

Personal and Impersonal God

by T. Subba Row

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[Page 198] At the outset I shall request my readers (such of them at least as are not acquainted with the Cosmological theories of the Idealistic thinkers of Europe) to examine John Stuart Mill's Cosmological speculations as contained in his examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy, before attempting to understand the Adwaita doctrine; and I beg to inform them beforehand that in explaining the main principles of the said doctrine, I am going to use, as far as it is convenient to do so, the phraseology adopted by English psychologists of the Idealistic school of thought. In dealing with the phenomena of our present plane of existence John Stuart Mill ultimately came to the conclusion that matter, or the so-called external phenomena, are but the creation of our mind; they are the mere appearances of a particular phase of our subjective self, and of our thoughts, volitions, sensations and emotions which in their totality constitute the basis of that Ego. Matter then is the permanent possibility of sensations, and the so-called Laws of matter are, properly speaking, the Laws which govern the succession and coexistence of our states of consciousness. Mill further holds that properly speaking there is no [Page 199] noumenal Ego. The very idea of a mind existing separately as an entity, distinct from the states of consciousness which are supposed to inhere in it, is in his opinion illusory, as the idea of an external object, which is supposed to be perceived by our senses.

Thus the ideas of mind and matter, of subject and object, of the Ego and external world, are really evolved from the aggregation of our mental states which are the only realities so far as we are concerned.

The chain of our mental states or states of consciousness is "a double-headed monster", according to Professor Bain, which has two distinct aspects, one objective and the other subjective. Mr. Mill has paused here, confessing that psychological analysis did not go any further; the mysterious link which connects together the train of our states of consciousness and gives rise to our Ahankaram in this condition of existence, still remains an incomprehensible mystery to Western psychologists, though its existence is but dimly perceived in the subjective phenomena of memory and expectation.

On the other hand, the great physicists of Europe are gradually coming to the conclusion [see Tyndall's Belfast Address. – S.R.] that mind is the product of matter, or that it is one of the attributes of matter in some of its conditions. It would appear, therefore, from the speculations of Western psychologists that matter is evolved from mind and that mind is evolved from matter. These two propositions are apparently irreconcilable. [Page 200] Mill and Tyndall have admitted that Western science is yet unable to go deeper into the question. Nor is it likely to solve the mystery hereafter, unless it calls Eastern occult science to its aid and takes a more comprehensive view of the capabilities of the real subjective self of man and the various aspects of the great objective universe. The great Adwaitee philosophers of ancient Aryavarta have examined the relationship between subject and object in every condition of existence in this solar

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system in which this differentiation is presented. Just as a human being is composed of seven principles, differentiated matter in the solar system exists in seven different conditions. These different states of matter do not all come within the range of our present objective consciousness. But they can be objectively perceived by the spiritual Ego in man. To the liberated spiritual monad of man, or to the Dhyan Chohans, every thing that is material in every condition of matter is an object of perception. Further, *Pragna* or the capacity of perception, exists in seven different aspects corresponding to the seven conditions of matter. Strictly speaking, there are but six states of matter, the so-called seventh state being the aspect of cosmic matter in its original undifferentiated condition. Similarly there are six states of differentiated *Pragna*, the seventh state being a condition of perfect unconsciousness. By differentiated *Pragna*, I mean the condition in which *Pragna* is split up into various states of consciousness.

Thus we have six states of consciousness, either objective or subjective for the time being, as [Page 201] the case may be, and a perfect state of unconsciousness, which is the beginning and the end of all conceivable states of consciousness, corresponding to the states of differentiated matter and its original undifferentiated basis which is the beginning and the end of all cosmic evolutions. It will be easily seen that the existence of consciousness is necessary for the differentiation between subject and object. Hence these two phases are presented in six different conditions, and in the last state there being no consciousness as above stated, the differentiation is question ceases to exist. The number of these various conditions is different in different systems of philosophy. But whatever may be the number of divisions, they all lie between perfect unconsciousness at one end of the line and our present state of consciousness or *Bahirpragna* at the other end.

To understand the real nature of these different states of consciousness, I shall request my readers to compare the consciousness of ordinary man with the consciousness of the astral man, and again compare the latter with the consciousness of the spiritual Ego in man. In these three conditions the objective universe is not the same. But the difference between the Ego and the non-Ego is common to all these conditions. Consequently, admitting the correctness of Mill's reasoning as regards the subject and object of our present plane of consciousness, the great Adwaites of India have extended the same reasoning to other states of consciousness, and came to the conclusion that the various conditions of the Ego and the non-Ego [Page 202] were but the appearances of one and the same entity – the ultimate state of unconsciousness.

