



Pre-requisites to Transdisciplinary Research

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1. Three types of Ignorance

Indian philosophical tradition speaks of three kinds of ignorance. One is ignorance that is aware of itself ? I know that I do not know. This is called philosophy. Ignorance that is not aware of itself is of two types. One is mere ignorance ? it does not know that it does not know. There is hope for mere ignorance to be aware of itself. Vain sorrow and grief follows and forces mere ignorance to Inquiry.

The other is learned ignorance ? self-delusion and so it thinks it knows, where as it also does not know that it does not know. There is no hope because learned ignorance conceals itself and appears as knowledge. Learned ignorance that passes for knowledge does not inquire; it does not examine; and it opposes; it is given to refutation and controversy; not to investigation. Nothing else (except what it says) is true or exists. Learned ignorance is the dogma that says "only this". Inquiry involves and is involved in a ?way of life? and authority to Inquiry comes from an authentic mode of life. Learned ignorance is pleased with itself. The Socratic method of cross-examination is Inquiry, which teaches the art of unlearning what is learnt. By the art of cross-examination not only does Socrates expose the ignorance that passes for knowledge but awakens, those whom he cross-examines, to a knowledge of which they are ignorant.

It must be clear by now, lack of appreciation of Transdisciplinarity springs from either mere ignorance or learned ignorance. Transdisciplinarity calls for philosophical attitude ?recognition that one does not know.

2. Transdisciplinarity and Worldview

Worldview that does not recognise the multi-levels of reality and their unity is an obstacle to acceptance of Transdisciplinarity. A self-concept that does not recognise the multi-levels of perception and their unity is a hindrance to the practice of Transdisciplinarity. Different levels of reality can be known only by one-to-one correspondence of levels of perception and levels of reality. Certain disciplining of body and mind is required to achieve this attuning of level of perception to the level of reality. One?s worldview and self-concept that are moulded by cognitive, conative and affective experiences need to be transcended for achieving this.

Indian tradition distinguishes four modes of mind. Mind which is mental mode of wavering (to do or not to do, to be or not to be etc.,). Intellect that helps discerning what is true and what is false. Ego that identifies of self with the body and mind. Chitta is a mental mode where mind gains knowledge by becoming what it is observing.

Organs of perception and organs of action assist illumination by Intellect. This illumination by Intellect is often obstructed by states of body and mind that are either distracting or

covering. Practice of YOGA ?disciplining of body and mind- is prescribed for attaining conditions of body and mind that facilitate attuning of the level of perception and the level of reality. Watching actions, thoughts, conduct and heart apart from breath are some of the recommended practices to witness the result of attuning level of perception and level of reality.

3. Ego states and life positions

Erikson proposed three states of ego, named as Parent, Adult and Child. Operating from a properly evolved ego state is necessary for practising Transdisciplinarity. Apart from this proper attitude towards self and others characterised by I am OK ? You are OK is essential. The other three positions (I am not OK ? You are OK, I am OK ? You are not OK, and I am not OK ? You are not OK) are a hindrance to cultivation of humility which is necessary for practice of Transdisciplinarity. You in these positions can be replaced by the world or reality to arrive at the attitude towards self and reality that is necessary for practice of Transdisciplinarity.

Response to errors in perception can range from self-deception (non-recognition of error), self-defeating (self-righteous attitude - transferring the blame to the other) and or geared to learning by accepting error and taking corrective action. Transdisciplinarity expects persons, organisations, societies to be learning rather than self-deceiving or self-defeating. This requires learning to manage ego and self vis-à-vis others and the world. Assagioli's methods for de-egoisation and oriental and occidental methods of meditation may be helpful.

4. Learning to anticipate and learning to participate

In addition to the four types learning ? learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together with, and learning to be ? learning to anticipate and learning to participate are crucial to our survival. Learning by shock or adaptation is inadequate in current circumstances. Learning to anticipate involves capacity to visualise future states and ability to image-nise. This future orientation (short-term and long-term) in itself is not sufficient. This learning to anticipate must be sufficiently wide spread to mount action in concert with others to restore the resilience of natural and social systems. Action in concert with others is to be learnt by participation. Individual learning and individual actions are insufficient to reverse the threatening trends in our environment (ecological, political, cultural or social). All these require threshold level of efforts warranting us to learn to participate or act in concert with others.