

LOVE VERSUS IDENTITY

(In one of the last issues of *The Philosophical Quarterly* (39/2, July 1966) Prof. G. R. Malkani published an article entitled "Identity versus Love" (pp. 97-108). Circumstances have made it as it were the swansong of this convinced Advaitin. It ought not to be forgotten for it is markedly characteristic of this fertile writer and able publisher who was ever eager to face upto philosophical challenges and welcomed any solid discussion. In order to honour him and to bridge over the regretted gap between the periodical with which he identified his intellectual career and its successor *The Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, I present the following critical reflections. When I sent them to him, he was kind enough to grant them some serious value and promised to published them. He would have, I trust, been glad to see here realised that promise which he himself was unfortunately prevented to fulfil).

In his article, Prof. Malkani tells us in the first place that "it is arguable that these two different ways, (namely, Identity and Love,) in which man can realise his highest destiny are not exclusive. At least the Advaitist thinks so.... Most people are qualified to pursue the path of Love.... Very few are qualified for the method of Identity.... But the method of identity.. may be preceded by love and also followed by it.... There is a kind of super-love where love itself is fulfilled. Dualities of any kind do not obtain here; for the human has given place to the Divine" (97). This means obviously that in some mysterious and most elevated sense love finds its perfect realisation in Identity. Unfortunately, the rest of the article fails to clarify this important statement.

Prof. Malkani further records the repugnance of the followers of love for the philosophy of identity or *advaita*. This is due, he thinks, to "misunderstanding about the Advaitic position." The latter he intends to clarify but only after critically examining the other position, in which he includes *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and, in the vaguest way, Christianity.

"The dualist," he says, "may hold the view that God is the primary reality, and that God has created *man* and the rest of the universes" (96). We may remark here that it is difficult to know

whom Prof. Malkani has in mind as the dualist. It cannot be Madhva whose dualism denies creation. And, while the view referred to is Christian, its further understanding by Malkani takes no account of the precise doctrine of creation according to Christianity. It would in any case be misleading to designate Christianity as *dvaita* when it is actually much closer to *advaita* (understood literally as non-dualism, not as monism) than to such declared forms of *dvaita* as Sankhya or Madhivism.

Whoever be this so-called dualist, Prof. Malkani finds difficulty with his view. For, while it is possible to conceive how the non-spiritual can be created (as *posited*—but in which sense he does not say—or *perceived*, or *imagined* as in a dream) “we have no instance within our experience which can make the creation of the *spiritual* meaningful to us. Whatever may be created, spirits are never created” (98). This is so because creation understood as self-communication of God’s spiritual nature would imply, according to Malkani, that “the spirit of God is divisible into parts” (*ibid*). This is his great objection, and it would obviously be valid also against creation of the non-spiritual if this were understood similarly as a form of divine self-communication, but I doubt whether Malkani meant this when he said that the non-spiritual might possibly be *posited* by God.

His other objection concerns the created spirit. If it is created, it is finite and, if it is a soul, it is “enclosed within a body”. Further, “most theistic systems conceive of the soul not as all-pervasive and universal, but as *atomic* in size and so indivisible. This is . . . a materialistic conception of it” (99). We may agree that those systems for which the soul is atomic in size are materialistic but most of the Western systems are innocent of this conception even when they agree that the soul is in some sense, not as spirit but as embodied spirit, located in space and time. Such systems also would be materialistic according to Prof. Malkani.

For Rāmānuja, the organic unity of soul and body in man constitutes the archetype according to which we may understand the unity of Lord and creation in the one Brahman. Apart from his own *sāttvic* body, the Lord has (through creation in the form of *pariṇāma* or self-modification of that body) a hierarchy of other bodies : gross (*prakṛti*), subtle (the trans-migrating souls), and blissful (the liberated ones). Thus, “there is no soul (not even

the divine *Ātman* or Lord) without a body and vice-versa. The two together constitute one organic unity. This conception of the individual soul is also, in our opinion, materialistic" (100). I agree here with Prof. Malkani that, if every spirit has to be embodied — even if only in a glorious body made of *sattva*—such a conception is materialistic, but I wish now to discuss his double objection.