This entity is neither matter nor spirit; it is neither Ego nor non-Ego; and it is neither object nor subject. In the language of Hindu philosophers it is the original and eternal combination of Purusha and Prakriti. As the Adwaites hold that an external object is merely the product of our mental states, Prakriti is nothing more than illusion, and Purush is the only reality; it is the *one* existence which remains eternal in this universe of Ideas. This entity then is the Parabrahmam of the Adwaites. Even if there were to be a personal God with anything like a material *Upadhi* (physical basis of whatever form), from the standpoint of an Adwaites there will be as much reason to doubt his noumenal existence as there would be in the case of any other object. In their opinion, a conscious God cannot be the origin of the universe, as his Ego would be the effect of a previous cause, if the word conscious conveys but its ordinary meaning. They cannot admit that the grand total of all states of consciousness in the universe is their deity, as these states are constantly changing and as cosmic idealism ceases during Pralaya. There is only one permanent condition in the universe which is the state of perfect unconsciousness, bare *Chidakasam* (field of consciousness) in fact.

When my readers once realise the fact that this grand universe is in reality but a huge aggregation of

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various states of consciousness, they will not be surprised to find that the ultimate state of [Page 203] unconsciousness is considered as Parabrahmam by the Adwaites.

The idea of a God, Deity, Iswar, or an impersonal God (if consciousness is one of his attributes) involves the idea of Ego or non-Ego in some shape or other, and as every conceivable Ego or non-Ego is evolved from this primitive element (I use this word for want of a better one) the existence of an extra-cosmic god possessing such attributes prior to this condition is absolutely inconceivable. Though I have been speaking of this element as the condition of unconsciousness, it is, properly speaking, the *Chidakasam* or *Chinmatra* of the Hindu philosophers which contains within itself the potentiality of every condition of “Pragna,” and which results as consciousness on the one hand and the objective universe on the other, by the operation of its latent *Chichakti* (the power which generates thought).

Before proceeding to discuss the nature of *Parabrahmam*. It is to be stated that in the opinion of Adwaites, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmasutras* fully support their views on the subject. It is distinctly affirmed in the *Upanishads* that *Parabrahmam*, which is but the bare potentiality of *Pragna*, [The power or the capacity that gives rise to perception] – is not an aspect of *Pragna* or Ego in any shape, and that it has neither life nor consciousness. The reader will be able to ascertain that such is really the case on examining the *Mundaka* and *Mandukya Upanishads*. The language used here and there in the *Upanishads* is apt to mislead one into the belief that such [Page 204] language points to the existence of a conscious Iswar. But the necessity for such language will perhaps be rendered clear from the following considerations.

From a close examination of Mill’s cosmological theory the difficulty will be clearly seen referred to above, of satisfactorily accounting for the generation of conscious states in any human being from the standpoint of the said theory. It is generally stated that sensations arise in us from the action of external objects around us: they are the effects of impressions made on our senses by the objective world in which we exist. This is simple enough to the ordinary mind, however difficult it may be to account for the transformation of a cerebral nerve-current into a state of consciousness.

But from the standpoint of Mill’s theory we have no proof of the existence of any external object; even the objective existence of our own senses is not a matter of certainty to us. How, then, are we to account for and explain the origin of our mental states, if they are the only entities existing in this world? No explanation is really given by saying that one mental state gives rise to another mental state, to a certain extent at all events, under the operation of the so-called psychological “Laws of Association”. Western psychology honestly admits that its analysis has not gone any further. It may be inferred, however, from the said theory that there would be no reason for saying that a material *Upadhi* (basis) is necessary for the existence of mind or states of consciousness.

As is already indicated, the Aryan psychologists [Page 205] have traced this current of mental states to its source – the eternal *Chinmatra* existing everywhere. When the time for evolution comes this germ of *Pragna* unfolds itself and results ultimately as *Cosmic Ideation*. Cosmic ideas are the conceptions of all the conditions of existence in the Cosmos existing in what may be called the universal mind (the demiurgic mind of the Western Kabalists).

This *Chinmatra* exists as it were at every geometrical point of the infinite *Chidakasam*. This principle

then has two general aspects. Considered as something objective it is the *eternal Asath – Mulaprakriti* or *Undifferentiated Cosmic matter*. From a subjective point of view it may be looked upon in two ways. It is *Chidakasam* when considered as the field of Cosmic ideation; and it is *Chinmatra* when considered as the germ of Cosmic ideation. These three aspects constitute the highest Trinity of the Aryan Adwaitee philosophers. It will be readily seen that the last-mentioned aspect of the principle in question is far more important to us than the other two aspects; for, when looked upon in this aspect the principle under consideration seems to embody within itself the great Law of Cosmic Evolution. And therefore the Adwaitee philosophers have chiefly considered it in this light, and explained their cosmogony from a subjective point of view. In doing so, however, they cannot avoid the necessity of speaking of a universal mind (and this is *Brahma*, the Creator) and its ideation. But it ought not to be inferred therefrom that this universal mind necessarily belongs to an Omnipresent living conscious Creator, simply because in [Page 206] ordinary parlance a mind is always spoken of in connection with a particular living being. It cannot be contended that a material *Upadhi* is indispensable for the existence of mind or mental states when the objective universe itself is, so far as we are concerned, the result of our states of consciousness. Expressions implying the existence of a conscious *Iswar* which are to be found here and there in the *Upanishads* should not therefore be literally construed.

