajnata samadhi* is as we have seen a knowing-forward-together. This is significant as each way in which we know ourselves in this sense is known forward from the true seat of knowing, the knowing power, *purusa*. It is still a 'forward' movement in that the seer does not seem to be resting in itself but is knowing together forward from itself. The four ways are ,

> *Samprajñāta [samādhi*] consists of [the consecutive] mental stages of absorption with physical awareness, absorption with subtle awareness, absorption with bliss, and absorption with the sense of I-ness.[97] (*YS.* I:17).

These are the four ways of knowing or being at one with oneself in *samprajnata samadhi*. They are increasingly subtle until the final stage of knowing 'I-ness' with one's self. The simple recollection and absorption in one's being. Knowing one's self as bliss is the stage preceding this. Both as we can imagine are highly attractive ways in which we might know ourselves. We might also note that they map quite well onto the top two contenders for the good; knowledge and pleasure (*Rep*. 505c). However, as with the good, these ways of self-knowing are not final or ultimate. There is a state more revered or perfected, that of *asamprajnata samadhi* which is just *purusa* abiding in itself.

> Now something is obvious about all of these stages: that what is being known is an object, some not perhaps always viewable, but certainly articulable thing. And that is quite what my self cannot be. I cannot be an object I give myself to look at, outwardly or in my mind. Accordingly, all these forms of *samadhi* are labelled *samprajnata*, the *samadhi* of "accurate knowing of distinguishables."[98]

Asamprajnata samadhi quite simply, I think, is just that *samadhi* without (*a-)*[99] the knowing forward together. That is, it is not a knowing into or toward one's self as bliss or I-ness but an

[96] Whiteman, *Aphorisms on Spiritual Method*. p.168.
[97] Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. p.414.
[98] Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras." p.83.
[99] a is a negating prefix.

unmediated self-knowing where the knower abides in itself. Settling in this state is described as a kind of 'residual habit' that follows from continued practice aimed at cessation from identification (*YS*, I:18). As a kind of residue from practice, there is no direct means to its achievement, in fact almost by definition there cannot be a direct means *toward* it. How we are to let go of ignorance if it is firmly established is truly perplexing.

> When any of the four aforementioned *samadhis* is attained, some other thing is highly likely to happen. The mind is likely to sully the purity of the *samadhi* by giving it (i) a word (*sabda*), that is, naming it; (ii) a significance (*artha*); or (iii) properties by comparison with some other thing (*smrti*, "remembrance," since the other thing would have been remembered). These now sullied, *samprajinta* forms of *samadhi,* are the *sa*, or plainly propertied forms: sa-vitarka, "sa-vicara," and so on. The *nir* forms, despite the mountain of confusion amassed by commentators about them, are plainly and simply those occasions of attained oneness when the mind does not interfere as stated earlier. They are oneness maintained in its purity. No more complex interpretation is needed.[100]

Again, we can see the difference quite clearly. *Nir-bija* and *a-samaprajnata samadhi* are those forms of *samadh*i completely untainted by the seeds (*bijas)* of action motivated by ignorance. *Nir-bija* is without seed. *A-samprajnata* is without the 'knowing-forward-together', not a uniting but rather an aloneness in which there is nothing to be united with anything as the knowing power rests in self-sameness. Recognising that there is a distinction to be made, to see the limit of the propertied forms like *samprajnata*, is part of coming to realise what is to be distinguished though it is itself not the attainment of what is distinguished. To discern the difference between the instrument of knowing and the knowing power is to recognise the mistake that is the state ignorance but it is not by itself what stabilises the state of liberation. For as we saw, we are liable to sully the recollection in a number of ways, chiefly by evaluating something other as more fundamental to ourselves. This at least explains how we are to make the crucial discernment if we are to ever make it, that is, from or in the state of recollection/*samadhi*.

> *Bijas* are inclinings or disposings built inward, due to past karman [activity]. They are things within which rise… effecting its influence now, to invade or

[100] Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras." p.84.

