

Synthesizing the *Vedānta*:
The Theology of Pierre Johanns S.J.

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and constitutes the results of my research in the subject.

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Abstract

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was an intriguing development that took place in Bengal with regard to a Christian rapprochement with Hinduism. After the early tragic death of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy, a convert to Catholicism whose theology conveyed a positive appreciation of aspects of Hindu *advaitic* philosophy, a group of Belgian Jesuits in Calcutta sought to develop the theological project initiated by Upādhyāy. Fr. Pierre Johanns (1882-1955), the most articulate figure of the group, began to publish a steady stream of articles in the monthly *Light of the East* that analyzed pertinent features of *Vedāntic* thought from the perspective of his neo-Thomistic presuppositions. In his articles, Johanns engages in a thorough explication and analysis of the thinking of the Hindu *ācāryas* Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha. He attempts to fashion a creative synthesis of their views, constructing a new, holistic metaphysic from the raw materials of their respective philosophical theologies. The synthesis would serve as a foundation upon which to erect the superstructure of Christian revelation, which Johanns believes will fulfill the *Vedāntic* natural religion. This thesis will undertake an examination of the theological writings of Fr. Pierre Johanns, discussing how Johanns interacted with *Vedāntic* philosophy and assessing the success of his project.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the material with which Johanns was dealing (*Vedāntic* philosophy) and the theological sources which influenced his methodology and treatment of the material (Thomist approaches to other traditions; fulfilment approaches toward Hinduism). The second chapter focuses on the historical context which contributed to Johanns' intellectual background, discussing the phenomenon of Western Orientalism, the Jesuit philosophy of education, and the thought of some key Catholics in Bengal (Upādhyāy, Animananda, Wallace, Dandoy) who shifted the theological tone toward positive engagement with Hindu philosophy. The third chapter focuses on Johanns' treatment of the philosophical theology of Śaṅkara. The fourth chapter details how Johanns interacted with the system of Rāmānuja. The fifth chapter analyzes how Johanns engaged with the *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* of Vallabha. The sixth chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Johanns' project, particularly in terms of the accuracy of his exposition, the quality of his neo-Thomist synthesis, and the credibility of his 'fulfilment' theology.

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Transliteration Key

This thesis follows the system of transliterating Sanskrit letters into Roman letters advocated in the standard modern grammar of Michael Coulson, who taught Sanskrit at the University of Edinburgh. The current edition of the grammar was edited after the death of Coulson by Richard Gombrich, who held the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford. This grammar is thus an important modern British work on the Sanskrit language. See chapter one of M. Coulson, Sanskrit: an Introduction to the Classical Language, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992.

The exception to this rule of following Coulson occurs in the case of titles of or quotations from books pre-dating the twentieth century which have Sanskrit spellings that deviate significantly from this system of transliteration. No effort was made to standardize the transliteration of these book titles and quotations.

In the thesis, where a Sanskrit word, such as *advaitin*, is given an English suffix, such as *advaitins* or *advaitic*, the suffix will not be italicized.

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Introduction

A. Research Topic

1. Thesis Topic/Title: Synthesizing the Vedānta: The Theology of Pierre Johanns S.J.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was an intriguing development that took place within the Roman Catholic Church in regard to a Christian rapprochement with Hinduism.¹ A leading Bengali intellectual and patriot Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy (1861-1907), a convert to Catholicism, began to formulate an Indian Christian theology that conveyed a positive appreciation of aspects of Hindu *advaitic* philosophy.² Upon his early tragic death, a group of Belgian Jesuits in Calcutta sought to develop the project initiated by Upādhyāy. In 1922, the Jesuits Pierre Johanns (1882-1955) and Georges Dandoy (1882-1962), both Oxford-educated Orientalists in Calcutta, released the first issue of a monthly periodical entitled *Light of the East* in India. The purpose of the periodical was to facilitate the encounter between Christian theology and Indian philosophy. The journal ran for twenty-four years and is regarded as one of the more innovative periodicals in Indian Church history.

Nothing so characterized the objectives of the journal as the monthly submissions of Fr. Pierre Johanns, the most articulate figure of these Belgian Jesuits. Johanns submitted well over one-hundred articles which carefully scrutinized the prominent schools of the *Vedānta* from his Thomist perspective. In these, he engaged in a thorough explication and analysis of the thinking of the Hindu religious leaders Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha, pointing out what he believed to be the strengths and the weaknesses of each position. He attempted to fashion a creative

¹ The use of the monolithic designation “Hinduism” to indicate a family of religions is contentious. See Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 5-21 for discussion on this issue.

² See Chapter Two for more information on Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy. Francis X. Clooney has argued persuasively that the *Vedānta* contains both philosophical and theological dimensions. See Clooney, “Binding the Text: *Vedānta* as Philosophy and Commentary,” *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. J. Timm, Albany: State University of New York, 1991, p. 47-68. The *Vedāntins* are exegetes of sacred Scriptures as much as they are theoretical philosophers. One cannot ignore either facet of their identity without misrepresenting the character of the *Vedānta*. Thomism similarly contains both philosophical and theological components, since it wrestles with Biblical texts as well as Aristotelian metaphysics. However, since Johanns usually focused on the philosophical dimensions when explaining the *Vedāntic* systems, they will be referred to as philosophies in this thesis. And since Johanns as a neo-Thomist engaged in a theological evaluation of these materials, Thomism will be referred to as a theology. These distinctions cannot be imposed in a rigorous way, and while they may be analytically helpful, they are admittedly artificial.

synthesis of their views, constructing a new metaphysic from the raw materials of their respective philosophies. He was convinced that when the metaphysical strengths of these key Hindu thinkers are synthesized, the result is something akin to classic Thomist theology.

Such an endeavor may not initially strike a modern reader as particularly bold or innovative. In order to appreciate why Johanns is often described as a “pioneer,” it is necessary to situate him within the theological climate of his time.³ Only twenty years had passed since Upādhyāy’s writings were banned by his Catholic superiors when Johanns and Dandoy sought to revive his project. Upādhyāy died “disowned and discouraged by his Church authorities.”⁴ Dr. J.A. Cuttat has described the prevalent attitude of the worldwide Church toward other faiths in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a *Wertblindheit*, indicating a blindness to the significance and importance of other religions and cultures.⁵ Many missionaries had adopted a rather literal interpretation of the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* declaration.⁶ Excluded from the Church, “infidels” were seen as “dwelling in the shadow of death” and “hurrying to destruction,” to cite the *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV, published in 1919.⁷ The notion that Asian or African religions were something that missionaries should attempt to understand sensitively, and to engage respectfully, was not the typical Christian position at this time. The approach was rather more negative, and the other systems of thought were viewed as unwelcome competitors.

Within this milieu, the writings and ideals of Catholics such as Upādhyāy,

³ Joseph Mattam, *The Land of the Trinity: A Study of Modern Christian Approaches to Hinduism*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1975, p. 34.

⁴ Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 91.

⁵ Jacques Albert Cuttat (b. 1909) was a Swiss diplomat who had a personal interest in furthering the interaction of Christianity in dialogue with Indian religions. During his stay as ambassador in India, he initiated a series of meetings for Christians interested in finding points of religious contact with Hindus. Cuttat wrote *The Encounter of Religions: A Dialogue Between the West and the Orient*, New York: Desclee, 1960.

⁶ The *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (“outside the Church, no salvation”) maxim was first formulated by Cyprian (*Epistles*, 73.21) and Origen (*In Iesu Nave Homiliae*) to indicate that those who broke away from the authority and guidance of the church were in grave spiritual danger. It was later cited by Pope Innocent III in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and in the bull of Boniface VIII entitled *Unam Sanctam* in 1302. The Council of Florence (1438-1445) discussed its implications for unbaptized infants. The declaration was originally used in reference to heretics of the Church, but it was later applied to the adherents of other religious traditions. See M. Eminyān, “*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, New York: McGraw Hill, 1967, p. 768.

⁷ Joseph Mattam, “Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School,” *Indian Journal of Theology*, 23 (July, 1974), p. 191.

William Wallace, Georges Dandoy, and Pierre Johanns were daring and progressive.⁸ They initiated a new attitude toward Hinduism, enabling later missionary-scholars to appreciate openly many facets of Indian thought and spirituality. These forward-thinking men based in Bengal, later dubbed the “Calcutta school,” were pioneers in the true sense of the word. As Joseph Mattam remarks, “They considered Hinduism not merely as something to be tolerated but as containing positive values for Christ and His Church.”⁹ This willingness to learn from Hindu philosophy and to acknowledge its profundity had not been prominent since the time of the “first Catholic quest” for a “fundamental rapport between Christianity and the *Vedānta*” conducted by such towering figures as Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) and Jean Calmette (1693-1740). Much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century missionary literature, especially of the Protestant variety, was confrontational in its tone. It was Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy who began the “second Catholic quest,” which marked the transition to a more positive appraisal of Indian religiosity.¹⁰ The later Catholic approaches to Hinduism developed after the time of Johanns and Dandoy would move away from their particular “fulfilment” approach,¹¹ but without the shift toward a more receptive appreciation of Indian spirituality sparked by the Calcutta school, the modern approaches would simply not be palatable within Catholic circles.

Scholars who study the history of Christian, and especially Catholic, engagement with Indian religiosity are in agreement that the body of written work produced by Johanns constitutes a significant contribution in the area of Hindu-Christian intellectual discourse. In 1973, Joseph Mattam published the following assessment: “The work of Johanns is so far the only systematic and serious attempt to study the whole of the *Vedānta* in the light of Thomist philosophy and theology.”¹² There has not been any significant theological development in the last thirty years to change the state of affairs recounted by Mattam. This assessment of Mattam is vital

⁸ The lives and thought of these men are discussed in Chapter Two.

⁹ Joseph Mattam, “Interpreting Christ to India: A Pioneer, Pierre Johanns, S.J.,” *The Clergy Monthly*, 37 (Feb., 1973), p. 47.

¹⁰ Richard Fox Young, “Seeking India’s Christ-Bearing Word,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 19 (Fall, 2002), p. 22-24. See Chapter Two for a discussion of the earlier missionary-scholars such as de Nobili and Calmette who interacted with Indian religions.

¹¹ See footnote 18 for an initial description of classical Catholic fulfilment theology. Chapter One contains an extended treatment of Catholic and Protestant versions of fulfilment theology.

¹² Joseph Mattam, “Interpreting Christ to India: A Pioneer, Pierre Johanns, S.J.,” *The Clergy Monthly*, 37 (Feb., 1973), p. 55.

in understanding Johanns' importance in the history of Hindu-Christian interaction, because Thomism has been the theological point of departure for some of the most important Catholic missionary-scholars in India.¹³ Johanns was a "pioneer" in the sense that he was a seminal thinker who sought to initiate a detailed exploration of Catholic and *Vedāntic* spiritualities from a Thomist perspective within a context that did not encourage this sort of theological project. Despite his importance, it has been claimed that "Johanns has not received the attention he deserves neither in his life time nor posthumously, probably because he wrote most of his articles in a small magazine with limited circulation."¹⁴ This thesis seeks to make an original contribution to the study of Hindu-Christian relations by drawing attention to, and examining the theological explorations of Fr. Johanns, showing his significance in the historical encounter of Hinduism and Christianity.

2. *Justification of Topic*

There are several reasons why a detailed study of the writings of Johanns is justifiable:

- 1) Classical Indian philosophy implicitly undergirds and informs the religious expression of millions of Hindus in India. The dominant form of indigenous philosophy is the *Vedānta*, a complex body of thought that is comprised of the subtle intellectual positions of certain key thinkers. Particularly in the last two centuries, Christian theologians and philosophers in India, whether missionaries or indigenous leaders, have recognized the need for a correct understanding of and an adequate response to the *Vedānta*. Johanns carried the intellectual exploration of the *Vedānta* further than most Christian theologians, both before his time and after; he conducted one of the most detailed analyses of the *Vedānta* from a Christian perspective available.
- 2) Historically, Johanns was a leader of the "Calcutta school," which was a circle of Jesuit intellectuals who were heavily influenced by Upādhyāy's desire to engage creatively with the *Vedānta*. They sought to perfect the project initiated by earlier pioneer Catholic thinkers, exploring the value of

¹³ Boyd cites De Nobili, Upādhyāy, Monchanin, le Saux, and Panikkar as examples of Catholic theologians operating from a Thomist framework in *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 261.

¹⁴ Joseph Mattam, *The Land of the Trinity: A Study of Modern Christian Approaches to Hinduism*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1975, p. 34.

indigenous philosophy in Indian Christian theology. Thus, Johanns is a key figure representing an important movement in Catholic history for Hindu-Christian encounter.

- 3) Many Indian Christian theologians have focused upon one primary figure or movement in Indian religious history, making that particular philosophy the hermeneutical key for constructing their own indigenous theologies. Examples would include Upādhyāy, who relied upon Śaṅkara's *advaitism*, A. J. Appasamy, who interacted primarily with Rāmānuja's *viśiṣṭādvaita*, and P. Chenchiah, who utilized the thought of Aurobindo Ghose.¹⁵ Johanns, on the other hand, interacted with various traditions and movements within the wider parameters of *Vedāntism* (Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Vallabha). His theological explorations of the *Vedānta* were wider ranging and more comprehensive than his predecessors or contemporaries.
- 4) Johanns is a premier example of a Western Orientalist who used Indological scholarship for mission. He similarly provides an illustration of the legacy of Jesuit scholarship and educational work in India. Jesuits before and after Johanns have immersed themselves in the serious study of Indian religious texts and rituals; an examination of Johanns' concerns sheds light on some motivations and assumptions which fueled Jesuit scholarship.