It now remains to be seen how Adwaitees account for the origin of mental states in a particular individual. Apparently the mind of a particular human being is not the universal mind. Nevertheless Cosmic ideation is the real source of the states of consciousness in every individual. Cosmic ideation exists everywhere; but when placed under restrictions by a material *Upadhi* it results as the consciousness of the individual inhering in such *Upadhi*. Strictly speaking, an Adwaitee will not admit the objective existence of this material *Upadhi*. From his stand-point it is *Maya* or illusion which exists as a *necessary condition of Pragna*. But to avoid confusion, I shall use the ordinary language; and to enable my readers to grasp my meaning clearly the following simile may be adopted. Suppose a bright light is placed in the centre with a curtain around it. The nature of the light that penetrates through the curtain and becomes visible to a person standing outside depends upon the nature of the curtain. If several such curtains are thus successively placed around the light, it will have to penetrate [Page 207] through all of them; and a person standing outside will only perceive as much light as is not intercepted by all the curtains. The central light becomes dimmer and dimmer as curtain after curtain is placed before the observer; and as curtain after curtain is removed the light becomes brighter and brighter until it reaches its natural brilliancy. Similarly, universal mind or Cosmic ideation becomes more and more limited and modified by the various *Upadhis* of which a human being is composed; and when the action or influence of these various *Upadhis* is successively controlled, the mind of the individual human being is placed *en rapport* with the universal mind and his ideation is lost in Cosmic ideation.

As I have already said, these *Upadhis* are strictly speaking the conditions of the gradual development or evolution of *Bahipragna* – or consciousness in the present plane of our existence – from the original and eternal *Chinmatra* which is the seventh principle in man, and the *Parabrahmam* of the Adwaitees.

This then is the purport of the Adwaitee philosophy on the subject under consideration, and it is, in my humble opinion, in harmony with the *Arhat* doctrine relating to the same subject. The latter doctrine postulates the existence of Cosmic matter in an undifferentiated condition throughout the infinite expanse of space. Space and time are but its aspects, and *Purush*, the seventh principle of the universe, has its latent life in this ocean of Cosmic matter. The doctrine in question explains Cosmogony from an objective point of view. [Page 208]

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When the period of activity arrives, portions of the whole differentiate according to the latent law. When this differentiation has commenced, the concealed wisdom or latent *Chichakti* acts in the universal mind, and Cosmic energy or *Fohat* forms the manifested universe in accordance with the conceptions generated in the universal mind out of the differentiated principles of Cosmic matter. This manifested universe constitutes a solar system. When the period of *Pralaya* comes, the process of differentiation stops and Cosmic ideation ceases to exist; and at the time of *Brahmapralaya* or *Mahapralaya* the particles of matter lose all differentiation, and the matter that exists in the solar system returns to its original undifferentiated condition. The latent design exists in the one unborn eternal atom, the centre which exists everywhere and nowhere; and this is *the one life* that exists everywhere. Now, it will be easily seen that the undifferentiated Cosmic matter, *Purush*, and the ONE LIFE of the *Arhat* philosophers, are the *Mulaprakriti*, *Chidakasam* and *Chinmatra* of the Adwaitee philosophers. As regards Cosmogony, the *Arhat* stand-point is objective, and the Adwaitee stand-point is subjective. The *Arhat* Cosmogony accounts for evolution of the manifested solar system from undifferentiated Cosmic matter, and Adwaitee Cosmogony accounts for the evolution of *Bahipragna* from the original *Chinmatra*. As the different conditions of differentiated Cosmic matter are but the different aspects of the various conditions of *Pragna*, the Adwaitee Cosmogony is but the complement of the *Arhat* Cosmogony. The [Page 209] eternal principle is precisely the same in both the systems, and they agree in denying the existence of an extra-Cosmic God.

The *Arhats* call themselves *Atheists*, and they are justified in doing so if *theism* inculcates the existence of a conscious God governing the universe by his will-power. Under such circumstance the Adwaitee will come under the same denomination. Atheism and theism are words of doubtful import, and until their meaning is definitely ascertained it would be better not to use them in connection with any system of philosophy.