> unsettle established oneness, in any of the above forms, by at least presenting some other mind-content to colour or shatter this oneness, in the shape of an "urge" to behave in some quite other way… Now Patanjali's simple, normally un-noted point is this: that any *samadhi* actually subject to such invasion cannot be ultimate, cannot be true self-knowing. That is because "urges" of this kind arise within only if they have, in some perhaps non-conscious way, been acknowledged by the person in question as an aspect of his being. While we can choose to ignore our "urges," that is post facto. Before we can do this they already will have disrupted our knowing-oneness with self.[101]

Our task is similar to that of a cultivator or gardener. We are to empty ourselves of the seeds, urges, and deep seated assumptions to knowledge of who or what we are. This is achieved through the prescribed practices, by cessation and recollection. In this way it seems to be more in the domain of the first sense of self-inquiry, the examination and the discernment of the content of one's life/being as it is. However, such discernment, the discernment of these deeply held taints or seeds, is only possible in the state of recollection. Recollection, *samadhi,* is both an end and a means. For those deeply held 'seeds' only become apparent as distinct in the state of recollection, when they become distinct they disrupt the recollection.

To prune away these deeply set involvements or seeds requires steady contemplation and indeed recollection/*samadhi* (Y.S. II:11). Another way to say this is that these principles or ideas only become knowable or see-able when we have entered a non-discursive mode of knowing. It is then that they become apparent as they do not have the same durability as the permanent knowing power. It is here that we can discern the lasting from the impermanent. Importantly, when they become apparent they disturb the recollection by having become apparent. Deliberately entering such a mode is the means by which we become aware of and so prune away these ideas rooted in ignorance. Though the state of recollection/*samadhi* is itself complete and, whilst effected, can be done for no other end but itself.

The dynamic here is slippery. Recollection is such that it is a complete state, an absorption. Cessation and the meditative practice is how one effects the state of recollection. In this way, it is an end. When one is recollected with one's self it is now that deeply held convictions or seeds can become apparent. Prior to becoming apparent they were what one was recollected with, and so the recollection carried this subtle layer of ignorance. After becoming apparent

[101] Kesarcodi-Watson. p.85.

the seed breaks the state of recollection as there has been a discernment and so a distinction is created between knower and known. This is how these deeply held convictions are pruned away and exposed as being other than or not essential to one's self. So, in this sense recollection is also a means, though it can only be effected by its nature for its own sake as it is a complete state. Lastly, the very motivation for the activity that brings about recollection, so active recollection, carries with it the taint of ignorance that can sully that recollection in the very motivation that brought it about. For it is an evaluative action aimed at a more choice-worthy state or place that has the power to displace one's self.

Our means to what we take the ultimate goal to be is itself also an end and so can be 'done' for no reason other than itself. To have a reason external to it, some end it is meant to achieve, is to impose on it the idea one carries about what that end is. The difference is subtle and it can appear contradictory as Rukmani (1996) noted earlier, though it is in step with what we have discussed. That *samadhi* that is full recollection and that is not disrupted and so continuous is itself the ultimate goal though we have no way besides being recollected to effect it. The goal in the end must happen of itself if it is to happen at all.

Seeds, because they are the origin or principles from which the framework of understanding that they govern grows take with them that whole structure when they are identified and let go of. *Samadhi* is entering the space in which these involvements and principles of understanding appear in seed form. It is the space in which we discover the hypothesised grounds that further thought develops on, we discover them by recollecting what precedes or is prior to them. Another name for the ultimate state *asamprajnata samadhi* is *nirbija* (seedless) *samadhi*; it is *samadhi* where no more seeds lie in potential and so recollection is continuous, undisrupted. Again this does not mean a void, non-activity, nor no hypothetical thought; it means only one is not identified with such.