B. Research Questions

This thesis is limited to an analysis of Johanns' interaction with three principal *Vedāntic ācāryas*: Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha.¹⁶ The scope is restricted to examining his theological writings which have been published and his lectures which have been preserved in manuscript form. While Johanns addressed other topics in Indian religiosity, such as Buddhism, Yoga, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, his central scholarly focus was upon the *Vedānta*, and especially the systems of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha. And although Johanns wrote expositions of the thought of other *Vedāntic* philosophers such as Madhva, Nimbārka, Caitanya, and especially Jīva Goswāmi, he did not engage in any lengthy or systematic theological critique of

¹⁵ For more on these theologians, see Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

¹⁶ An *ācārya* is a spiritual leader; the term is often applied to one who founded a school of Hindu philosophy.

their positions.¹⁷ The thesis is therefore delimited to Johanns' treatment of the three philosophers that he considered most important to Indian intellectual history, and it sets about to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How did Johanns interpret and exposit the three *Vedāntic* systems of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha?
- 2) How did he seek to synthesize three prominent *Vedāntic* systems into what was, in his view, a holistic metaphysic? How did Johanns allow the *advaita* of Śaṅkara, the *viśiṣṭādvaita* of Rāmānuja, and the *śuddhādvaita* of Vallabha to cross-fertilize into a fresh synthetic perspective by bringing them into conversation with each other and with the Thomist conception of *creatio ex nihilo*?
- 3) How did Johanns, motivated by neo-Thomist presuppositions, attempt to remain faithful to the spirit and individual emphases of each *Vedāntic* school, while at the same time seeking to discover a "perennial philosophy" which can be derived from the *Vedānta*?
- 4) What did Johanns mean by expressing the relationship between Christ and the *Vedānta* in terms of fulfilment? How does his model of fulfilment theology compare with other Catholic and Protestant models that were contemporaneous with his period?

The thesis assesses the degree to which Johanns was successful in his project of expounding three key *Vedāntic* systems and synthesizing them into a coherent perennial philosophy which could function as an Indian natural theology that would be "fulfilled" by the supernatural aspects of Christian faith.¹⁸ Several components of

¹⁷ In *Light of the East*, Johanns explicated the philosophies of Madhva and Nimbārka in articles that are not part of the "To Christ through the *Vedānta*" series. The discussion of the thought of Caitanya and Jīva Goswāmi is included, however, in the "To Christ through the *Vedānta*" series, but there is no systematic theological evaluation which is provided, rather only pure exposition. Since Johanns provided no comparable theological evaluation for Caitanya and his follower Jīva Goswāmi as he did for Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha, it cannot be affirmed that Caitanya's *acintyabhedābheda* plays a vital role in Johanns' synthesis. Johanns considered Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha as the creators of the "three greatest systems" of Indian philosophy. *Light of the East*, 8 (June, 1930).

¹⁸ An explanation of the most important terms will be beneficial. Johanns used the word "synthesis"

the project are examined in order to determine its degree of success or failure. A number of lines of inquiry are pursued. Was Johanns accurate in his interpretation and exposition of the *Vedāntic* systems of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha? Did he provide a convincing synthesis which does not damage or misconstrue the original emphases and thrust of each *Vedāntic* school? Was Johanns' neo-Thomist desire to search for a perennial philosophy based upon *Vedāntic* metaphysics an unnatural imposition upon, or a natural outgrowth of, *Vedāntic* concerns? How rigorous or superficial was his particular version of fulfilment theology in terms of its specificity and range when compared with the other fulfilment models?

C. **Research Methodology**

This research is primarily a close textual study of the theological writings of one Jesuit educator in Bengal, particularly with respect to his neo-Thomist approach to *Vedāntic* philosophy. Johanns was a lecturer in philosophy during his service in Calcutta as a Jesuit missionary. His writings overwhelmingly reflect his interest in making a theological evaluation of various Indian philosophical perspectives. If this justifies a mode of analysis of Johanns' writings which takes into account the theological/philosophical components of his project, it is also important to set Johanns within the wider intellectual context of the Catholic and the Orientalist responses to Indian religiosity. To illuminate the historical factors which would have influenced Johanns' thinking adds clarity and depth to the theological analysis. Understanding the intellectual background which informed Johanns' reflections is a necessary prerequisite to appreciating his project of synthesizing the *Vedānta*. Thus, textual study which is sensitive to historical context is the main method of appraising Johanns' theological contributions. The nature of the thesis topic allows for the scrutiny of issues which arise from the intersection of philosophy and theology.

in the sense of drawing together various metaphysical and practical components of diverse philosophical and theological systems in order to construct a perspective that is holistic and which does not denigrate important aspects of reality by emphasizing certain features over against other vital ones. His understanding of synthesis is derived from (neo-)Thomism. "Perennial philosophy" refers to this developing holistic perspective, first introduced by the Greeks, extended by medieval scholastics such as Aquinas, and fine-tuned by neo-Thomists, which most adequately depicts the stable metaphysical structure of the universe. "Natural theology" refers to truths which can be ascertained by the unaided human intellect and conscience. Johanns believed that the *Vedāntic* "natural" truths would be "fulfilled" and brought to completion when the seeker went on to accept the higher Christian supernatural truths, such as the Trinitarian doctrine, which were accessible only through divine revelation. See Chapter One for more discussion on these important technical terms.

D. Primary Sources

1. Johanns' Writings

Johanns is best known for his articles on the *Vedāntins* which comprised the “To Christ through the *Vedānta*” series. He also published over forty articles in *Light of the East* which were not part of this series. After completing the lengthy “To Christ through the *Vedānta*” project, Johanns began another installment of articles entitled “Short Outlines of Hinduism,” which provided a chronological sketch of the major trends and developments in Indian religious thought from its beginnings.¹⁹ He also surveyed “The Great Theologies” of the major Hindu *ācāryas* who founded *Vedāntic* schools. Other topics addressed by Johanns in *Light of the East* articles included “The Quest for God” in various Hindu Scriptures, “Outlines of a Philosophy of the Ideal,” and “Pure Actuality and World Possibility.” He continued to explore the interaction of *Vedāntic* and Scholastic metaphysics upon his return to Belgium in such articles as “*La Divinisation dans le Vedānta*,” “*Pierres d’Attente du Christianisme dans la Philosophie Indienne*,” and “*Théologie Catholique et Sagesse des Indes*.” His major book, *La Pensée Religieuse de l’Inde*, was published by the University of Namur.²⁰ In addition to his scholarly works, Johanns also composed a series of mystery plays (*Mother of Apostles*; *Veronica*; *Refuge of Sinners*; *Annunciation*) meant for the edification of those under his care. He had a particular fascination for the childlike spirituality of St. Theresa of Lisieux, who provided inspiration for his devotional work entitled *The Little Way*; this work was a compilation of thirty-seven meditations on the life of simple devotion to Christ exemplified by Theresa.²¹ Thus, one can detect from the writing output of Johanns that the *Vedāntic* commentaries, along with the Scriptures that the *ācāryas* accepted as authoritative, were the focus of his scholarly inquiry, but he was also interested in general matters of Christian spirituality and piety.

2. Archives/Libraries

The written works of Fr. Johanns have been published in a select number of periodicals, mainly Catholic journals. *Light of the East* had a life-span of twenty-five

¹⁹ For the full references of these articles, see the list of published works by Fr. Johanns provided in the Selected Bibliography.

²⁰ P. Johanns, *La Pensée Religieuse de l’Inde*, Namur: Secrétariat des publications, 1952.

²¹ These mystery plays and meditations on St. Theresa’s spirituality will be excluded in the analysis of the thesis, since they contain no discussion of the *Vedānta* or the synthesis.

years (1922-1946), but copies of it are hard to find. Through a combination of conducting archival research and accessing published sources in certain libraries, a corpus of extant texts written by Johanns can be clearly identified. These primary textual sources, mainly contained in Jesuit institutions in Calcutta and in Belgium, are the bulk of the information that is preserved regarding Pierre Johanns.

a. Calcutta

The Goethals Indian Library of St. Xavier's College, University of Calcutta has the complete set of *Light of the East*, as well as many other articles of Johanns that are relatively inaccessible. The Goethals Library is a treasure trove of precious materials dealing with Jesuit mission in Bengal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Goethals is open for consultation by students and academics, and the Librarians are helpful and will photocopy any requested materials. The Library is well organized, and the Librarians are concerned to ensure the preservation of their unique holdings. Many rare manuscripts and articles of Upādhyāy, Animananda, and William Wallace are kept here. There are collections of unpublished material, letters, and other personal items by Upādhyāy and Wallace listed as *Varia* in the Goethals catalogue that can be found nowhere else.

b. Belgium

The Centre de Documentation et de Recherche Religieuses of the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix in Namur is the other major library that has many writings of Johanns. There is a good collection of Catholic periodicals and monthlies that pertain to mission in India at the Centre, such as *Clergy Monthly* and *India Missionary Bulletin*. As a University library, the Centre is in a good state of upkeep and organisation, and xeroxing is permitted.

Two Jesuit Archives in Belgium contain several publications of Fr. Johanns, along with other writings of the prominent Jesuits of the Calcutta school. Special permission by the head archivist is required for consultation in the case of both Archives. Photocopying is done by the archivists, and scanning of documents is permitted. The Archives of the North-Belgian Province of the Society of Jesus in Heverlee, near Leuven, have many articles and books on Jesuit mission in the collections. The Archives of the South-Belgian Province of the Society of Jesus in Brussels have a large selection of primary sources in the holdings regarding mission to Bengal and the Congo. Many of the Jesuit missionaries have personal files

containing letters, unpublished writings, and obituaries. Over twenty unpublished manuscripts of Johanns have been preserved by the Archives of the South-Belgian Province in Brussels. These manuscripts are all type-written and are undated. Many are unedited and contain hand-written corrections by Johanns over the typed print. They were donated to the Archives by the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix of Namur. It is possible that many were lecture-briefs of Johanns.²²

c. Other Libraries

The United Theological College of Bangalore has published the *Light of the East* "To Christ through the *Vedānta*" articles, although other writings of Johanns in *Light of the East* and elsewhere are not included in this publication.²³ The library of the United Theological College does not contain much primary material that is relevant for researching the Calcutta school. The Indian Institute of the University of Oxford has an incomplete set of *Light of the East*, making it an important library in the United Kingdom for researching Johanns.

E. Secondary Literature on Johanns

There is a dearth of secondary material concerning Johanns. While several scholars note his historic importance in terms of Christian engagement with Indian philosophy, none provide a detailed study of his writings.²⁴ There are no extended biographical treatments of his life. No publications have analyzed Johanns' thought in a comprehensive way. The most extensive description of his theology is contained in three articles by Fr. Joseph Mattam which address the basic features of his

²² Many of these type-written manuscripts are quite unpolished, and they contain much information which merely repeats what Johanns has already conveyed in the *Light of the East* articles. Therefore, the main text of the thesis contains exposition and analysis of information derived from the *Light of the East* articles, which Johanns carefully edited and scrutinized. Supplementary information, derived from the unedited manuscripts, which is helpful for clarifying the arguments provided in the main text is included in footnotes. Primacy of place in the analysis should belong to the material which Johanns published and which he had thoroughly edited.

²³ *To Christ through the Vedānta*, 2 vol., ed. Theo de Greeff, Bangalore: United Theological College, 1996.

²⁴ A few brief treatments of Fr. Johanns can be found in the following works: A. Mookenthottam, *Indian Theological Tendencies*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1978, p. 48-49; P.T. Thomas and M.M. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*, Tiruvalla: New Day Publications in India, 1992, p. 134-137; R. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 91; M. Amaladoss, "Pierre Johanns," *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. G. Anderson, New York: MacMillan Reference, 1998, p. 333; Bradley Malkovsky, "Advaita Vedānta and Christian Faith," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 36 (Summer-Fall, 1999), p. 406-407.

methodology and his project of synthesis.²⁵ Mattam only discusses Johanns' interaction with the theoretical philosophies of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. He does not deal with Johanns' engagement with their practical philosophies. Nor does Vallabha appear in his articles, despite the fact that Johanns' lengthiest treatment of a *Vedāntic* system is his discussion of Vallabha's *śuddhādvaita*. K.P. Aleaz provides a portrait of the theological methodology of Johanns and his interaction with *advaita*.²⁶ Aleaz focuses upon Johanns' approach to Śaṅkara's theoretical doctrine of God. He also compares Śaṅkara's model of causality with *creatio ex nihilo*. He leaves the other features of Johanns' project unaddressed. No articles or writings which have discussed Johanns have ever included his unpublished manuscripts. Insofar as this thesis is based upon materials that have not been previously analyzed and examines features of Johanns' theology that have not been adequately explored, it has a genuine claim to originality, both in terms of depth of discussion and breadth of documents consulted.

There are a few works which briefly survey the most important members of the Jesuits of the Calcutta school. Namboodiry published a work on the history of St. Xavier's College and has included a chapter on the Intellectual Apostolate of the Calcutta school.²⁷ The Jesuit historian Steenhault produced a volume on the work of the Society of Jesus in West Bengal; he included a chapter on Upādhyāy, Animananda, Wallace, Dandoy, and Johanns.²⁸ Upādhyāy has been the subject of the majority of in-depth scholarly research, with important publications by Lipner and Tennent analyzing the life and writings of this pivotal figure.²⁹ The treatment that Upādhyāy has received is much more substantial than the research on any of the Belgian Jesuits who followed in his path. This thesis seeks to fill a notable lacuna in the research on Catholic and Jesuit interaction with Hinduism.

²⁵ Joseph Mattam, "Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School," *Indian Journal of Theology*, 23 (July, 1974), p. 191-205; Joseph Mattam, "Interpreting Christ to India: A Pioneer, Pierre Johanns, S.J.," *The Clergy Monthly*, 37 (Feb., 1973), p. 46-56; Joseph Mattam, The Land of the Trinity: A Study of Modern Christian Approaches to Hinduism, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1975, p. 17-43.

²⁶ K. P. Aleaz, Christian Thought through Advaita Vedānta, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996, p. 113-123.

²⁷ Udayan Namboodiry, St. Xavier's: The Making of a Calcutta Institution, New Delhi: Viking/Penguin Books India, 1995, p. 115-130.

²⁸ Y. Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Ranchi: Catholic Press, n.d., p. 82-95.

