

# Crystallinity

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By Benjamin Wagener on November 26th, 2013.

Crystallinity as a permanent state is quite an utopia. For me it is the way we confront ourselves to reality and learn it mainly from our mistakes or half-mistakes. I think that the World as we see it is a kind of mental representation based upon our biology, on our wills and on our needs.

I already said in a previous paper that somehow what we call »consciousness« may be an extremely acute product of our biology that gives us the ability to think about reality and about our situation of beings, more precisely as human beings. I consider that many animals may have such an upper structure but it could be very different: just look at swans and ducks by example and see how they love their lacs and rivers... It is quite the same for us, we love our situation of human beings but the context with respect to swans and ducks is totally different.

We may thus think that we have indeed some strong limitations in our understanding of reality. First we may be limited essentially by our situation and condition of Human Beings. This natural limitation goes also with our social limitation. But there is more, we are not only limited by our situation that produces some unique sense of what reality is, or may be, which is directly linked to our sense of consciousness. Indeed when you look at the evolutionary states that make us what we are you may not say »cogito ergo sum« (the famous sentence of Descartes that means »I think so I am«) but, from a biological point of view, we should maybe say »sum ergo cogito«. This is indeed a very important point from a neuroscientific point of view and it may rise a serious question about the interaction between our thoughts and our biological state. This cogito of Descartes has nevertheless a huge meaning in the History of consciousness, it is a way for consciousness to speak to itself and say »I Am«.

Our brain may be thought as a very balanced and extremely intricate bio-physical organ and from those limitations comes a sense of wisdom that our elderly know very well. Indeed we learn all our life and our brain is maybe from all our organs the one that is the most evolving through our entire life. It is now well known in medicine that our brain has a natural plasticity so that it really adapts to our situation, to what we do and to what we learn. What I called crystallinity is something a little bit different.

Crystallinity is something due in part to our limitations, especially in our understanding limitations, while we learn more and more by our mistakes that we do not know much indeed. This is the significance of »crystal-ity«: under the pressure of the understanding of external reality and with the limitations that are (biologically) inherent to us the normal evolution tends to make our understanding more and more crystalline.

Crystallinity is indeed the way our thoughts and our Mind structure itself by confronting to reality and for our own best interest. Of course there is a huge amount of biology behind. We have to do according to what are important for us, our biology, with respect to our, second after seconds, encounter with reality. Indeed we have a natural biology that is also rooted in our brain, in our thinkings and in the way we conceive reality.

The fact is that the exterior realm is something extremely complex that we can understand in various ways but the normal one, the healthy one is very structured, is »crystalline«. It is the way we manage reality in a safe manner for ourselves. Our mind should naturally be very structured.

The Self (the »sum«) is something interesting from this point of view and it has a lot to do with consciousness and reality. It is something very complex that has various sides. We can by example see the Self as the instance that takes decisions and it is very interesting. But we can also see the Self as the instance that thinks and feels. It is something extremely intricate that somehow gives us an identity with respect to reality and by this it also creates a self-consciousness of ourselves.

As a elementary but fundamental limitation we can easily see how our lives all depend on the other human beings we encountered, we are limited by the fact itself of being human and it has very important consequences (e.g. how we learn to speak). Indeed our internal logic, our psychology, depend integrally on the others and in particular on the way we react and behave with this respect.

The all scheme by which we structure ourselves may be almost impossible to detail, all psychologists, psychiatrists and neuroscientists are thinking to it and the fact is that, even if we all have some understanding of it, the global picture is missing and can be incredibly fluctuant from one person to another.

The consequence is nevertheless something that we can see each day: our respective personalities. It is something curious that Personality and Self have been words quite confused in the history of psychiatry but that they are indeed the expressions of completely different things: we express our selves according to our personalities.

The pictures that come to me by thinking to it are various kinds of structures like flowers that emerge like representations of our beings. Those representation may be as different as we are physically different and may takes place on the scene of the theater that we experience each day.

At some stage of development we may experience a very safe and transparent understanding. This is the other meaning of crystallinity. We may achieve such a state of mind that things are well understood and conceived. The limitations I spoke about may then appear natural and as an important structuring part of our Self.

After a well development it is what can be expected: a very clear and structured conception of what is our Self and what is the reality we are in. It is nevertheless something very unique and personal that depends a lot on the individual we are. On the other hand we can see all around us that this development can be disturbed quite easily and many persons experience various kind of mental disorders.

Those disorders should not in my opinion be seen too dramatically. In fact, independently of this, we are all nowadays very evolved and somehow strong persons because of evolution. It can be seen that from time to time a person may not be so well adapted to the reality we are in. This can be due to various kind of confusion about our feeling of what reality is but it remains the fact that at the level of evolution that we have reached we can have a real sincere hope that anyone may have the ability to readapt, can improve and get really better. This is the role of psychologists and psychiatrists to help such readaptation but there is still an important doubt, either in psychiatry itself or in the societal conception, that a person with some disorder can really cure.

So here is a sincere personal comment for psychiatrists: think to how much a person can improve according to some strength and goodness, that we all have, and he/she will do/be so.