> To put this one more way, I would say that only *kaivalya*, or absolutely true self-knowing, can be *nirbija*, for only *kaivalya* can be, or involve, a knowing of self such that what is known is attached in no way to what is not self as if it were part of self, so attached in no way to any articulable thing. This is what *kaivalya* indeed means, here-an absolute absorption in nothing but what one's self is, or, if you prefer, what one is, oneself. This absorption can in no way be subject to possible *bija* incursion. *Bijas* may express themselves, but not as self… there can be only one form of *a-samprajnata*, for there can be

> only one form of genuine self-knowing. And that cannot be any *samskara*[102]-bound knowing of self.[103]

Seeds may express themselves but not with what I am calling the evaluative dimension that has the power to displace the self-knowing of *purusa*. Seeds with this disruptive potential co-opt the reality of the knowing power into their own form. The harmful seed that prompts action is that seed that is bound up with the evaluation of what one is prompted to move toward as being more ultimate or more true to what one is.

The problem again is the depth to which he hold these convictions. They occur at the level of what we have taken ourselves to be and so rest at the very base of our understanding. Though I might practice cessation and familiarise myself with the state of recollection there is nothing I can do directly about these deeper held commitments as they are held in the space from which this activity of cessation and the motivation to bring about recollection arises. The problem is significant though, for Patanjali, not fatal.

Patanjali's practical recommendation

Patanjali observes that given that the endeavour or motivation toward non-attachment and cessation from identification can be characterised as excessive, moderate and weak it follows that there must be something primordial besides that is responsible for the ultimate release (*Y.S*, 1:22).[104] Though the endeavour toward cessation of identification can vary in strength or excessiveness whilst the release that is its result happens in a way that seems unrelated to the strength, or simply the fact, of the motivated endeavour. What is responsible then for the perfected release is something else, something primordial besides what is within the motivational reach of the individual.

The name given for this primordial power of release is *Isvara, '*the Lord'. Knowledge of this power of release comes from 'obedience to the Lord' (*Y.S.* I:23). 'The Lord' just is that primordial humanity or self, *purusa*, operating in us that is

> un-affected by any attachments that may overlay the working out of tainted motivation. (*Y.S,* I:24).
>
> In him is a never failing seed of knowledge of all things. (*Y.S*, I:25)

[102] Samskara is an impression created by activity where one has conflated what one is with what one is not.
[103] Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras." 87
[104] Whiteman, *Aphorisms on Spiritual Method*. p.171.

The Lord, in effect is the Idea of *purusa*, it is the Idea of that which is *visesah* (something-over-and–above), something like the "eternal ultimate difference" as that which is possessed by Plato's Idea(s).[105] This ultimate Idea, *unaffected by attachments* and the *seed of omniscience,* is the Idea Patanjali recommends we submit to the guidance of in order to attain re-collectedness (*Y.S,* II:45). It is the Idea he recommends we seek to know and 'direct' our activity toward.

If one's theistic feelers are tickled, it is worthwhile to note, as Jakubczak (2014) does, the tradition of non-theistic devotion in both yoga and *Samkhya*.[106] For the purpose of devotion is liberation. This goes only to say that we need not think of *purusa,* or *Isvara* theistically if we don't want to. A similar tension exists in Platonic scholarship with regard to the good. There is a tradition of associating the good with god or as Benitez (1995) notes.[107] The point is that in both cases there are theistic readings or deifications of these core Ideas though we need read them so.

What is more my interesting is the status of the Idea, its reality. The strength of the Idea is such that it binds all other involvements and attachments, so that when one is released from even this Idea then presumably all other attachments fall with it. The release is total or perfect. This is attributed to the nature of the Idea, that it is 'unaffected by any attachments that may overlay the working out of tainted motivation' and is 'the seed of all knowing'. It is the Idea perfectly suited for our needs and it is for this reason that Patanjali recommends we orient ourselves toward and submit to it.

Another way to frame the problem is, how does one know what one knows before one knows it? The recommendation is that one orientates one's self toward, places the highest value in, *purusa*. The Idea of which is the unmediated self; free from attachment and any drive to attachment, the seed of all knowing or simply the knowing power itself. However, as long as it remains an Idea, as long as I have a sense of what liberation is, I am bound by that Idea in that I pursue it, in that I take myself to lack it, and so I am not liberated. For to have an object of one's knowing or of one's devotion is to be other than that object.