Is it true that we materialize the spirit if we hold, on the one hand, that the divine Spirit can create limited spirits and, on the other hand, that such limited spirits can be embodied and thus in some sense located in time and space? I shall answer this question in the light of the teaching of saint Thomas Aquinas.

First of all, while admitting that no analogy from experience can equate divine creation, I contend that there do exist within our experience instances which can make the creation of the spiritual meaningful to us. There are, indeed, cases where new and limited spiritual realities are produced by the causal influence of a spiritual agent. For instance, a teacher who communicates his knowledge to pupils produces in their minds new and limited cognitions which are due to his causality as a spiritual agent. The analogy becomes even more striking if we suppose the teacher to be a perfect *guru* who out of pity enlightens an aspirant. The latter then comes to share in the perfect knowledge of his guru without in any way dividing, decreasing or increasing that perfect knowledge. It is, indeed, characteristic of a spiritual perfection that it can be participated without being divided into parts or affected in any way. The resulting participation depends ontologically on its spiritual cause without which it would not have come to exist and to be what it is and yet it is really distinct and finite. Its cause, on the other hand remains transcendent and independent of its effect which it has originated freely and not to fulfil any need of its own. This analogy, though very imperfect since the produced knowledge is not a subsistent reality but an endowment graciously vouchsafed to an already subsistent pupil, is yet relevant to show that the absolute Spirit can, without any inner division or change, produce freely other spirits, limited and dependent *qua* beings upon itself, and within which it will be most intimately immanent while retaining its perfect transcendence.

Another analogy is that of the man of science, say a mathematician, who conceives for the first time a geometrical figure

such as the circle. This scientific conception is perfectly definite in contrast with the circles encountered in nature which never adequate it perfectly (for instance, their circumference can never be perfectly continuous and without breadth). It is, therefore, not simply produced by them, but is a perfect idea whose mental existence and definite essence are rigorously due to the free conception of the spiritual agent by which and in which that idea exists. This analogy shows well how a piece of spiritual reality, in this case, an idea, can not only arise but also continue and even be reabsorbed in a consciousness to which it owes the whole of itself. But as an analogy it is more imperfect than the preceding one because the originated reality is, in this case, an accident which perfects the conscious mind in which it abides. But we could possibly conceive of a perfect mathematician for whom any such production of a definite figure would simply be an act of detailing his perfect intuitive (non conceptual) knowledge for the sake of communication. Other analogies, taken from the field of volition, could also be developed which could make us understand somehow the sovereign efficiency and freedom of a divine *fiat* ("let that arise") or command from the perfect Spirit. Thus, examples (as required by Indian logic) are not lacking to support the conception of creation out of nothing except the divine consciousness and will (which are identical in the Creator) without implying any materialisation of that creating Spirit.

As to the relation between creature and Creator, it is obviously not reciprocal. As Śaṅkara says explicitly, "Brahman is the Ātman of the universe, but the universe is not the Ātman of Brahman" (*Ved. Sūtra Bhāṣya*, 2,1,9). Aristotle and Aquinas may help us to understand this. According to their very elaborate theory of relation, whether a relation is true or not depends on the existence of a foundation of that relation; but whether it is real or only logical depends on whether that foundation is intrinsic to the related or extrinsic to it. Now the foundation required for the creature-Creator relation is the ontological novelty of the creature, a novelty which is intrinsic to the creature alone, since the Creator remains unchanged by his creation. Hence, that relation is real on the side of the creature but merely logical on the side of the Creator. (Just as the relation between knower and known is real in the knower insofar as he has changed by his act of knowing, but only logical in the known which has not changed

by becoming known). The relation, therefore, which ensues from creating neither really affects nor materializes the Creator.