²⁹ Julius Lipner, Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary, Oxford: University Press, 1999; Timothy Tennent, Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: the Legacy of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

F. Educational and Priestly Biography of Fr. Pierre Johanns S.J.

Pierre Johanns was born in Heinerscheid, Luxemburg, on April 1, 1882, the tenth child in a family of eighteen.³⁰ At the Atheneum of Luxemburg, he was already displaying academic potential in Greek and Latin, but his lively nature was getting him into mischief. His father removed him from the Atheneum and had him sent to a Jesuit boarding school in Belgium at the College Saint-Servais, Liège, for the last year of his Humanities. He completed brilliant classical studies in Liège. He then served a few years as an apprentice at a German firm in Mainz. During his apprenticeship, Johanns began to sense an inner compulsion to pursue a missionary vocation, and so he entered the novitiate at Tronchiennes of the Society of Jesus of the South Belgian Province on March 8, 1903 at the age of 21. He then studied metaphysics at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, from 1906-1909, where he found immense stimulation in the teaching of his mentor, Fr. Pierre Scheuer.³¹ This developed his predilection for speculative thought, and Scheuer quickly noticed his pupil's philosophical acumen, remarking to others that Johanns was the most intelligent, promising student that he had ever taught. From 1909-1911, Johanns took up a post of Regency at his old school in Liège, where he instructed younger students in philosophy. During this time, he read widely in Continental and Russian philosophy, and he took a keen interest in Scholastic theology. He also immersed himself in modern languages, reading lyric poetry and dramas. From 1911-1915, he studied theology for his priestly training at Louvain, furthering his interest in the relation between Christian doctrine and metaphysics. On August 1, 1914, he was ordained a Jesuit priest.

Another Jesuit, Fr. William Wallace (1863-1922), stationed in Calcutta, had been pleading to the Society that men were needed for the Bengal Mission.³² Wallace had left for India in 1889 as a Church Mission Society (C.M.S) worker, but his work amongst Bengali peasants led him to adopt Catholicism, with its

³⁰ The biographical information on Fr. Johanns was gathered from the following obituaries/tributes collected by the Archives of the South Belgian Jesuit Province: P. Turmes, "Father Peter Johanns S.J.," *The Herald*, February 20, 1955; Joseph Masson, "Un Pionnier: Le Père Pierre Johanns S.J.," *Belge*, November 22, 1955; P. Piron, "In Memoriam: Le R.P. Pierre Johanns," *Belge*, February 11, 1955; *Echos*, (August, 1955), p. 23-28.

³¹ Pierre Scheuer (1872-1957) taught metaphysics at the University of Namur from 1904-1907 and then at the University of Louvain from 1907-1918. He was an important member of the Louvain school of neo-Thomists. See D. Shine, *An Interior Metaphysics: the Philosophical Synthesis of Pierre Scheuer*, Weston: Weston College Press, 1966.

³² For more on Wallace, Dandoy, Upādhyāy and Animananda, see Chapter Two.

sacraments, images, and offerings of flowers, as the form of Christianity that was, in his judgment, the most compatible with the Indian ethos. He converted to Catholicism in 1898 and became an important figure for Jesuit mission in India. Recognizing the importance of Wallace's request, the Superiors of the Society commissioned Johanns to begin training for mission work in Bengal. Johanns was given permission to complete three further years of philosophical study at Louvain beginning in 1916, where he explored Kantian philosophy and German idealism, immersing himself in Fichte and Hegel. He took his last vows on February 2, 1917. He was then granted two more years of Indological training at Oxford (1919-1920) in preparation for his future ministry. Johanns studied Sanskrit at Campion Hall, under the supervision of Professor A. A. MacDonell. He took a particular interest in the philosophical thought of Śaṅkara, but he also exposed himself to the divergent systems of the other great *Vedāntic* teachers. Johanns acquired a profound respect for the intellectual heritage of the Indian civilization and for the spiritual search embodied in its literature. His thesis was entitled "The *Intellectus Agens* in Western and Eastern Philosophy."³³ After an oral examination that lasted a mere ten minutes, Johanns was awarded the Bachelor of Literature degree. His external examiner from Cambridge commented that "only once in a century can you find an intelligence of this type." Oxford thereupon offered him a lectureship in European Philosophy for a couple of years at the University, with the promise of a continuing position in Indian philosophy. Fr. C. Plater of the South Belgian Province replied to Oxford that Johanns would not be allowed to take up an academic post, because "he is destined for the Bengal Mission and cannot be spared." Johanns had by this time attained control over the ancient languages of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Sanskrit, as well as over the modern languages of German, French, English, Flemish, Italian, and Russian.

Johanns arrived in Calcutta in November of 1921 and was appointed as a lecturer in philosophy at St. Xavier's College, University of Calcutta, a position he was to hold for the next eighteen years. As an essential aspect of his academic duties, he systematically studied the sacred Hindu scriptures and the major *Vedāntic* commentaries in the Sanskrit language. In 1922, Fr. George Dandoy (1882-1962) of St. Xavier's founded a monthly entitled *Light of the East*, serving as the general editor. Dandoy was a specialist in *advaitic* spirituality and published two scholarly

³³ This thesis has not been preserved by Oxford.

treatments on this subject.³⁴ He had been a teacher at St. Mary's Theological College, Kurseong (Himalayas) before receiving an appointment at Calcutta as chaplain of the Christian Hostel of St. Xavier's. Working closely with Dandoy, Johanns began to submit articles for *Light of the East* under the title of "To Christ through the *Vedānta*."

In their submissions to the monthly, Dandoy and Johanns argued that Christianity should not destroy the finest aspirations of India, but complete them. They worked in close cooperation with Brahmachari Animananda, the disciple and convert of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy, and their journal sought to continue the work begun by Upādhyāy. The intellectual method of Dandoy and Johanns was influenced by a professor of theology at Louvain, Fr. Pierre Charles, who, as a leading figure in Catholic missiology, advocated an adaptation theory of approach to other cultures.³⁵ Fr. William Wallace took a similar approach: not to denigrate the truths that Hinduism had discovered in the *sanātana dharma*, such as the importance of union with God and self-denial. Johanns and Dandoy were deeply impacted by this sort of thinking, and Johanns quickly began to acquire a reputation among Hindus in Bengal for his sensitive grasp of the *Vedānta*. Monks and *saṃnyāsins* would pay Johanns a visit in order to discuss religious matters with him. Johanns received invitations from the Gaudiya Math, where followers of Caitanya would ask for his spiritual guidance.³⁶ He was also a friend of the *āśram* of Bagayat, where he was treated as a sort of *guru*; he had extended conversations with these *Vaiṣṇava* monks, and they often would make a written record of his statements.

When a position for a lectureship in Indian philosophy opened up at the University of Calcutta, Johanns was requested to submit an application. Professor

³⁴ Dandoy, *An Essay on the Doctrine of the Unreality of the World in the Advaita*, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1919; Dandoy, *L'Ontologie du Vedānta: Essai sur L'Acosmisme de L'Advaita*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932.

³⁵ Pierre Charles (1883-1954) was professor of theology at Louvain from 1914-1954. He had a special interest in missiology, ethnology, and history of religions. Joseph Masson summarizes the thrust of Charles' thinking: "the value of non-Christian cultures and religions; the spiritual competence of non-Christians; the need to have communities and local churches living in their own cultures and entrusted to local pastors." See Joseph Masson, "Pierre Charles, S.J.," *Mission Legacies*, ed. G. Anderson, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994, p. 410-415. Charles' approach most closely resembles the "adaptation" model described by R. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, New York: Orbis, 1985, where the local culture is taken very seriously by the missionary, who works closely with local leaders to discern the categories and concerns important to that local culture, respecting the integrity of the apostolic tradition and the indigenous traditions.

³⁶ See Chapter One for more information on Caitanya.

MacDonell of Oxford wrote his recommendation, stating that since Oxford had considered Johanns' aptitude high enough to offer him a post in philosophy, Calcutta would be privileged to acquire him. Prof. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Chair of the philosophy faculty at Presidency College, University of Calcutta, finally vetoed Johanns, because he thought the Jesuit might use the position as an opportunity to proselytize. Later, Johanns was offered a lectureship in formalistic logic, but he himself declined the opportunity, since he felt that this venture would not further his scholarly exploration of Indian philosophy.

Aside from his lecturing duties at St. Xavier's, Johanns would also offer a special course every May on Indian Philosophy at the Jesuit Theologate, Kurseong. He later published the material that constituted the course in the form of four booklets which sought to provide a simplified explanation of the philosophies of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Vallabha, and Caitanya.³⁷ Catholics working in India began to recognize the importance of the work of Dandoy and Johanns. However, there were others who were uneasy with the explorations of *Light of the East*. In 1925, Cardinal Lepicier, the Apostolic Visitor to the Indies, who was sent to inspect the project, assured Johanns that he was a true pioneer, asserting, "I approve without any reservation your method of apostolate. It is in line with the Fathers of the Church and the Doctors and the Society of Jesus itself...What Justinus was for Rome, Irenaeus for Gaul, Augustine for Africa, that you are, dear Father Johanns, for India."

Johanns also served as curate of the St. John's Parish of Calcutta while carrying out his academic responsibilities. He was involved in the direction of the nuns of Calcutta and in the instruction of catechumens and the young. Johanns was a frequent speaker at spiritual retreats for the Jesuits. Unfortunately, he had to return to Belgium in 1939 for health reasons. After his recovery, he published the series of articles and books written in the French language. In 1940, he began to teach young men set apart by the Society for service in India. Johanns served as both their instructor and spiritual director. His program for preparing the future missionaries included a study of Sanskrit, Hinduism, and Indian History. A serious study of English was also required. The curriculum was administered in the Institut des Lettres Indiennes at the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix of Namur, approved by Superiors in Bengal and Bihar. After two years of study, the prospective missionaries would receive a Baccalauréat-ès-Lettres Indiennes. He

³⁷ A Synopsis of "To Christ Through the Vedānta, 4 vols., Ranchi: Catholic Press, 1930-1932.

taught at Namur until 1947, keeping photos of his students and corresponding with them when they began their ministries in India. His longest scholarly treatment of Hinduism, *La Pensée Religieuse de l'Inde*, is essentially a summary of the lectures delivered in Namur.³⁸ In his academic career in India and Belgium, he lectured on a wide spectrum of topics in the field of comparative religion and philosophy, drafting a series of typed manuscripts that were never published or edited.³⁹ In January of 1948, he suffered a stroke and was partially paralyzed, unable to speak. He was transferred to the novitiate in Arlon, where he was cared for by the Jesuit community. His last seven years were filled with physical suffering and patient endurance. He died in Arlon on February 8, 1955 at the age of 73.

G. Outline of Chapters

The thesis is divided into three major Sections. Section One provides the historical context and intellectual background to Johanns' project. Section Two details the application of Johanns' theological methodology to three representatives of *Vedāntic* philosophy. Section Three assesses the significance and the degree of success of Johanns' project.

The first Section is comprised of Chapters One and Two. The first Chapter introduces the material with which Johanns was dealing (*Vedāntic* philosophy) and the intellectual sources which influenced his theological presuppositions (Thomist approaches to other traditions; fulfilment approaches toward Hinduism). This preliminary Chapter sketches the theological methodology which informed his project of synthesizing the *Vedānta*. The second Chapter focuses on aspects of the historical context which shaped the attitude of Johanns toward the *Vedāntic* writings. The phenomenon of nascent Western Orientalism as it approached Sanskrit texts is discussed. The Jesuit philosophy of education is surveyed, which valued the study of classical texts and humane literature for moral and intellectual formation. A summary of the thought of key Catholics who impacted the nature of the Jesuit apostolate in Bengal, such as Brahmābandhab Upādhyāy, Animananda, William Wallace, and Georges Dandoy, is also included.

Section Two is comprised of Chapters Three, Four, and Five. The third

³⁸ Johanns, *La Pensée Religieuse de l'Inde*, Namur: Secrétariat des publications, 1952.

³⁹ See the list of unpublished, typed manuscripts in the Selected Bibliography. Most of the manuscripts are less than twenty pages.

Chapter focuses on Johanns' treatment of the philosophy of Śaṅkara. Fr. Johanns used the theoretical philosophy of Śaṅkara to highlight the complete self-sufficiency and independence of God. In terms of practical philosophy, he was impressed with Śaṅkara's stress on valuing God for Himself. The fourth Chapter details how Johanns interacted with the system of Rāmānuja. Johanns balanced Śaṅkara's monism by synthesizing *advaita* with Rāmānuja's understanding of God's very personal relation to the contingent, but real world. He found Rāmānuja's emphasis on *bhakti* and meditation upon God inspiring. The fifth Chapter analyzes how Johanns engaged with the *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* of Vallabha. Johanns found Vallabha's understanding of the world as the result of divine self-analysis a helpful addition to Rāmānuja's philosophy. He approved of Vallabha's doctrines that promote the importance of emotive-intuitive experience of God and appreciation of the divine joy.

Section Three is comprised of the sixth Chapter and the Conclusion. Chapter Six assesses the degree to which Johanns was successful in carrying out his defined objectives which informed his project of synthesizing the *Vedānta*. The methodological strengths and weaknesses of Johanns' project are examined, particularly with reference to his explication of the *Vedāntins*, his notion of neo-Thomist synthesis, and his exposition of fulfilment theology. The Conclusion provides a summary of the key contributions of Johanns to Hindu-Christian intellectual discourse and to Christian theology in India.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, some personal information about the reasons for selecting this thesis topic would be in order. This researcher noticed that there was a major gap in the historiography of Catholic-Hindu encounter. There has been much attention devoted to Upādhyāy, Monchanin, le Saux, and Panikkar when discussing the most important Catholic missionaries/theologians who grappled with Hindu philosophy and spirituality in the previous century. Well over forty years passed after the death of Upādhyāy in 1907 until the writings of Monchanin, le Saux, and Panikkar were published. The most important development that took place in this intervening period was the emergence of the "Calcutta school," which was led by P. Johanns, G. Dandoy, and W. Wallace; yet there has been comparatively little research documenting their contributions to Catholic approaches to Indian religions. Upādhyāy is such an important figure in the history of this encounter that it seems

odd that the “Calcutta school,” which sought to develop his vision of engagement with the *Vedānta*, should be neglected in telling the story of Catholic-Hindu relations.