[105] Whiteman. p.171.
[106] Marzenna Jakubczak, "The Purpose of Non-Theistic Devotion in the Classical Indian Tradition of Sāṃkhya – Yoga," *Argument : Biannual Philosophical Journal* 4, no. 1 (2014): 55–68.
[107] Eugenio E Benitez, "The Good or The Demiurge : Causation and the Unity of Good in Plato," *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 28, no. 2 (1995): 113–40.

Watson (1982) frames the same recommendation slightly differently

Watson (1982) notes the same recommendation whilst bringing our attention to the shear attractiveness/desirability of the Idea and specifically the pull to identify one's self with it. To take one' self to be the source, the fountain of all knowing and wisdom. The non-attachment to even this is the release whose final resting is the state of liberation, unmediated and uninterrupted self-knowing. However, the release itself, rather than being the product of motivated action, is outside of the reach of the individual who endeavours to effect it. That is the whole point and the reason that it is recommended that we submit to the Idea.

Watson (1982) here is speaking specifically of the difference between *sam* and *a-samprajnata samadhi*

> One question of course remains: how do we get there? I can guarantee no answer. And Patanjali is clear only to a point. In fact, beyond a certain measure, it is hard to see to what "clarity" could come. But this much, at least, is obvious. What we need is aloofness from *samskaras* [tendencies toward involvement or attachment]. We need to effect detachment from them, since they color aspects of self, or of what gets taken as self. This is our problem and it is a great one. Patanjali has told us that to stop mind-movings (*cittavrttinirodha*) we must indulge in practice (*abhydsa*) and detachment *(vairagya*)…
>
> But how do we adopt a practice (*abhydsa*) effecting detachment (*vairagya*) from members of our supposed person which we only can know in a non-conscious way? How do we break relations with someone known to us only by hearsay? That is our problem, and it is not easy.[108]

This is the point that one's deeper involvements only become apparent to one through *samadhi.* and even then one's *samadhi* may still be liable to rest in or be disrupted by a subtle state of ignorance. The difficulty is the realm in which this final work, pruning away of deeply held taints, needs doing. Patanjali's solution of sorts is that there is one involvement so strong that it will bind all others.[109] What Patanjali offers is practical advice, nothing more or less. In Watson's (1982) words

[108] Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras." p.88.
[109] "*One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them"* J.R.R Tolkien. A peculiar connection though perhaps worthwhile in light of the Platonic side of the comparison

> If I seek wisdom about my true-nature, and I find I am the wisdom-giver, this will be a level of self-understanding to which I am bound to cling. This is a picture of "what I am" I am bound to like very much and to covet greatly. And if I covet it greatly enough, if I centre my attention on this understanding with sufficient strength, then inclinations emanating from acceptance of other ways of self-seeing will certainly never impinge. If my entire energy-structure is invested in one mode of believing about myself, nothing remains for investing in any other. Put simply, I just will not view myself as anything other. Whatever may then be said about these other *samskaras* [tendencies toward involvement]-Do they still exist? Don't they?-is now totally disowned. No *vairagya* [non-attachment] could be more complete. This, I think, is the most that can be said.

Rather I think, no involvement could bring about a non-attachment so complete when it itself is released. The reason for the all-binding effect of this final and ultimate involvement is that it touches everything that can be known and so all the possible ways in which I might know myself. It should be noted that it is not correct to think of this recommendation as imaginative or contrived. The state of absolute or seamless knowing that is *samadhi* is real and so to be involved in a mode of self-identification with this level of being is neither contrived nor imaginative, it is itself an end that is worthwhile and hard to attain. It is to know one's self as being.