As to the question whether a created spirit can be intrinsically embodied, it offers no unsurmountable logical difficulty. Once we admit, according to the above explanations, that created spirits are possible as partial and imperfect participations which totally depend *qua* beings on the absolute Spirit, it is natural that they should form a hierarchy of specifically different degrees of finite spirituality which may range from bodiless to embodied spirits. The ontology and epistemology of the former (called "separated" finite substances, or angels in the Western tradition) has been fully elaborated in the Christian treatises of angelology; whereas the philosophical treatment of the embodied or human soul-spirits is the object of philosophical psychology.

To conclude this whole question, we may say that the acceptance of the reality of creation as delineated above does in no way detract from a strict adherence to the essentials of *advaita*. *Advaita* does not mean monism but non-dualism. It asserts that there is only one independent Absolute, which is the *nirguṇa Brahman* or incomplex God, the Fulness of Reality Knowledge-Infinite (*Satyam-Jñānam-anantam*), Bliss (*Ānanda*), Power (*Śakti*), etc., and that no other being is absolute or ontologically independent of it. While created beings can be substances (*saguṇa dravya*), as recognised by Śāṅkara, they can never be *a se* (existing simply *by themselves*, as the Absolute, whose essence is to be). Yet they are not divine accidents, for they do not add anything to the creating Fulness, but are freely produced participations of that Fulness. As creatures endowed with a spiritual soul, we are born in ignorance though meant to achieve omniscience. We naturally begin with the false conception of ourselves and material objects as so many absolute independent beings. This innate ignorance characterised by *dvaita*, superimposes absoluteness upon the relative and, even when it conceives of a supreme Being or God, it superimposes upon it the characters of the relative and individualises it into a *saguṇa Brahman*. But the search for the supreme and total Cause of ourselves and the universe can lead us to the knowledge of the *Brahman-Ātman* independently of which no other being can be properly conceived or exist. While in our ignorance we used to conceive this dependent being as absolute or as a partial

or a body of the Absolute it is now seen that such thinking was *adhyāsa* or false superimposition. With regard to the Absolute the finite is not a *viśesa* or a *viśesana*, i. e., a differentiating element or addition, but an *upādhi*, i. e., a fictitious affix. This does not mean that it has not got all the imparted reality which a creature can receive but that it adds nothing to the Fulness. The finite (*alpa*) cannot increase the infinite (*Bhūman*). Being only a dependent participation and reflection, not a real part (*amsa*) of, or an addition to, the Absolute, it can be compared to a magic transformation which leaves the magician unchanged, or a bounteous dream which does not enrich the dreamer. The point of such comparisons is, however, not to dispel the dependent reality of creatures (as in Buddhism) but to maintain the transcendence of the Creator.

This *advaita* is expressed in the statement *Tattvamasi* (Thou art) of which the second part of Prof. Malkani's article recalls the impeccable Śāṅkarian exegesis. This interpretation unveils the *literal* meaning of the text (understood within its proper context) by a clear recourse to the *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā* of its three terms. This *lakṣaṇā* (indication of the special secondary meaning intended in the sentence) is *jahad* (destructive, negative) of all the purely mundane connotations of the terms, and *ajahad* (retentive) of the *svārtha* or essential meaning of those terms which it elevates transcendently above all understanding corresponding to worldly experience. Thus explained the sentence means that the purified and elevated "thou", i. e., the inner, unchanging Root-Cause, ruling *Antaryāmin*, illumining *sākṣin*, and supreme *Ātman* of Svetaketu (or any man) is by pure identity (are not in any relational sense) the purified and slovated "that", i. e., the inner, unchanging Root-Cause and Lord of all that can be pointed out as "that", in short, of the whole universe. In other terms, my supreme *Ātman* (attainable through retrogressive inner search down to the very root of my being) is the supreme *Brahman*. Or, in the terms of saint Augustine, "thou art, O God, more interior to me than my innermost and superior to my uppermost." It is not I as the experiencer who am Brahman but Brahman is the *Ātman* of this and every other experiencer : *Atmā sa bhokturiti* (note the genitive), as Śāṅkara expresses it pithily in *Ved. Sūt. Bhāṣya*, 1,1,1 when defining the Vedantin's tenet¹.