I am neither a Catholic in terms of tradition nor an Indian in terms of ethnic or national background. I have never served as a missionary in India. I am a Protestant student of theology who has lived in the United States and the United Kingdom. I have been educated in both evangelical and mainline theological schools which emphasize Protestant theology. Yet, I have been struck by the quality of Catholic engagement with Hinduism, particularly in terms of both intellectual and mystical encounter. I have benefitted greatly in my theological and personal formation by reading and reflecting upon the writings of these wise individuals. It is my hope that this thesis makes a contribution to the study of the history of theological engagement by Catholics in India, because I feel personally indebted to this rich tradition for the intellectual and spiritual impact it has had upon me.

Part One

Chapter One

Theological Methodology of Johanns

Introduction

This chapter explores the theological methodology which informed the evaluation of the *Vedāntic* systems by Johanns. Johanns completed a lengthy process of theological education before arriving in Calcutta, and he was remarkably well-read in the historical development of both theology and philosophy. Johanns had diligently studied such diverse thinkers as Fichte, Kant, Hegel, Śaṅkara, Madhva, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, and he was comfortable discussing modern as well as medieval intellectual systems. The eminent neo-Thomist Pierre Scheuer, his instructor at Louvain, recognized Johanns' sophistication in matters of speculative thought and his acumen in theological reflection. He commented that Johanns was the brightest mind he had ever taught. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Johanns self-consciously developed an approach to the *Vedānta* based upon certain theological presuppositions.

First, he drew inspiration from the irenic attitude displayed by the Greek Fathers and by Thomas Aquinas toward philosophies which were not specifically Christian. Second, he developed a specific project of synthesizing the viewpoints of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha. Third, he espoused a form of fulfilment theology which reflected the nature-grace distinction historically affirmed by Thomists.

Each of these three features is examined in turn. The explanation of the specific approach of Johanns with regard to this methodology is supplemented with pertinent background information concerning Thomistic theology, the *Vedānta*, and fulfilment theology, in order to provide clarity to the discussion and to the terminology employed.

A. Use of the Method of the Church Fathers and Aquinas

1. Johanns' approach

a. Greek Fathers

Johanns intentionally developed a Christian approach to the *Vedānta* after the

model of certain Church Fathers in their attitude toward Greek philosophy. P.T. Thomas explains:

Johanns found inspiration in the writing of the early Fathers. According to Johanns, the early Fathers accepted anything valuable that they found in Greek philosophy and synthesized them with Christian thought. He recognized the contributions made by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and others in this process of assimilation. With this background he dealt with different systems of *Vedānta*.⁴⁰

In the view of Johanns, the Greek Fathers were willing to learn about the “Transcendent One” of Plotinus as well as the “Ideal World” of Plato. They also created a synthesis of these two idealist Hellenistic philosophies with the more empirically-driven Aristotelian philosophy of the material world of particularity.⁴¹ By accepting the truths put forth by the greatest of the Greek thinkers as *logos spermatikos*, or “seeds of the Word,” the Fathers acknowledged the value and beauty of the indigenous intellectual systems of Greece as potential conduits of truth.⁴² The Fathers were able to express their own Christian beliefs and metaphysical ideas using certain elements of the vocabulary and philosophical frameworks of the Greek philosophers.

b. Aquinas

Johanns wanted to do with the *Vedānta* “what Saint Thomas did with the systems of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus when he organized them into the wider system of *analogia entis*.”⁴³ Aquinas self-consciously drew from a number of Greek, Islamic, and Jewish thinkers in the construction of his own metaphysical framework of natural theology. The spiritual and philosophic thought of the Hellenistic and Semitic worlds was not denigrated by Aquinas; he accepted the “rational truths” of these philosophers and allowed them to form the substructure of his theology. Johanns was similarly willing to engage deeply with the *Vedānta*, integrating the “rational truths” within a coherent, unified metaphysic compatible with a Christian outlook. He believed this harmonious synthesis would perfect the aspirations latent

⁴⁰ M.M. Thomas and P.T. Thomas, Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers, Tiruvalla: New Day Publications of India, 1992, p. 134.

⁴¹ Johanns, “*Le Divinisation dans le Vedānta*,” *Rythmes du Monde*, 1 (March, 1947), p. 67.

⁴² See Paul Hacker, Theological Foundations of Evangelization, St. Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1980, for discussion of the approach of the Greek Fathers.

⁴³ Johanns, *Introduction to the Vedānta*, Ranchi: *Light of the East Series* 23, 1943, p. 36.

within the Indian religious search for divine truth.⁴⁴

2. Background: Thomas Aquinas and Neo-Thomism

a. Rationality and Inter-religious Reasoning

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the great scholastic Christian theologian of the thirteenth century, was a Christian thinker consumed with the pursuit of wisdom.⁴⁵ Aquinas asserts that “a thing is best disposed when it is fittingly directed to its end, since the end of everything is its good...The name of being wise is simply reserved to him alone whose consideration is about the end of the universe, which end is also the beginning of the universe: wherefore, according to the Philosopher, it belongs to the wise man to consider the highest causes.”⁴⁶ Such a belief led Aquinas to delve deeply into the study of metaphysics, in its examination of causes, ends, and being. One who is wise will seek to understand the first cause, which of necessity must also be the source of being. A central object of metaphysical inquiry will inevitably be God, and thus there is a compatible relationship between philosophy and theology. The study of being is simultaneously the study of truth, since truth implies a correspondence with that which exists in reality. Aquinas writes, “The Philosopher defines the First Philosophy as being the knowledge of truth, not of any truth, but of the truth which is the source of all truth, of that, namely, which relates to the first principle of being of all things; wherefore its truth is the principle of all truth, since the disposition of things is the same in truth as in being.”⁴⁷

There are certain self-evident truths which can be attained by human reason as it reflects upon the nature of reality. These truths which are gleaned through rational inquiry will be harmonious with the revealed truths given to humanity by

⁴⁴ See Johanns, “*Théologie Catholique et Sagesse des Indes*,” *Doctor Communis*, II (1951), p. 160-179.

⁴⁵ For useful surveys of the life and thought of Aquinas, see B. Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump, Cambridge: University Press, 1993, D. Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979. For a range of interpretations of the philosophy of Aquinas, see F. Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*, Malden: Blackwell, 2002.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.1, translated in *The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas: literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers*, vol. 1, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924, p. 1-2. Aquinas refers to Aristotle as the “Philosopher” in his writings.

⁴⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.1, translated in *The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas: literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers*, vol. 1, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924, p. 2.

God; indeed, they must be compatible, for these naturally ascertained truths are contained in the wisdom of God, which is the source of all revelation. Upon this basis, Aquinas affirms the usefulness of metaphysics. Although there are revealed truths which are beyond the reach of the unaided human intellect, metaphysics can be used to validate foundational realities. A disciplined approach to metaphysics can provide a vehicle for common discourse among all seekers of wisdom. Fundamental errors and false beliefs can be cleared away with a proper utilization of reason. These foundational truths are not the sole property of Christians but can be perceived by all humans. Aquinas believed that the pursuit of metaphysics provides a common language and method for ascertaining truth across cultural, religious, and temporal boundaries. Natural theology is the study of these foundational metaphysical truths which can be perceived through reason without recourse to revelation.⁴⁸

In the written corpus produced by Thomas Aquinas, there are numerous citations from the works of Moses Maimonides, Avicenna (Ibn-Sīnā), and Averroes (Ibn-Rushd).⁴⁹ The sheer frequency of the references to Maimonides and Avicenna is indicative of the fact that Aquinas viewed these fellow metaphysicians as worthy colleagues in the rational search for truth. He afforded great respect to these two figures and was eager to learn from them in his own personal project of using philosophy as a tool to articulate his faith in God. These philosophers were themselves heirs to a steady stream of philosophical output in the Muslim and Jewish traditions situated within the boundaries of the Caliphate, which stretched from India to Andalusia. Fundamental assertions of these earlier philosophers had been mediated to Aquinas through Maimonides and Avicenna, who had absorbed the Peripatetic (Aristotelian) tradition passed down to them; thus, there is a certain chain of influence from the early Islamic philosophers (*falāsifah*) to Thomas Aquinas,

⁴⁸ See J. Aertsen, "Aquinas' Philosophy in its Historical Setting," The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas, ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump, Cambridge: University Press, 1993, p. 12-37 for further discussion.

⁴⁹ Maimonides (1135-1204) was the famous medieval Jewish commentator and philosopher who composed The Guide of the Perplexed in Arabic, which explored the relation of the Jewish faith with Aristotelian thought. See Rambam: Readings in the Philosophy of Moses Maimonides, ed. L. Goodman, New York: Viking Press, 1976. Avicenna (980-1037) was a Persian Muslim whose philosophy was influenced by Aristotelian and neo-Platonic sources. See D. Gutas, Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works, Leiden: Brill, 1988. Averroes (1126-1198) was the esteemed Andalusian exponent of Aristotelianism. Aquinas would refer to Averroes as the Commentator in his writings. See O. Leaman, Averroes and His Philosophy, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

albeit an indirect one.

Before becoming a friar of the Dominican order, Thomas had been educated at the University of Naples, founded by Frederick II (1272-1337), a great *aficionado* of Arabic culture.⁵⁰ The University was a leading European institution involved in the study of the Arabic commentaries on Aristotle and of prominent philosophical works of the Islamic *falāsifah*. The region of Sicily was known for its cosmopolitan ethos, where there was mutual interchange and intellectual stimulation between Jewish, Islamic, and Christian cultures. In fact, Aquinas had chosen Sicily as the best location for the theological academy that he had been requested to oversee in 1272, precisely because of the cultural breadth of its intellectual character. Albert the Great (1206-1280), the teacher of Aquinas, had himself relied upon the commentary and translations of Avicenna in his own exposition of the thought of Aristotle. Thus, it is no great surprise that Aquinas was willing to engage seriously with the Peripatetic philosophical tradition. An example of Aquinas' interaction with Islamic philosophy will now be explored in some depth, in order to emphasize the way in which he critically engaged with other traditions. This specific example was selected because the technical terminology and concepts which Aquinas develops in his creative engagement with this particular issue are vital for understanding Johanns' metaphysical perspective.

b. Example: Avicenna and the Distinction of Essence and Existence

Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* had never clarified sufficiently whether the fact of an individual's existence or the essential nature of the individual held ontological primacy in his system. Often Aristotle simply assumed the eternal existence of certain entities, failing to distinguish between two very different inquiries when defining individual items: "what is it?" and "is it?" The modern attentiveness to the category of existence in philosophy did not arise until metaphysical abstraction was situated within a more concrete discussion of the relation of creator to the created world, specifically within an Islamic context. Muslim philosophers sought to make a clear distinction between the first Being and everything else that emerged from it, lest God be reduced simply to the first item in a series. Thus, al-Fārābī (880-950), although accepting an emanationist scheme, suggested that "if essence, which is not the same as existence, does not have its being from itself, it must have it from something else...and so we proceed to a principle which had no essence as apart

⁵⁰ Frederick II was king of Sicily from 1296-1337.

from existing.”⁵¹ This principle was, of course, the first Being. This assertion was the first time that a philosopher had clearly separated the categories of existence and essence.

Avicenna had carried the exploration further, specifying that there were two different types of existence, namely necessary being and possible/contingent being. The raw fact of an individual’s coming to be and passing out of existence is unable to be explained simply with reference to its essence. All entities that come to be are only “possibly existent by virtue of themselves,” and therefore something outside of that entity and its essence must account for its attainment of existence.⁵² Only one principle has necessary being by virtue of itself, and this principle has “no essence (*māhiya*) except that it be necessary being, and this is its existence (*anniya*).”⁵³ It has no properties or potentialities; it is a sheer unity, without any composition of existence and essence.⁵⁴ All else besides this necessary being has a level of composition within it, namely the fact that being “comes to” its essence. Quiddity, or essence, is distinguished from existence in every entity except the necessary existent, for existence “comes to” every entity except the necessary existent, which itself has no quiddity save for its mere existence.⁵⁵ Thus, the distinction of existence from essence serves to accentuate the radical difference between necessary and contingent being, and Avicenna is able to posit the ontological distinctiveness of the

⁵¹ al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūṣ al hikam*, 66.4, 17-18; 67.3-6, translated in Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, Cambridge: University Press, 1983, p. 106. The philosopher al-Fārābī espoused a Neoplatonist position that envisioned the universe emanating from the intellect of God. He was one of the first Muslim philosophers to develop a sophisticated Neoplatonic metaphysic. See Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 107-128.

⁵² Avicenna, *Shifā Ilāhiyāt* 1.7 (47:10-11), translated in G.C. Anawati, *Avicenna: La Métaphysique du Shifā (Shifā Ilāhiyāt)*, vol.1, Paris: Vrin, 1978, p. 121: “Quant au possiblement existant, son caractère propre ressort de ce que [nous venons de dire]: à savoir qu’il a besoin nécessairement d’autre chose qui le fasse exister en acte.” See also Avicenna, *Dānish-nāmā* 18 (Analysis of the condition of being as being necessary and being contingent), translated in Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Avicenna: Dānish Nāmā-ī ‘alā’ī*, London: Routledge and Paul Ltd, 1973, p. 48.

⁵³ Avicenna, *Shifā Ilāhiyāt* 8.4 (346:11), translated in Anawati, vol. 2, p. 87: “Il n’y a donc pas d’autre quiddité pour le nécessairement existant que le fait qu’il est nécessairement existant. Et c’est cela l’être.” See also Avicenna, *Dānish-nāmā* 24 (Finding that the essence of the Necessary Existent can be no other than existence), translated in Morewedge, p. 55.