> Patanjali's solution, and this is crucial, is simple practical advice. And, I would add, correct. What we cannot say is the one thing we most burn to say, which is how to rid ourselves of this final most salutary *samskara*. For only total *samskara*-release is *kaivalya* [liberation]. Patanjali concludes his remarks with this comment:
>
> "In the *nirodhah* [cessation] of this one also, so the *nirodhah* [cessation] of all, lies *nirbija-samadhi*.[seedless recollection]" (*Y.S,* 1:51).[110]

and the story of the ring of Gyges. It is the 'ring of power' that we are likely to want to cling to the most that in the end needs to be destroyed, let go of.

[110] Kesarcodi-Watson, "Samādhi in Patañjali ' s Yoga Sūtras." p.88.

CONCLUSION

With the intention of re-affirming the central value and importance of self-inquiry I have endeavoured to account for what it is with the help of Plato, Patanjali and a comparison between them. I proposed two senses in which we might understand self-inquiry and suggested that a complete account should speak to both senses and the relation between them. All three contexts; Plato, Patanjali and the comparison between them each helped us understand the relationship between these two senses of self-inquiry and the problems faced by them.

In the first sense, the endeavour is carried out mostly in the domain of discursive knowledge. It proves to be to our benefit here that we are able to discern and distinguish those principles and ideas that lie at the root of our thought and action as being distinct from ourselves. In this endeavour, we examine our lives by the investigation of those ideas and values that have most shaped it. Ideally, the goal is to discern everything that is not essential to one's self as being other than one's self. The ability to apprehend something discursively is essential to this.

This goal of discerning difference seems, as we noted, to operate primarily in the domain of discursive knowledge. Plato perhaps helped us best understand how this mode of knowing relates to hypotheses. In short, it moves from and depends on them. Three basic hypotheses we have encountered here are the PNC, the hypothesis of comparability and the hypothetical distinction between knower and known that we attribute as the base of our discursive thinking. The goal in the first sense is to become aware of the operation these principles in our thought as well as the value judgements that they help us establish, or that are intrinsic to them. We endeavour to come to an apprehension of these hypothetical roots of thought and activity and to understand the effects of their operation. The goal is just to recognise them and their operation and in so doing we create distance or difference between them and ourselves as we are what comes to recognise them. In this way, the process of self-inquiry in this first sense is thought about as a process of distillation.

In yogic terminology, self-inquiry in this first sense is to become aware of those deeply held seeds, those impulses towards identification, or modes of ignorance, that one holds in one's being. The initial or primary ignorance is identifying one's self, the knowing power, with the instrument of knowing. As such, the most important discernment is the discernment of the difference between the two. In the comparative instance, the work in the first sense was to become aware of the 'common objects' that one pre-comparatively assumes in order to make a comparison. The assumption of this kind in the existent comparative literature between Plato

and Patanjali casts this common object as ‘liberation’ or as a shared fundamental orientation between the two. As far as pre-comparatively assumed ‘common objects’ go this did not create too much distortion in the philosophies only it required that we assume we know what the ultimate goals of each are. That is, it required that we assumed knowledge to what *purusa* and the good are. This seemed to be just what we don’t want to or in fact can’t do if we want to understand either system. These Ideas are perhaps most simply defined by our inability to grasp or reach them.

Nonetheless, we noticed in the comparative instance that prior to the assumption of a ‘common object’ between the two philosophies was simple hypothesis of comparability. The hypothesis that the two things compared are comparable. Since we wanted to avoid assuming any further ground so as not to impose that ground as a kind of standard on what we compare we looked to what was involved in this hypothesis, what it itself presupposed, seeking to find the justification for the comparison there. We found that in order to compare at all one presupposes an underlying sameness or unity to what is compared. The same underlying unity that we presuppose in the act of division as the use of the PNC in the division of the soul helped us recognise. This underlying unity, if we could affirm or come to know it, would justify the comparison without needing to assume a ‘common object’. This had the benefit of justifying and explaining the ability to compare as well as not imposing a foreign object or standard onto what one compares. In this way it seemed to satisfy the merit worthy non-distortion impulse that we located in the thesis of incommensurability/incomparability without having to deny the possibility of comparison. I then suggested that we consider this underlying sameness, the presupposed unity between two philosophers/ies, to be one’s self, the comparer. It is here that the comparative project met with that of self-inquiry in the second sense.