The kind of unity which links the experiencer (*bhoktr*) with his supreme (*Ātman*) is called *tādātmya* ("having-that-as-ātman"). This cannot mean here identity pure and simple but can only designate the kind of *unreciprocal* relation which binds an effect to its innermost and total Cause (*upādāna*, a term often mistranslated as material cause—how can the pure *Cit* be a material cause?—and better rendered by Malkani as substantial cause; I, however, prefer to say immanent or inner cause). It is the tightest kind of unity, short of pure identity, since it subjects the whole being *qua* being to the total Cause which penetrates it most intimately as the Planitude imbibes the totality of each one of its participations.

However, this unity can become even more perfect. It can, indeed, be merely "existing" me (to use 'exist' in an active sense) as unrecognised causality or it can become fully recognised by me. Between these two extremes lies the domain of my spiritual love for God. This domain is animated by the dynamism of my *Brahma-jijñāsā* or intellectual thirst for God. This is a desire for a supreme experience, for "a knowledge which culminates in comprehension" (*avagati-paryantam jñānam*), since "the comprehension of Brahman is, indeed, the end of man" (*Brahmavagtirhipurusarthah*), as Śaṅkara writes in *Ved. Sut. Bh.*, 1, 1, 1. But he also recognises that no word, concept or *manovrtti* can be the means of such a realisation of Brahman, *yato vāco nivartanta aprapyā manasa saha* (wherefrom words recede, together with the mind, not having attained it : *Taittiriya Upanisad*, 2, 4). How, indeed, could anything finite, such as a concept or even a whole *sruti*, inform an intellect adequately about the Fulness? The intellect is open through its unlimited dynamism to receive that supreme *Jneya* (Reality to be known). St. Thomas Aquinas provides the following solution : for man to enter into the perfect intellectual possession of God, a free self-gift of the very essence of God is required by which he directly illumines man's intellect so that in this experience God is not only the Reality known but the immediate Informer of that intellect. Thus, besides the *ontological* presence and compenetration of God as Creator in all his creatures, there is another, free and beatifying, compenetration, which pertains to the *intentional order*, and by which God surrenders lovingly to those purified created spirits which their *Brahma-jijñāsā* has sattuned to his divine Love. When the supreme *Atman*, who is the supreme object of all love (*na va are sarvasya kāmāya*

sarvaṃspriyaṃ bhavati. Atmanas-tu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati: Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up., 2, 4,5) and is pure consciousness, thus communicates himself in the pure union of blissful love, man's intellect really shares in the very divine Consciousness and Omniscience; and this unity in consciousness implies the highest unity in love and bliss, the identity begun by love and achieved by love. "Before you loved me, I loved you," said the Lord Jesus.

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NOTES

1. Since 1954, I have often recalled the importance of *lakṣaṇā* in Śaṅkarian exegesis and, parallally, of intrinsic analogy in Thomism; of especially, *The Correct Interpretation of the Definitions of the Absolute according to Śaṅkara and Aquinas*, in *The Philosophical quarterly*, Jan. '55, 187-194; *Towards Reorienting Indian Philosophy* Ibid., Jan. '57, 241-243; *The Logical Structure of "Tattvamasi" according to Sureśvara*, Ibid., Jan. '61, 255-266; *Some Governing Principles of Indian Philosophy*, Ibid., Jan. '63, 255-257; cf, also the book *Religious Hinduism*, St. Paul Press, Allahabad 3rd edition, 1959, chapter on Śaṅkara.