⁵⁴ Avicenna, *Shifā Ilāhiyāt* 1.7 (47:18), translated in Anawati, vol.1, p. 122: “C’est (le nécessairement existant) le singulier (*al-fard*); ce qui n’est pas lui est double et composé.” See also Avicenna, *Dānish-nāmā* 21 (Finding that there cannot be a multiplicity in the Necessary Existent), translated in Morewedge, p. 53.

⁵⁵ David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas, Notre Dame*: University Press, 1986, p.18.

necessary Being.

While earlier Neoplatonic models had been able to account for the possibility of motion and emanation through Aristotle's notion of a prime mover, the problem of validating the *actuality* of the various emanated items had been left unresolved until Avicenna brought forth his discrimination between necessary existence and possible existence. The world which had emerged in the Neoplatonist model might simply have never *been* if not for the necessary being conferring existence upon possible beings. Avicenna, however, did not embrace a conception of creation which fully reflected the radical distinction of contingent and necessary being, for the emanationist doctrine blunted the force of the distinction. Existence appears at times to take on the identity of an accident which is adjoined to the essence of a possible being in Avicenna's metaphysics, a charge which Averroes leveled against him and felt to be a serious weakness. Averroes, in his refutation of al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, asserted that al-Ghazālī was led astray by Avicenna:

But Ghazālī based his discussion on the doctrine of Avicenna, and this is a false doctrine, for Avicenna believed that existence is something additional to the essence...Now, existence for Avicenna is an accident which supervenes on the essence, and to this Ghazālī refers when he says: "For man before his existence has a quiddity, and existence occurs to it and enters into relation with it."⁵⁶

Averroes thought that if existence "occurs to" an essence, as Avicenna had posited, then in some sense the essence possesses an independent possible existence even before it is actuated. Something must already *be*, even if only in a state of possibility, in order for existence to come into composition with it. And thus, the creator becomes reduced to a kind of demiurge introducing a new level of order into pre-existing entities. Avicenna's language of possible being does not lend itself to removing this difficulty. Avicenna does not provide a concise analysis of existence; all that is affirmed is that it "comes to" the quiddity of contingent beings and is the essence of the necessary existent. The celebrated distinction put forward by Avicenna does not provide a more precise characterization of the necessary existent or a more cogent explanation of the emergence of the world beyond these most basic

⁵⁶ Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (5.303.1-5), translated in Simon van der Bergh, *Averroes' Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Oxford: University Press, 1954, p. 179. Al-Ghazālī is famous in Muslim philosophy for his attack on the Peripatetic school of thought. His most famous work is entitled *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)*, where he subjects the agenda of these earlier philosophers influenced by Greek thinking to scathing criticism. See Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 217-233.

assertions.

Aquinas refines the distinction by relating these two elements to potency and act. He would propose an analogy whereby essence is to existence as potency is to act. Aquinas explains potentiality and act in this way: “Existence denotes a kind of actuality: since a thing is said to exist, not through being in potentiality, but through being in act.”⁵⁷ He goes on to demonstrate that God is pure act through an analysis of essence and existence reminiscent of al-Fārābī and Avicenna:

Existence itself cannot be caused by the very form or quiddity of a thing; I mean that it cannot be caused as by an efficient cause, since then something would be its own cause and bring itself into existence; but this is not possible. Therefore, everything that is such that its existence is other than its nature must have its existence from another. And because everything that exists through another is led back to that which exists through itself as to its first cause, there must be one thing which is the cause of existence in all things because it alone is the act-of-being...But everything that receives anything from another is in potentiality to the act received. Therefore it is necessary that the essence itself, or the form, which is the spirit, be in potentiality relative to the existence that it receives from God, and that that existence be received as act.⁵⁸

God is viewed as pure act of being, without potentiality, whereas creatures have participated being and do not have their own *esse* (to-be). A thing thus comes into existence by the active power of God; individual things do not emerge of necessity, rather they are actuated by the one pure act whose very quiddity is to-be, and these potentialities are thereby said to participate in *esse*. The following is a lucid summary of the theological implications of the analogy:

Esse (to-be) itself is the ultimate act in which everything can participate while it participates in nothing. Whence we say: if there be anything which is subsistent *esse* itself- as we say God is- then that one participates in nothing at all. Other subsistent forms, however, must participate in *esse* as potency to act, so given that they are to this extent in potency, they can participate in something else.⁵⁹

By situating the essence/existence distinction within the axis of potentiality

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.22, translated in *The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas: literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers*, vol. 1, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia* 4.8, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *De Anima* 1.6.2, quoted in David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas*, Notre Dame: University Press, 1986, p. 31.

and act, Aquinas was distancing himself from the Averroesian charge that this distinction would lead to conceptualizing existence as an accident, which would then introduce the notion of pre-existent possible essences co-present with God before creation. Aquinas uses the Latin infinitive *esse* (to-be) to indicate that being has an active nuance and may best be rendered “act of being.” *Esse* is not a quality or attribute attached or adjoined to an essence which resides in a possible world. In treating the meaning of the word “possible,” Aquinas is clear that entities are not possible in themselves but are only possible and “might exist” in relation to the active power of God; there are no presupposed existents before the creative act of being actualizes them. He writes, “Nothing apart from God has been from all eternity. Before the world existed it was possible for it to be, not indeed because of the passive potentiality of matter, but because of the active power of God.”⁶⁰

After the exercise of the active power of God, potential beings participate in the existence of the necessary being. In the metaphysics of Aquinas, there is an ontological primacy of *esse*, whereas in the system of Avicenna there is an implicit primacy of possible essences. The scholar Georges Anawati notes that “because he begins with essence, Avicenna is brought inevitably to consider the *esse* which affects it as an accident; by contrast, St. Thomas begins with the existing being and makes *esse* what is most intimate and profound in that being.”⁶¹ Aquinas’ accentuation of *esse* better preserves the notion of God as creator and safeguards Him from being seen as a demiurge materializing possible essences that were already fully constituted in their natures before creation.

Avicenna, in an attempt to preserve a doctrine of creation within a model of emanation, had defined a created being as that which receives existence from another and does not exist in itself.⁶² So everything except the first Being is created, in terms of this definition. Aquinas takes this foundational definition and uses it to undercut the doctrine of emanation, for if only God the pure act can bestow existence to potential beings who have no potentiality in themselves, then there is no ontological

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.46.1, translated by T. Gilby, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 8, London: Blackfriars, 1967, p. 69, 71.

⁶¹ *La Métaphysique du Shifā*, tr. G. Anawati, p. 78, quoted in D. Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*, Notre Dame: University Press, 1993, p. 43. Fr. Georges Anawati (1905-1994) was a Dominican scholar living in Cairo who specialized in Islamic philosophy. See David Kerr, “George Anawati,” *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. G. Anderson, New York: MacMillan Reference, 1998, p. 433.

⁶² Avicenna, *Shifā Ilāhiyāt* 8.3 (342:10-15).

warrant or need for the intermediary beings of Neoplatonism from which other things successively emerge. Each entity, being a composite of existence and essence, owes its participated being *directly* to the creator whose very essence is existence; the introduction of a third party in the process of creation is deemed superfluous. Nothing created can take the role of the act of being which is associated with creation. Aquinas asserts:

Creation is the proper activity of God alone. Effects which are more universal need to be taken to more universal and original causes. Among all effects the most universal is existence itself, which should accordingly be the proper effect of the first and most universal cause, which is God. Now God's proper effect in creating is that which is presupposed to any other, namely existence....Now as an individual man shares in human nature so, too, every created being whatever shares, if I may put it so, in the nature of existing; God alone, as we have seen, is his own existence. Hence no created being can produce a being purely as such.⁶³

In summary, Aquinas uses the distinction of existence and essence passed down by al-Fārābī and Avicenna to make a sharp contrast between the creator and all other items of the creation and to articulate what sets off the creator from all else; he draws out the implications of this distinction to accentuate the uniqueness of God's being. He utilizes the distinction to dismantle the Neoplatonic conception of creation and to give greater warrant to his own concept of creation which is compatible with traditional Christian doctrine. Aquinas recognized the importance of the attack on Avicenna by Averroes in regard to viewing existence as an attribute which combines with essence. While accepting the distinction introduced by the Islamic philosophers, Aquinas re-situates it within a different axis than the Neoplatonist scheme in which it had originally been developed. He recasts it within his own model of direct creation of contingent entities by the free act of God. He sought to advance his own understanding of God as pure act of being, undercutting the emanationist doctrine of the Islamic Neoplatonists in favor of his own model.

Aquinas provided an example for Johanns for how a Christian theologian might approach other traditions and how he may creatively engage with their philosophical materials. Aquinas viewed the eminent Greek, Jewish, and Islamic philosophers as worthy colleagues in the pursuit of truth, and he self-consciously

⁶³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.45.5, translated by T. Gilby, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 8, London: Blackfriars, 1967, p. 45, 47.

drew upon the ideas and categories in their writings in order to articulate his own understanding of reality. Johanns wanted to interact with the *Vedānta* in a similar fashion as Aquinas dealt with his philosophical predecessors:

Le docteur scolastique a fréquenté surtout Aristote, Platon et Plotin, ces trois géants de spéculation hellénique. Sa méthode à leur égard, on la connaît. Quand il doit traiter du monde matériel, il suit avant tout le bon sens et le réalisme d'Aristote. Quand il pénètre dans la sphère des esprits purs et se meut à travers le monde angélique, Platon avec son idéalisme devient son guide. Enfin lorsqu'il touche aux sommets de la transcendance, il plotinise.⁶⁴

Johanns was heavily influenced by Aquinas' method of approach to other metaphysical systems in his own treatment of the *Vedānta*. Johanns intentionally interacted with the great *Vedāntic* philosophers, skillfully utilizing the diverse arguments of the Indian thinkers to craft what he believed to be a coherent metaphysic. He would allow the subtle arguments of one *Vedāntic* master to correct the statements of another. He readily adopted the ideas of the *ācāryas*, situating them within his own conception of a universe created directly by the pure act. A quotation from the conclusion of one of Johanns' articles will illustrate how he was engaging in a procedure which was exemplified by Aquinas: "We must thus correct Rāmānuja by Vallabha, and both by Śaṅkara, and then raise the whole conception to a higher plane by *creatio ex nihilo*. Thus do we complete our system on the absolute and the contingent."⁶⁵

c. Neo-Thomism

Johanns was also influenced by a more modern re-conception of Thomism, which has been dubbed neo-Thomism. Neo-Thomism refers to an important movement that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which sought to re-introduce the basic principles of Thomism into the current philosophical

⁶⁴ Johanns, "Theologie Catholique et Sagesse Des Indes," *Doctor Communis*, II (1951), p. 2. See also "Pierres d'attente du Christianisme dans la Philosophie Indienne, *Lumen Vitae*, I (1946), p. 173 ff.

⁶⁵ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 3. Johanns allows the ideas of the *Vedāntins* to interact with one another in a distinctive fashion. Here is but one example: "Śaṅkara is right in saying that all the reality of the world is contained in God in the form of Reality. But we must go further than Śaṅkara and say that God also contains the world as an idea in His intellect. Now, this ideal world is an inner mode of God- as Rāmānuja holds- or, to be more precise, an aspect of God, namely of His participability- as Vallabha pointed out. We must again go beyond Rāmānuja and Vallabha and remark that the world as an inner mode or aspect of God is not real but only realizable, i.e. a possible. To make this world real, God must create, or transfer it from its ideal condition to its condition of existence." *Introduction to the Vedānta*, Ranchi: *Light of the East Series* 23, 1943, p. 37.

discussion and to engage modern problems. Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) is generally understood to be an important figure in the renewal of Thomist studies, when he called for bishops to “restore the golden wisdom of Thomas and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society and for the advantage of all the sciences” in the 1879 *Aeterni patris* encyclical.⁶⁶ Leo XIII commissioned the editing of a critical edition of the writings of Aquinas, and he founded the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at the University of Louvain for the dissemination of Thomist thought. The Pope was especially concerned that Thomism engage with developments in the social and scientific disciplines so that it would cease to be viewed as an antiquarian philosophy.

Copleston notes that the modern revival of medieval philosophy and its engagement with current thought “is associated largely with the university of Louvain, and especially with the work of Cardinal Mercier.”⁶⁷ Désiré Mercier occupied the chair of Thomistic philosophy at Louvain and inspired his students to integrate the findings of modern science and mathematics with the teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas. He believed that metaphysical knowledge is founded upon sense-perception of the empirical world, and therefore the sciences are an ally to philosophical advancement. Joseph Maréchal provided instruction in biology and philosophy at Louvain, and he furthered the task of bringing Thomism into discussion not only with biological studies, but also with modern philosophy.⁶⁸ Maréchal is famous for his comparison of Thomistic and Kantian epistemology. He came to the conclusion that the Kantian description of the problematic of epistemology, known as his transcendental critique, would be helpful for drawing out the rudiments of Aquinas’ critique of knowledge which can be found in his writings. Thus, Kant had made positive contributions which needed to be integrated into the Thomist position.

Maurice De Wulf promoted the idea of *philosophia perennis*, whereby a

⁶⁶ See J. Weisheipl, “Scholasticism,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 1167.

⁶⁷ F. Copleston, *Aquinas*, London: Penguin Books, 1955, p. 240. Désiré Mercier (1851-1926) occupied the chair of Thomistic philosophy from 1882 until he was appointed an Archbishop of Malines in 1906 and then a Cardinal in 1907. He wrote *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, 2 vol., tr. T. Parker, London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1917.