Again, in the first sense we are to examine and excavate the operation of hypotheses and principles in our thought and activity that previously lay unexamined. More significantly, such ideas that, prior to examination and discernment, enmesh themselves in what we take ourselves to be. These are the ideas that shape and guide our activity in the world. The work in the first sense is becoming aware of these ideas, specifically of their evaluative dimension. The yogic side helped us consider this process as a kind of distillation from one’s self of what is not essential to one’s self. What is essential, the fact and power of knowing, is then to be discerned from all that it is tied up with. Chiefly or in the final instance, the instrument of knowing, intelligence. The fact of knowing is such that it out shines or out lasts that which is not essential to it, that which does not have the same permanence as it. Like for instance a discernible object

of knowledge that appears and disappears according to its usefulness to the present circumstance or not. The fact of knowing, the knowing power that is one's true nature, is what remains consistent through experience. It is the changeless or immutable 'background' that is the 'object' of *samadhi* and *nous* and that is presupposed in the fluctuations of our discursive states.

Part of the reason for the self-inquiry focus had to do with its ability to impress on us the personal dimension of the more general problem of justifying or 'arriving' at this presupposed or underlying unity. This underlying sameness or unity that we recognise as being presupposed in our discursive thinking is such that it belongs neither to the knower nor to the known exclusively. It is prior to the distinction between them and is the underlying or in-most nature of both. It is the shared being of both of the knower and the known. By bringing one to the apprehension of this presupposition in the context of self-inquiry one brings the problem home in the sense that to deny what is presupposed is to deny one's own being. The personal effect of where we locate and identify the limit is important and valuable though not essential nor necessary. For the underlying unity belongs equally to both sides of the knower and known equation. It is the shared being or inmost know-ability of both.

Ignorance amounted to a kind of misattribution of the being of this underlying reality to what it does not belong to, that which is *becoming*, rolling in and out of being (*Rep,* 479c5-9). It is to attribute the being of the *noetic* to the discursive or *dianoetic*. To take the knowing instrument to be the knowing power. Ignorance is a misattribution or misidentification of this kind. This primary identification or misattribution then creates an assumed centre around which further conflations begin to solidify and from which further harmed activity originates. From the yogic perspective this is 'self-centredness'. From the Platonic and evaluative perspective, it is a mistaken idea of the good. Cessation was about ceasing from the identification or misattribution, not from activity.

The mistake is the attribution of the reality belonging to the knowing power, *purusa*, to the knowing instrument. From the perspective of value, it is to attribute ultimate value to something that it does not belong to. This misattribution or miss-location of ultimate value to something that it does not belong to, like power or honour, then creates a centre around that 'object' such that one begins to judge the use and benefit of everything else in reference to this centre. This foreign standard or value then becomes the source for further ignorant activity. By the Idea of the good, and our study of it, we come to appreciate all the ways in which we might misattribute

the value belonging to it to what is not it. The most refined examples, mistaken notions of the good, being knowledge and pleasure (*Rep*, 505c). The point being that the ignorance, like the mistaken identification in yoga, is the misattribution of the reality of the good itself to what it is not. The Idea of the good then becomes the standard by which we can begin to weed out these more subtle or even noble seeming, though still inappropriate, attributions of value. Ignorance in both cases is a fundamental mistake that comes to rule over or centre our activity. Activity when not harmed or informed by ignorance will not carry that harm of ignorance. Again, the goal is not a cessation of activity but a cessation of harmed activity, activity finding its origin in this ignorance.

Intelligence, operating from principles like that of the PNC and the principle of comparability, when it turns its attention on itself, can apprehend its own limit. In this way we can come to infer what is necessarily presuppose by the operation of intelligence. We discern something underlying and presupposed by recognising the limit of what thought can grasp whilst still dependent on or moving from hypotheses. As such, we can come to discern or recognise the mistake of ignorance though the discernment itself is not enough to displace us permanently from the position of ignorance. It is however necessary if we are ever to be displaced from it.

