



Cosmic Consciousness

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The phrase “cosmic consciousness” has a surprising and fascinating history. I will show how it first enters into circulation in the writings of the remarkable Englishman Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), a socialist, philosopher, and prescient activist for gay rights and prison reform. Carpenter made a trip to India and Sri Lanka in 1890, where he spent two months sitting at the feet of Ramaswami, an Indian sage and disciple of Tilleinathan Swami. Carpenter invents the phrase in order to paraphrase Ramaswami’s teaching, which was itself a commonplace among the Advaita-inspired sages of the period, that there is in human beings the possibility of an all-encompassing consciousness (the Sanskrit phrase *jñāna-ākāśa* would later be offered as a translation of Carpenter’s phrase). Later still, in the writings of William James and others, the phrase acquires a new and different meaning in the idea that the cosmos itself exhibits a form of consciousness. James, indeed, uses just this phrase in his early formulation of cosmopsychism.



Ganeri is a philosopher whose work draws on a variety of philosophical traditions to construct new positions in the philosophy of mind, metaphysics and epistemology. He advocates an expanded role for cross-cultural methodologies in philosophical research, together with enhanced cultural diversity in the philosophical curriculum. Ganeri has published a wealth of books and articles. He is editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy* and co-author of *Classical Indian Philosophy: A History of Philosophy without Any Gaps, vol. 5 (OUP 2020)*. He joined the Fellowship of the British Academy in 2015 and won the Infosys Prize in the Humanities the same year, the only philosopher to do so.

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