⁶⁸ Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), who lectured at the Jesuit scholasticate in Louvain and influenced such eminent theologians as Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, wrote *Point de départ de la métaphysique*, 5 vol., Brussels: L’Édition Universelle, 1944. The third through fifth volumes contain his noted treatment of Kantian idealism.

unified stream of thought introduced by the Greeks and developed by the medieval scholastics was in need of revival by the neo-scholastics.⁶⁹ Certain antiquated ideas needed to be corrected, but on the whole, the basic system synthesized by Aquinas was of continuing value for understanding the metaphysical structure of the universe. This conception of the *philosophia perennis* would inspire many modern Thomists. Copleston writes:

The claim that there is a perennial philosophy involves the claim that there is an abiding metaphysical pattern in the changing and developing universe, which is capable of being understood and stated. But it does not follow that any given man had or has a completely adequate understanding of it. The concept of a perennial philosophy is the concept of a developing insight rather than the concept of a static and once-for-all expression of insight. Moreover, the claim that Thomism is the perennial philosophy is not intended by those who make it, at least by the more sensible among them, to exclude the possibility of fresh insights into truth being contributed by non-Thomist philosophers. It does, however, imply that these insights can be organically assimilated by a developing Thomism.⁷⁰

Contemporary Thomist philosophers believe that the basic metaphysical position outlined by Aquinas provides a balanced picture of reality, not allowing emphasis on one facet to make the philosopher ignore other important aspects. It is this holistic metaphysic that the Thomist strives to protect. The emphasis is not so much that the metaphysic is accurate because it is what St. Thomas taught, but rather that his depiction corresponds more closely to the stable structure of reality than other schemes. And this description can be enhanced and clarified through further reflection and through engagement with non-Thomist sources.

Two other famous modern Thomists, who were not associated with the Louvain tradition, were Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson.⁷¹ Maritain called for

⁶⁹ De Wulf (1867-1947) was a student of Mercier at Louvain, before he was appointed professor at the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at Louvain. He taught there from 1893-1939. His work, the *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale* "promoted the revival of scholastic learning by pointing out the essence of scholasticism...By scholasticism, De Wulf meant a body of original doctrine of metaphysical nature, arrived at by reason; despite secondary divergences, this was common to the great thinkers of the Middle Ages and found its most adequate expression in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas." A. Wylleman, "De Wulf," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 836.

⁷⁰ Copleston, *Aquinas*, London: Penguin Books, 1955, p. 253.

⁷¹ Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) was a French Thomist who lectured at the Institut Catholique de Paris, Princeton, and Columbia. He wrote *The Degrees of Knowledge*, London: G. Bles, 1937, and *Le Docteur Angélique*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1930. See B. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals*, Notre Dame: University Press, 1983. Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) taught history of medieval philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1921-1932. From 1932-1951, Gilson

an “open Thomism” which could integrate insights from other disciplines and from modern culture. His writings dealt with education, art, poetry, and ethics, as well as metaphysics. Maritain is especially noted for his socio-political philosophy which details his conception of the freedom, rights, personhood, and dignity of humanity. Gilson was a historian of medieval philosophy who attempted to show how many medieval ideas have been transmitted into modern philosophy. He diverges from the Louvain neo-Thomists by resisting the idea that there was ever a common philosophical synthesis in the Middle Ages and by his conservative hesitation to synthesize Thomism with insights from non-Thomist systems like Cartesianism or Kantianism.

Johanns’ education was at the University of Louvain, where the neo-Thomist movement was particularly strong. One can detect the neo-Thomist assumptions that Johanns held by recognizing his concern to develop a balanced metaphysic that did not focus upon one aspect of reality at the expense of another equally important facet. His project of synthesizing the central doctrines of various *Vedāntic* schools to produce this holistic viewpoint is a particularly neo-Thomist endeavor. Johanns was explicit at the outset of the *Light of the East* series that, in his opinion, none of the *Vedāntic* schools by themselves articulate a full-orbed perspective that provides this comprehensive outlook; the positive assertions of the schools need to be harmonized in order to produce this desired holism:

(The schools) contradict each other. This is due to each system (*advaita, viśiṣṭādvaita, dvaita, dvaitādvaita*) mistaking one great limb of Truth for its complete body... We have said that in the Catholic philosophy of Saint Thomas we find all the important doctrines met with in the *Vedānta*. But in the Thomistic system we have an organic whole... If the *Vedānta* philosophers will only bring their positive statements into harmony, if they will only adjust and thus partially limit their assertions, they will turn disconnected doctrines into a system, and that system will be Thomism, or something akin to Thomism.⁷²

The standard neo-Thomist viewpoint could hardly be better expressed than in this quotation, though the innovation of Johanns was to engage with the Indic systems rather than with the usual European materials. In his view, India has developed the

lectured at the Collège de France. He wrote *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, London: V. Gollancz, 1957, and *God and Philosophy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941.

⁷² *Light of the East*, 1 (October, 1922), p. 3.

raw materials which could be utilized to construct a coherent perennial philosophy, but since the *Vedāntic ācāryas* “try to stretch their positive assertions in such a way as to block up some other positive truth,” a synthesis is needed of the various schools to work them into a consistent whole. Johanns was attempting to do with the *Vedānta* what his neo-Thomist colleagues were doing with contemporary Continental philosophies, integrating their various perspectives into a *philosophia perennis*.

B. Project: Synthesis of Vedāntic Schools

1. Johanns' approach

Johanns, as a competent scholar of Indian philosophy, recognized that there were many interpretations of the *śruti* and diverse viewpoints represented within the *Vedāntic* tradition.⁷³ He was correct in acknowledging that there is not one unified vision of reality that prevails unchallenged within the intellectual strands of Hinduism. The Hindu philosophers have not yet achieved a single system. According to Johanns, although the systems of the *Vedānta* contain all the philosophic materials that are needed to create a coherent, satisfying metaphysic, the individual systems themselves tend to “block up some other positive truth” and “extend their sectional views over the whole of reality.”⁷⁴ What is needed is a synthesis of the *Vedāntic* systems, allowing the strengths of each position to contribute to the construction of a “perennial philosophy.” The system of Rāmānuja must be brought to bear upon the thought of Śaṅkara, and Vallabha must be allowed to correct the philosophizing of Rāmānuja. Johanns skillfully explained the differences between the *Vedāntic* schools and described the major critiques that each tradition makes against its rivals. This approach reflects Johanns’ neo-Thomist instincts. He was of the belief that the systems of the *Vedānta* are a “heap of loose limbs that await a common soul.”⁷⁵

A major assumption of Johanns was that a synthesis of the *Vedāntic* schools would produce a metaphysic “akin to Thomism.” Johanns did not want to destroy the *Vedānta*, rather he wanted to allow it to follow its natural course of development

⁷³ The term *śruti* refers to the most sacred revelation of Hinduism, usually construed as the *Vedic* material.

⁷⁴ *Light of the East*, 1 (Oct., 1922), p. 1. Note the neo-Thomist language, particularly of the Louvain school, that is being employed here by Johanns.

⁷⁵ *Light of the East*, 1 (Oct., 1922), p. 1.

through a thoughtful synthesis. After years of studying the *Vedānta*, Johanns was of the opinion that there was not any major opposition between the thrust of *Vedāntic* thought and Catholic theology. Indeed, he asserted that “there is no important philosophical doctrine of St. Thomas which is not found in one or the other of the *Vedānta* systems.”⁷⁶ By resolving the key contradictions that are found between the various major schools of the *Vedānta* and re-working them into a synthesized whole, Johanns was hoping to produce an edifying contribution to Indian spirituality. This form of synthesized *Vedānta* would be intelligible to both Hindus and Christians in India. K. P. Aleaz writes:

Three things happen simultaneously in the effort undertaken by Johanns; firstly, *Vedānta* systems are harmonized among themselves; secondly, *Vedānta* is harmonized with Christian philosophy; thirdly, the reconstruction of Christian philosophy on Indian grounds is accomplished... Different schools of *Vedānta* together have to contribute for the construction of an Indian Christian philosophy.⁷⁷

2. *Background: The Vedānta*

Within the six orthodox schools of traditional Indian philosophy, there are two which particularly base their views upon exegesis of the *Vedic* corpus. The *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* concentrates upon the earlier portion of the corpus; the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* gives primacy of importance to the latter contents of the corpus. And thus, the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* was also known as the *Vedānta*, meaning the end of the *Vedas*.⁷⁸ The various *Vedāntic* schools look to the *Upaniṣads* as their principal point of departure. For both *Pūrva* and *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*, the *Vedas* are eternal and impersonal, but for the *Vedāntins* the *Upaniṣads* are the culmination of the *Vedic* corpus. Moving away from ritual-centered interpretations of the *Vedic* materials, the *Vedāntins* focused upon the internalization of the meaning of the ritual which was promoted in the *Upaniṣads*. Where the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsākas* accentuated the importance of the performance of the ritual, the *Vedāntins* underscored the need to understand the connection between *Brahman* and *ātman*. They saw this connection as the true import of the meaning of the sacrifice, where the realms of the eternal

⁷⁶ *Light of the East*, 1 (Oct., 1922), p. 1.

⁷⁷ K.P. Aleaz, *Christian Thought through advaita Vedānta*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996, p. 114.

⁷⁸ The material provided in this summary of the *Vedānta* comes from the following sources: John Brockington, *The Sacred Thread*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1996; Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London: Routledge, 1994; Eric Lott, *Vedāntic Approaches to God*, London: Macmillan Press, 1980.

world and this earthly world met. The *Upaniṣads* contain reflections and intuitions about *Brahman* and *ātman* and their relationship, along with other hidden correspondences that are discerned by the wise, and thus they constitute a primary source of salvific knowledge. The *Brahma Sūtras* are a text of around 550 *sūtras* attributed to Bādarāyaṇa which attempt to summarize the essence of *Upaniṣadic* teaching in a series of aphorisms. The terseness of the *Brahma Sūtras* gave rise to a large commentarial tradition in which various interpreters attempted to unveil the true relation of *Brahman* to the world which they believed Bādarāyaṇa summarized. Most of the great *Vedāntin* commentators wrote from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries C.E. They sought to teach the attainment of *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, as a means of liberation from bondage. The *Vedāntins* also utilized other writings, such as the epics and certain *Purāṇas*, in the explication of their distinctive systems.

The *Vedāntic* schools affirm that humans through ignorance have become estranged from *Brahman* the ultimate reality. Freedom comes when the self is integrated with *Brahman* in a proper fashion. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha, as exegetical theologians, were trying to provide a coherent interpretation of the diverse *Upaniṣadic* verses which at times identified *Brahman* with the individual self and at other times affirmed an ontological distinction between the two. Śaṅkara was the great *Vedāntic* exponent of radical non-dualism born in the eighth century A.D. Philosophers after Śaṅkara have had to take into account his erudite and penetrating arguments for the unique form of monism that he advocated. *Advaita* claims that this integration is simply the realization that the self in its truest sense is identical with the Absolute. Nothing changes ontologically when this great realization is acquired; rather the truth of the identity dispels all false perceptions based upon ignorance. Rāmānuja, writing in the eleventh century, was self-consciously reacting to the particular form of *Vedāntic* philosophy that Śaṅkara espoused. Rāmānuja's own body of *Vedāntic* thought was a type of dissent against *advaitic* metaphysics. The *viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) of Rāmānuja asserts that this integration with *Brahman* includes the recognition that the self is part of the "body" of *Brahman*, and thus it is not abolished but is nurtured as it communes with the Absolute. Salvific union with *Brahman* allows the self to have an intimate relationship with the perfect being of God. Vallabha, a sixteenth century theologian, in his *śuddhādvaita* (pure *advaita*), contended that the self is an expression of the self-analysis of *Brahman*, as being and consciousness are projected against the background of the divine plenitude.

One useful way of evaluating the positions of the various *Vedāntic* schools is to determine how they characterize the nature of the inner self (*ātman*), which analogically indicates the nature of the Supreme Self (*Brahman*). The specific model of selfhood helps to provide an interpretive key for understanding the various relations in each system. Eric Lott comments:

Each (school) seems to take its stand on some distinctive feature of selfhood and interprets the Supreme self, indeed the whole of reality, by means of this distinct analogical perspective. Even doctrines that may appear to be held in common by all *Vedāntins*, perhaps taken from a common *Vedāntic* tradition, are found to be woven into the concerned system in subordination to the determining analogy.⁷⁹

The commentators will often indicate their perspective on such issues when explaining identity statements in the *Upaniṣads*, such as the famous *tat tvam asi* of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, which allude to a mysterious relationship between the inner self and the Supreme Self. A brief sketch of the positions of some of the most famous *Vedāntic* commentators will now be provided, noting their understanding of selfhood and the meaning of the *Upaniṣadic* identity statements.

a. Śaṅkara's Position

Śaṅkara asserts that reality is non-dual (*advaita*) in nature; *Brahman* alone ultimately exists.⁸⁰ The appearance of the phenomenal world is due to a series of false superimpositions (*adhyāsa*) on the non-dual *Brahman* caused by ignorance (*avidyā*) so that individuality and multiplicity seem to arise. But all the while it is only *Brahman* that ultimately constitutes reality. The phenomenal world does have a conventional reality, however, and *Īśvara* the personal God carries out his creative activity on this level. Śaṅkara adopts the Buddhist hermeneutic of two levels of reality, one being conventional reality and the other being absolute reality. Behind a human's perception of the phenomenal world of multiplicity, there is an ontological reality, namely the non-dual *Brahman*; ultimate reality is not *śūnyatā*, the void of *Mādhyamika* Buddhists. Ignorance makes an individual perceive the differentiated world instead of *Brahman*, much as someone may perceive a snake instead of correctly identifying the object as a rope. Ignorance also makes an individual think

⁷⁹ Eric Lott, *Vedāntic Approaches to God*, London: Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 28.