If the endeavours of self-inquiry were to remain in the discursive frame we would perpetually frustrate the attempt to know ourselves in this more intimate or non-discursive sense. We will fail to know what we previously apprehended as beyond the limit or the reach of our discursive knowing, the presupposed and underlying unity. The knowing of this underlying unity required a different mode of knowing. The first sense of self-inquiry builds the expectation that self-inquiry is an activity where some kind of product or discernible object of knowledge is its result or goal. As we have seen, some kind of discernible product or object of knowledge is produced by self-inquiry in this first sense. We come to discern those ideas, values and principles that had until that discernment governed our thinking and activity in a pre-discursive and pre-reflective manner. However, the discursive mode of knowing precludes us from the unmediated self-knowing required for the knowing of our underlying and unified nature. All the discursive mode can grasp is an account of the self, a reflection of it, to make the self an object of its knowing. This has to do with the basic dependence of the discursive mode of knowing on the distinction between knower and known. Were we to remain in this mode of knowing perpetually we would fail in our self-knowing in the second unmediated sense. What we needed was a different mode of knowing that did not move from the basic distinction between knower and known, a non-discursive mode of knowing.

This is exactly what we find in *nous* and *samadhi*, states of seamless, non-discursive *knowing-being*. The cultivation of these states is the cultivation of the full being into the state of knowing, it is a life-shaping endeavour. These seamless *knowing-being* states seemed to provide a solution to the problem created by the first sense of self-inquiry. The problem of looking for what's looking and expecting to find something *other* than the fact of looking. Chasing our own tails so to speak. These modes of knowing suggested that we might, in our self-knowing, 'occupy that space' prior to or beyond the operations of hypothetical and discursive thought. This does not mean an inability to engage in such, in fact quite the opposite, it means only that one has not located themselves in or on hypotheses but 'in being'. This true seat of the self is what makes possible free and clear intellectual activity as it takes up no position in the discursive space. It therefore does not distort the free operation of intelligence by imposing on it the purposes and standards of a particular position that we assume and identify with in the state of ignorance. Ignorance is the investment, of either ultimate value or simply of *self*, in something, some position or idea, that is not it.

This second sense of self-inquiry faced two significant problems. The first had to do with the pre and so non-discursive way with which we hold to ignorance when it is present in our being. This is the point of the depth to which we hold the presumptions to knowledge and value in our being such that they can exercise the influence that they do on us in a pre-discursive, 'invisible' manner. The whole nature of ignorance is to be unaware of the misattribution or identification that characterises it. We are then liable, on the suggestion that we settle into a non-discursive mode of knowing, to settle into a mode of knowing that is itself conditioned by a subtle state of ignorance. That is, in our recollection and absorption in a seamless mode of knowing-being, content with the simple fact of knowing, we could be recollected with or absorbed in a knowing of ourselves *as* some or the other thing and as such perpetuate or remain in that state of ignorance. We could identify ourselves not with being itself but with something that is very much like it, like the state or sense of 'I-ness' that is one of the final and most subtle of the subordinate states of *samadhi*. This subtle identification with a way of viewing ourselves *as* something is then something that mediates our self-knowing. Self-inquiry in the second sense invites us to consider the possibility of resting in an unmediated self-knowing.

The second problem now also appears a kind of solution to the first problem. The second problem was that the non-discursive modes of seamless *knowing-being* were themselves, in both the yogic and platonic contexts, subordinated by a higher Idea. The Idea of the good and that of *purusa*. Both were Ideas of something more ultimate than *nous* and *samadhi.* It is here,

in the relation to the Ideas, that I suggested we find a meaningful difference between the two systems. Plato remains somewhat ambivalent about the good. We cannot know it, which helps press home the penultimate good of inquiry into the highest good *as* our highest good, though he does deny the reality of the good itself. In fact, it is the most real; it is the Idea that denotes ultimate reality and value. Patanjali on the other hand casts his the Idea of *purusa* as realisable, as attainable by the practitioner. However, as we just saw in Chapter 4, our inability to make sense of how this is meant to happen, how we are meant to bring it about by our own activity, leaves the yogi in a similar position with regard to their Idea as the Platonic philosopher. In both instances, the Idea is perhaps most cleanly or simply defined as that which we cannot grasp but is the most ultimate. Both the yogi and the Platonic philosopher are then in a kind of relationship to the Idea and it is the Idea that ultimately organises their activity.

I claimed that this problem turned out to be a solution to first problem faced in this second sense of self-inquiry. The Ideas by their status as *Ideas* become principles or standards by which we can begin to free ourselves of ignorance that would otherwise be hard to discern. That is, they create an Idea so ultimate that one cannot be mistaken of its reality were one to ever come to a vision of it. Put another way, they are Ideas that by contrast expose those ideas, presumptions to knowledge, and states of being that fall short of them. We can then see the Idea as serving the function of pulling us out of and helping us identify ignorance that would otherwise, given the first problem, not be discerned. In the final instance if we are to attain to an uninterrupted and unmediated self-knowing, the vision of reality itself, even these Ideas must be let go of only it seems we are incapable of doing so directly. It must, if at all, happen of its own accord.

The strongest take-away for both Plato and Patanjali then seems to be the encouragement that we centre our lives on kinds of activity that are themselves complete. Such activities produce a more complete and so more knowable state of being. Whether this then becomes a means to a further end is what we cannot say. However, by proposing the good and *purusa* we assume in some way that they are. Whether these remain eternally different Ideas or not is what we can't answer.

A more daring conclusion

The assumption at the outset of this research involved the intrinsic value of self-knowing and self-inquiry. The idea that the ultimate source of value was to be found in one's self, and that the unmediated self-knowing 'of one's self as such' is an intrinsically valuable thing. Rather,

or less clumsily, one's self just is that source of ultimate value and so unmediated self-knowing is just the full recognition or apprehension of this value. The challenge or the task of self-inquiry is to come to know one's self, to recognise and come to rest in the state of unmediated self-knowing. Instead of chasing our tails looking for what's looking we are to, in the domain of self-knowing, settle with the simple fact of looking, or the state of simply looking. Such states of seamless *knowing-being* we found in *nous* and *samadhi*. We benefit in keeping the first sense of self-inquiry alive in that it helps us, first and foremost, 'locate' this non-discursive realm by the apprehension of the limit of discursive thinking. By reflecting on hypothetical thought we come to inquire into and recognise what precedes or is presupposed by it, what lies prior to hypotheses, an underlying unity. We then let go of discursive thought in order to apprehend, become absorbed in, this seamless mode of knowing-being that is the background or shared nature of both the knower and the known.

To 'identify' one's self, one's being with the *noetic,* to rest in the recollection of one's true or underlying nature is to rest in self-knowing. There is no mediation in this self-knowing. However, if we can be pulled from this position by an Idea that seduces us by its evaluative dimension, by the sense of there being something more ultimate in terms of *self-knowing,* then we have not come to fully appreciate the value of the simple state of self-knowing. To recollect one's true nature of seamless knowing and to remain here is to be fully convinced by the innate and ultimate value of this state, the ultimate value of one's being. Such conviction would be unperturbed by the allure to identify one's self with anything else, unable to evaluate another position as more fundamental to one's self, or simply as more valuable. And so, to be fully convinced of the value of one's being by coming to know it in an unmediated way is to be unable to have one's recollection disrupted by the sense that there is something more ultimate or more valuable. The idea that has this disruptive power or potential is an idea that carries with it an evaluation of something more fundamental to one's being than the recollected state one finds one's self in. Here's the catch; if the Ideas of *purusa* and the good can unsettle us *in this manner* then we still have work to do in relation to and with them. Our task, at the end of all our exploring, is to arrive at our beginning and to know the place for the first time.

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