⁸⁰ For more information on the works and teachings of Śaṅkara, see A.J. Alston, *A Śaṅkara Source Book*, 6 vols., London: Santi Sadan, 1980-1989; E. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969; C. Ram-Prasad, *Advaita Epistemology and Metaphysics*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.

that the multiple objects of the phenomenal world are independent of *Brahman*. A *jīva* is an *ātman* that falsely believes that it is independent and limited. In reality, the *ātman*, or the truest essence of the self, is ontologically identical with *Brahman*. For Śaṅkara, the famous *Upaniṣadic* declaration “you are that” (*tat tvam asi*) indicates that the *ātman*’s true identity is realized “by removing the incompatible elements of individuality and transcendence to reveal the pure consciousness which is the ground of the *ātman* as of *Brahman*.”⁸¹

b. Rāmānuja’s Position

According to Rāmānuja, the famous *Upaniṣadic* dictum “*tat tvam asi*” does not assert absolute ontological identity between the *ātman* and *Brahman*.⁸² He explains the nature of the identity by means of his famous body-soul analogy, whereby the world is related to *Brahman* as the body is related to the soul. The world of souls and materiality is controlled and supported and is subordinate to *Brahman*, the inner-controller of the world. The non-dual *Brahman* possesses a body composed of differentiated entities that qualify Him- thus, the description of the system as *viśiṣṭādvaita*. Although the embodied *Brahman* is a synthetic, inseparable whole, these entities are eternally distinct within *Brahman* and cannot be reduced to complete identity with Him. The sections of the *śruti* that seem to deny plurality are merely declaring that there is no plurality that exists where a unified ontological ground does not suffuse and undergird the plurality. Rāmānuja asserts that the *Upaniṣadic* texts which some monist philosophers believed denied the reality of “multiplicity” are simply trying to demonstrate that nothing exists independently of *Brahman* and that all objects find their ultimate support in God- this is the true import of the identity statements. Rāmānuja tries to balance the unity of the Absolute with the reality of the world of relations, attributes, and multiplicity. The plurality of the world is due to the internal distinctions present in the “body” of the unified *Brahman*.

c. Vallabha’s Position

Vallabha accepts the validity of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which he deems the

⁸¹ John Brockington, *The Sacred Thread*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1996, p. 110.

⁸² For more information on the works and teachings of Rāmānuja, see J. Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986; J. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974; E. Lott, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Madras: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1976.

final authority in religious matters.⁸³ As a *Vaiṣṇava* theologian, who is said to have received personal instruction from and visionary experiences of Kṛṣṇa, he advocates a metaphysical model which conceives of Kṛṣṇa as the totality of reality. Thus, his system is known as *śuddhādvaita*, because he asserted that the prior monistic system of Śaṅkara was tainted and introduced other categories alongside of *Brahman*. Vallabha, on the other hand, believes that all of reality could be seen as the projection and concealment of various aspects of the person of *Brahman*, identified as Lord Kṛṣṇa. All entities in the phenomenal world, including the self, can be identified in one way or another as various projections of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*). Against the background of the divine plenitude, the *sat* is projected while the *cit* and *ānanda* are concealed, and the inanimate world becomes manifested with its components of physical materiality. In the same way, the *sat* and *cit* are projected while the *ānanda* is concealed, becoming the individual, conscious selves. Kṛṣṇa is unchanging in His basic nature; the world of materiality and selves is simply the result of Him choosing to veil and manifest various aspects of His eternal personhood. Thus, the *tat tvam asi* statement of identity indicates that the self is simply Kṛṣṇa under the guise of the concealment of His *ānanda*. Spiritual discrimination involves understanding one's identity as an aspect of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

d. Other Vedāntic Systems

Madhva was a thirteenth-century devotee of Viṣṇu who propounded a system known as *dvaita*, indicating that he is a dualist.⁸⁴ There is an irreducible difference between Viṣṇu and the world, and the materiality and selves which comprise the world are similarly distinct from each other. Not only does he reject monism, but he also argues against any notion of the world as an emanation from God. Matter, selves, and Viṣṇu exist eternally and are each completely real ontologically. Even in the liberated condition, the separateness of these entities is not compromised. Madhva regards the declarations of the *Upaniṣads* which seem to indicate monism as merely metaphorical in nature. The closest identification that the self enjoys with

⁸³ For more information on the works and teachings of Vallabha, see R. Barz, The Bhakti Sect of Vallabhāchārya, Faridabad: Thomson Press, 1976; J. Redington, The Grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa: The Sixteen Verse-Treatises of Vallabhāchārya, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 2000; J. Timm, "Prolegomenon to Vallabha's theology of revelation," *Philosophy East and West*, 38 (1988), p. 107-126; J. Timm, "The Celebration of Emotion: Vallabha's Ontology of Affective Experience," *Philosophy East and West*, 41(1991), p. 59-75.

⁸⁴ See D. Sarma, An Introduction to Madhva Vedānta, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Viṣṇu comes about as a result of devotion and a sense of complete dependence.

Caitanya (1486-1533) was an ecstatic devotee of Kṛṣṇa whose religiosity inspired other *Vaiṣṇavas*, particularly in Bengal.⁸⁵ His basic theology was systematized and expounded by the six Gosvāmins, who composed works in Sanskrit. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a key Scripture for this school of thought, called *acintyabhedābheda*. There is a relationship of unthinkable difference in identity with Kṛṣṇa. Jīva Gosvāmi, perhaps the most prominent thinker, advocates three manifestations of Kṛṣṇa. There is *Bhagavat*, the supreme, personal Being of numerous attributes, who is the highest expression of divinity. Then there is the Supreme Self, who interacts with the material world and with the selves. There is also *Brahman*, who is the unqualified principle discerned by the monistic philosophers. *Brahman* is only a partial manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

More minor *Vedāntins* include Nimbārka, a contemporary of Rāmānuja, who teaches that God and the world of souls and matter are identical, sharing the same substance, and yet different (*bhedābheda*). Bhāskara, a contemporary of Śāṅkara, teaches a form of *bhedābheda* that conceived of Brahman in different transformations of cause and effect; the finite world is the result of a real self-transformation on the part of *Brahman*. Unity and diversity are held in tension by Nimbārka and Bhāskara.⁸⁶

Johanns pursued excellence in his study and explanation of the *Vedāntic* systems. His scholarly competence was recognized by various educational institutions, in Oxford as well as Calcutta, and his spiritual discernment was perceived by *Vaiṣṇava* devotees as much as Catholic novices. He was twice offered a position to lecture at the Presidency College, University of Calcutta. The impressive efforts of Johanns as an Indologist inspired the Professor of Sanskrit at Sorbonne University, Olivier Lacombe, to endorse and write the preface for his book *La Pensée Religieuse de l'Inde*.⁸⁷ In both the depth of his detailed expositions and the breadth of his overarching theological perspective, Johanns was and still is considered an erudite figure deserving of respect.

⁸⁵ See S.K. De, Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature & Studies in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1960; B. Tirtha, Sri Chaitanya's Concept of Theistic Vedānta, Madras: Sri Gaudiya Math, 1964.

⁸⁶ See J.L. Brockington, The Sacred Thread, Edinburgh: University Press, 1996, p. 110.

⁸⁷ Johanns, La Pensée Religieuse de l'Inde, Namur: Secrétariat des Publications, 1952.

C. Hinduism as Preparation and Christianity as Fulfilment

1. Johanns' approach

Johanns once referred to Hinduism as “the most searching quest in the natural order of the Divine that the world has known.”⁸⁸ In his view, it is clear that there are important intuitions and spiritual discoveries that the great Indian sages have gleaned from centuries of intense mental and existential search for the Ultimate. In fact, Johanns regarded the character of Hindu philosophy as being much more deeply religious than anything the Western world has ever produced, including the great Hellenistic philosophies. Johanns was convinced that the “*Vedānta* is perhaps the best among the natural religions and therefore the best foundation for the supernatural structure of Christianity.”⁸⁹ His statements reflect the general conception in Thomistic theology that general truths pertaining to the world and to God are accessible to the human mind without recourse to special revelation, and these “natural” truths provide the base upon which the higher “supernatural” concepts that are specific to Christianity can be erected. Such notions as the existence of God, the essential character of God, and the nature of moral action would be included within the sphere of “natural” truths which a natural religion may discover.

With this distinction between supernatural and natural religion in mind, Johanns believed that the best facets of Hindu philosophy were an authentic *praeparatio evangelica* for the supernatural Christian religion.⁹⁰ A Hindu will not need to abandon the central values and beliefs passed down for generations when accepting the Christian message. Christianity need not be a foreign imposition into the Indian milieu, rather it will speak directly to the heart of India’s quest for God as reflected in the sacred *śruti* and the philosophical texts. Christianity will fulfill the aspirations and noblest conceptions of Indian “natural” religion, and there can be a

⁸⁸ Johanns, “Hinduism,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 28.

⁸⁹ *Light of the East*, 6 (March, 1927), p. 4.

⁹⁰ The concept of *praeparatio evangelica* was developed by certain apologists of the early Church such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius of Caesarea. They asserted that it was the “work of the *Logos* in and through providential revelation, human reason, and even pagan philosophy, which instilled in the pagan mind belief in the oneness of God and the desire for pure worship and higher morality in the centuries prior to the coming of Christ and the apostolic mission.” These truths imparted by the *Logos* are known as *praeparatio evangelica*, or preparation for the gospel. See Richard Muller, “*Praeparatio Evangelica*,” *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985, p. 238.

relatively smooth transition from the tendencies and development of *Vedāntic* philosophy to the worldview expounded in the Christian tradition. As Johanns would say, “Hindus will find Christ if they find themselves fully.”⁹¹ The *Vedānta* will function much the same way in India as Greek philosophy did for the Christians converted within Greco-Roman culture, structuring the foundation and shape of doctrinal formulation.

A Christianity enriched by *Vedāntic* foundations will also add to the Church Universal. Johanns wrote: “The mystic Christ...will not be completed until it has bound to itself in a life-giving embrace the most fervent, the most intelligent, and the most earnest children of India.”⁹² Indian spirituality will help to fulfill the mystic Christ and his Body, the Church, which has been entrenched in Hellenistic modes of expression and praxis for so long. Thus, there is an aspect of mutual fulfilment which is latent within the thought of Johanns, where Christianity fulfills the Hindu quest and where Indian spirituality contributes its profundity to the Body of Christ.

2. Background: Fulfilment Theology

a. Catholic Fulfilment Theology

Regarding the Catholic notion of fulfilment, particularly in the Indian context, it is necessary to look as far back as the seventeenth century, when Catholic missionaries were seeking a rapprochement with upper-caste Hindus.⁹³ Two prominent figures whose writings exemplify a common Catholic attitude to Hindu religiosity, and to the *Vedānta* in particular, are the Jesuits Roberto de Nobili and Jean Calmette.⁹⁴ Richard Fox Young notes the Thomist methodology that pervades the writings of the early missionaries: “When I say that literary productions like de Nobili’s and Calmette’s signify a quest for a fundamental rapport with the *Vedānta*, I

⁹¹ *Light of the East*, 1 (Oct., 1922), p. 2.

⁹² *Light of the East*, 4 (Oct., 1925), p. 1.

⁹³ Due to variation in scholarly literature, the spelling of “fulfilment” will be used in reference to the type of theology addressed in this chapter, whereas the verbal form will be spelled “fulfill.”

⁹⁴ Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) was an Italian Jesuit who served as a missionary to Madurai, arriving in India in 1605. See S. Rajamanickam, *The First Oriental Scholar*, Tirunelvali: De Nobili Research Institute, 1972, and V. Cronin, *A Pearl to India: the Life of Roberto de Nobili*, London: R. Hart-Davis, 1959. Jean Calmette (1693-1740) was a Jesuit priest working in the Carnatic mission from 1723 till his death. For selections of Calmette’s writings, see *The Indian Christiad: A Concise Anthology of Didactic and Devotional Literature in Early Church Sanskrit*, ed. A. Amaladass and R. Young, Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash, 1995.

mean, theologically speaking, that theirs were Thomistic endeavors, that Catholicism's dichotomy between Nature and Grace informed their undertakings, and that Christianity perfects *Vedānta*.”⁹⁵ The notion of “fulfilment” here takes on the more specific sense that Grace perfects and completes the realm of Nature. De Nobili, in his Tamil treatise the *Nitya Jīvana Callāpam* (Dialogue on Eternal Life), assumes the universal validity of reason to establish fundamental moral and religious truths. He assumes that there is “reasonable religion,” and so he evaluates South Indian religion according to his notion of what constitutes such a rational spirituality. As Francis X. Clooney observes, Jesuit missionaries typically believed that “wrong views must be dragged into the light and shown up for what they are, critiqued and stripped of the appearances of logic and reasonability, just as reasons have to be adduced to defend the truth and dismiss unworthy attack upon it.”⁹⁶ According to these standards, certain mythological narratives and forms of Hindu “idolatry” are deemed irrational, defective forms of religion. De Nobili attempts to give all of his critiques a rational warrant, for “religious issues are not a matter of opinion, but of the application of norms accessible to all human beings. The meaning of ‘God,’ the dependent nature of the world, the basic principles of morality, the rights and wrongs of worship are all thought to be universally available and not reducible merely to the opinions of one particular culture.”⁹⁷ Confused, self-stultifying beliefs should be readily abandoned, if the adherent is genuinely searching after truth. Reason and argumentation are key tools in the process of negotiating valid from misleading religious positions. Rational inquiry was an indispensable component of the missionary endeavor, as well as the search for a viable natural theology. For the early Catholic missionaries, “the reference to a ‘natural light’ and the discovery of a natural conception of God and a natural theology and *philosophia perennis* were, particularly for the Jesuits, the prerequisite and stimulus for doing missionary work in India.”⁹⁸

Grace perfects nature (*gratia perficit naturam*) in Thomistic theology. Once

⁹⁵ Richard Fox Young, “Seeking India’s Christ-Bearing Word,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 19 (Fall, 2002), p. 22.

⁹⁶ Francis X. Clooney, “A Charism for Dialog: Advice from the Early Jesuit Missionaries in Our World of Religious Pluralism,” *Studies in Jesuit Spirituality* (March, 2002), p. 13.

⁹⁷ Francis X. Clooney, “De Nobili’s *Dialogue* and Religion in South India,” *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. J. O’Malley, Toronto: University Press, 1999, p. 412.

⁹⁸ Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: an Essay in Understanding*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, p. 54.

errors and deficiencies in perspective are corrected by the rigorous use of rational inquiry, the acceptance of the revealed truths of Christian teaching is much easier. The mind recognizes its limitations and embraces the supra-rational ideas revealed by God as truths which can satisfy its search for knowledge. De Nobili was writing and theologizing within this paradigm. Jean Calmette is another exemplary figure who accepted basic Thomistic presuppositions. He believed that there was an impressive range of truths contained in Hindu philosophy that were illustrative of the ascertainment of the “natural light.” He wrote several treatises and prayers in Sanskrit which adopted and extended the technical terminology of the *advaita*.⁹⁹ Calmette sought to reason from the basic principles that were espoused in Indian philosophy and to expose logical fallacies that were evident in some of these fundamental premises. He wrote: “La méthode que nous observons avec les *brames* est de les faire convenir d’abord de certains principes que le raisonnement a répandu dans leur philosophie; et par les conséquences que nous en tirons, nous leur démontrons sans peine la fausseté des opinions qu’ils reçoivent communément.”¹⁰⁰

The high regard that Matteo Ricci and Alessandro Valignano had for Confucian philosophy and the Chinese classics is evidence that they respected the “natural theology” that arose from a classical culture.¹⁰¹ Valignano insisted that the missionaries learn Chinese by studying the *Analects* and the other classics and allowed Ricci to dress in Confucian garb. The inclinations of the Chinese to shun vice and to follow a moral, natural law amazed Ricci, and he was confident that the introduction of Christianity into China would perfect their high sentiments. The Confucian teaching was replete with wonderful advice on cultivating a virtuous life, individually and corporately. For the Jesuit missionaries in East Asia, the task of mission involved introducing new truths, and at the same time meant accepting and

⁹⁹ The following example is taken from the *Satyavedasasarasamgraha*: “*Sarveśvara* (lit., The Sovereign Lord of All) is devoid of stain (*nirāñjana*) and change (*nirākāra*)/ without form (*arūpa*) and invisible (*adrśya*)/ without qualities (*nirguṇa*) without blemish (*niṣkalaṅka*)./ He is individed (*akhaṇḍa*), the *Sarveśvara*.” This passage is quoted in Richard Fox Young, “Seeking India’s Christ-Bearing Word,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 19 (Fall, 2002), p. 22. Calmette also wrote a breviary for Indian converts and frequently referred to the Christian God as *saccidānanda*.

¹⁰⁰ Calmette, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, quoted in Halbfass, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was a leading figure of the Jesuit mission to China during the Ming dynasty who was able to present himself to the Imperial Court at Beijing. Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) was appointed Visitor of the Jesuit Mission in the Far Asia and oversaw the efforts in China, Japan, and India from 1573-1606. For more detailed information on Valignano and the Jesuits in East Asia, see Andrew Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1994.

rejoicing in the good that was already to be found in China. They accepted the principle that “one can add something new only by understanding and affirming what is already in place.”¹⁰² In the same way that the earliest Jesuits affirmed the value of studying the Greek classics and defended the importance of reading such “pagan” authors as Virgil and Terence, the serious engagement with the texts of Confucianism and with the contemporary Chinese literati was promoted by Valignano. Indeed, some of the missionaries looked upon the Chinese civilization as more advanced in attainment than the classical Greek civilization. The policy of adaptation and inculturation had its theological rootedness in the Thomistic theology which was affirmed by the early generations of Jesuit missionaries. Andrew C. Ross notes: “Given the Jesuit belief that grace perfects nature, the possibility of a far-reaching inculturation was thus opened up...The very goal of Confucian education and philosophy was personal and civic virtue- which was also the goal of the Catholic Humanism the Jesuit schools played such a major part in shaping.”¹⁰³

b. Protestant Fulfilment Theology

Protestant fulfilment theology is generally associated with a particular conception of the relation of Christianity to other religions brought to its most developed expression in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain. Paul Hedges provides the following description of classical British fulfilment theology:

Fulfilment theology involves the belief that man has certain innate religious yearnings which can only be satisfied by the full revelation of God; however, it was necessary that mankind was first prepared for this revelation, so a series of lesser religions were given to man. These religions were themselves at different levels, and were made known to man as he became ready to receive them, with ‘lower’ religions being replaced by ‘higher’ religions, until at last, the ‘highest’ religion became known. Each of these religions answered man’s religious needs, though to differing degrees, and in this way they may be seen as ‘evolutionary,’ in that there is a developing progression of religions from a lower to a higher form, each being more suited to man’s needs. Further, each religion is held to be ordained by God for the purpose of leading mankind

¹⁰² Francis X. Clooney, “A Charism for Dialog: Advice from the Early Jesuit Missionaries in Our World of Religious Pluralism,” *Studies in Jesuit Spirituality* (March, 2002), p. 8.

¹⁰³ Andrew C. Ross, “Alessandro Valignano and Culture in the East,” *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. J. O’Malley, Toronto: University Press, 1999, p. 349. For further discussion of Jesuit Humanism, see Chapter Two.

towards His final revelation.¹⁰⁴

Among the first theorists who spoke in terms of Christianity as a fulfilment of the human religious quest were Oxford Sanskritists. Max Müller espoused a form of religious evolutionism, whereby Christianity was viewed as superior in its stage of development when compared with lower forms of religious expression.¹⁰⁵ The various religions can be ranked on an ascending ladder in terms of evolutionary progress, with Christianity in its particular stage of growth at the culmination. For Müller, the historical process would one day lead on to a higher stage of development than even Christianity, which would be an ideal form of religious expression that fulfilled the instincts and aspirations of all the previous religions; but for now, the Christian faith was at the apex of the process. Monier-Williams, especially in his earlier writings, accepted the distinction between higher and lower forms of religiosity, and he spoke of Christianity as the fulfilment of Hinduism, since Christianity's higher advancement in terms of its spirituality guarantees that it can satisfy the human desires and inclinations which gave rise to Hinduism.¹⁰⁶ Monier-Williams, an Evangelical Anglican who throughout his life insisted on the complete supremacy of Christianity, wrote: "Is it not a fact that all the gropings after truth, all the religious instincts, faculties, cravings, and aspirations of the human race which struggle to express themselves in the false religions of the world, find their only true expression and fulfilment- their only complete satisfaction- in Christianity?"¹⁰⁷ Both Müller and Monier-Williams regarded "lower" forms of religion as human constructions which express deep spiritual needs and instincts. These theories of religious development, which arose in academic circles, began to influence the thinking of certain Christian educationalists working in India.

Frederick D. Maurice was one of the first British theologians to begin to speak in the terminology of fulfilment.¹⁰⁸ Maurice took issue with Thomas Carlyle's

¹⁰⁴ Paul Hedges, Preparation and Fulfilment: A History and Study of Fulfilment Theology in Modern British Thought in the Indian Context, Bern: Peter Lang, 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Max Müller (1823-1900) lectured at Oxford on Modern Languages and Comparative Philology. He initiated the famous Sacred Books of the East Series, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879-1910.

¹⁰⁶ Monier-Williams (1819-1899) occupied the Boden Chair after teaching Sanskrit at Haileybury College. He produced a landmark Sanskrit Dictionary and wrote several scholarly treatments on Hinduism and Buddhism. See Monier-Williams, Hinduism, London: SPCK, 1880.

¹⁰⁷ Monier-Williams, Modern India and the Indians, London: Tubner, 1879, p. 234.

¹⁰⁸ Maurice (1805-1872) was a prominent Anglican theologian who taught at King's College, London. He wrote The Religions of the World and their Relations to Christianity, London: John Parker and Son, 1852; see J.F. Maurice, ed. The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, London: Macmillan, 1884.

famous lecture on “The Hero as Prophet,” and he sought to articulate his own views on the relation of Christianity to the other traditions. He wrote, “I contend that he who is able to give them the answers to the Hindoo’s deepest questions is not a destroyer, but a preserver: that he will have a right to boast of having upholden all that was strongest and most permanent in the Hindoo life and character.”¹⁰⁹

William Miller, the Principal of the Madras Christian College, looked to Christ as the standard of religion and morality.¹¹⁰ At the same time, he felt that although Christ and His teachings were ultimately central, enriching truths could be found in Hinduism which could contribute to the common good of humanity and to the Church of Christ. Hinduism’s emphasis on the immanence of God and on social solidarity has much to teach humanity, and in this regard Christianity has no monopoly on truth. Other religions could make contributions to the completeness of Christianity, while Christ can fulfill the aspirations of the adherents of other religions. Miller makes clear that institutional, historic Christianity is not superior to Hinduism, rather it is Christ Himself who is the Fulfiller of Hinduism. Christ brings to fruition all the ideals and noble thoughts that were expressed in Indian culture and infuses new life into them.

Frederick Kellett, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary and staff worker at Madras Christian College, wrote the short document called “Christ the Fulfilment of Hinduism.”¹¹¹ He views God as being active in revealing Himself progressively in the historical religions, and he avers that all religions have some measure of truth, even if only in fragmentary form. Christ completes, develops, and sums up that which is lacking in the moral and spiritual outlook of the religions. The fragments of truth are a type of foreshadowing of the reality of Christ. Kellett uses the

¹⁰⁹ F.D. Maurice, The Religions of the World and their Relations to Christianity, London: John Parker and Son, 1852, p. 59. Carlyle (1795-1881), the celebrated Scottish writer, delivered six lectures on heroes and hero-worship in 1840. The second lecture was his description of Mohammed in his role as prophet. See Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1897, p. 42-77.

¹¹⁰ William Miller (1838-1923) arrived in Madras in 1864 and worked as an educator in India until 1896, when he was elected as Moderator for the Free Church of Scotland. In 1901, he was appointed as vice-chancellor of the University of Madras and departed from India in 1907 to reside in Edinburgh. Miller wrote Lectures for Educated Hindus, Madras: S.P.C.K., 1880, and Indian Mission and How to View Them, Edinburgh: James Thin, 1878. See O. K. Chetty, William Miller, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1924.

¹¹¹ Kellett (1862-1904) wrote the pamphlet “Christ the Fulfilment of Hinduism” in 1896. The pamphlet was 23 pages long and was number 10 in a CLS series of Papers for Thoughtful Hindus. See E. Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfill: The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India Before 1914, Lund: Gleerup, 1965, p. 105.

terminology of *praeparatio evangelica* when describing such Hindu concepts as Vedic sacrifice and Vedāntic knowledge, and he considers such notions as precursors and typologies of Christ's future work.

T.E. Slater, who worked for the London Missionary Society in Madras, spoke of his desire to present Christianity in terms of consummation rather than antagonism to Hinduism.¹¹² He declined to attack Hinduism or to reproach any person for their deeply-cherished beliefs. Indeed, Slater attempted to speak appreciatively of Indian religiosity and to adopt an irenic attitude. Sensing the close link that was being forged between Indian nationalism and reformed, neo-Hinduism, Slater realized that negative statements by missionaries about Hinduism would be met with increased hostility. After a discussion with Monier-Williams, Slater became convinced that presenting Christ as Fulfiller of the Indian quest was a much more adequate message for the current situation. He was of the opinion that the nature of humanity and the needs of society require certain elements which Hinduism can only imperfectly satisfy. Slater writes:

For the best and brightest products of the Hindu spirit are still partial and one-sided, faint approximations of the sum and circle of Christian theism, fragmentary truths that lose their power over the mind and life because they lack the support of other kindred verities and cannot be welded together in one definite body of belief. It is not the same thing to see precious stones scattered in different quarries and to see them combined in a beautiful mosaic. The Hindu writings are the product of a national genius but there is no orderly development, no progressive manifestation of truth; they lead up to no commanding eminence from which all becomes clear. They constitute an anthology, not one organic whole: whereas, in the historical Christ, the idea and the fact are forever wedded; the substance of all ancient shadows is revealed.¹¹³

Hinduism had its time in the plan of God, but it must give way to the finality of the perfect Christ; it contains scattered truths and partial revelation, but Christ gathers these up into a completed whole. Slater made the following assertion, in The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity: "Christ will yet satisfy the spiritual hunger and thirst to which the great religious ideas of the East only give expression: and India... will surely find the enlightening revelation of the Gospel to be in complete accord

¹¹² T. E. Slater (1840-1912) worked in Calcutta from 1866-1887 and in Bangalore from 1888-1904. He settled in Sydney and was a contributor to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910. Slater wrote Studies in the Upanishads, Madras: CLS, 1989, and The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity, London: Elliot Stock, 1909.

¹¹³ T.E. Slater, The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity, London: Elliot Stock, 1909, p. 3-4.

with the best sentiments of her best minds, the true realization of the vision of her seers, the real fulfilment of the longings of her sages.”¹¹⁴ Both sympathy for and deep knowledge of Indian religions are a prerequisite for Christian mission for Slater.

John Nicol Farquhar was born in Aberdeen in 1861. From 1891, he taught in Calcutta at a college of the London Missionary Society for eleven years, and in 1902 he joined the Young Men’s Christian Association in India. After working in different capacities for the YMCA for over twenty years, Farquhar assumed the post of Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester in 1923. He wrote several important studies of Hinduism, in both its classical and modern forms.¹¹⁵ Eric Sharpe, who has written on Farquhar’s theology, has remarked that for the first quarter of the twentieth century, this seminal figure was “more than any other individual responsible for bringing about a decisive change in the thinking of Christians over against the phenomena of other faiths.”¹¹⁶

The most famous publication of Farquhar is The Crown of Hinduism, which first appeared in 1913.¹¹⁷ Farquhar endorses the line of theological thinking which called for a return to the primitive Gospel expressed in the religion of the historical Jesus. Creeds, dogmas, and the externals of institutional Christianity were secondary to the simple beauty of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Farquhar aspired to present Christ, rather than an intellectual system or organizational structure, to India. The ethics and moral teachings of Christ were particularly appropriate to the spiritual needs of an India which was acquiring nationalist aspirations. Farquhar argues that traditional concepts enshrined in Hindu belief, such as *karma* and caste, are no longer helpful in guiding India in the construction of a modern nation. The high regard for freedom, progress, and civic virtue which the message of Christ promotes is a much better intellectual platform upon which to build a progressive India. He writes: “In light of the new circumstances of the nations, the practical differences between Christianity and the other great religions now stand out in

¹¹⁴ T.E. Slater, The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity, p. 291.

¹¹⁵ J.N. Farquhar (1861-1929) wrote A Primer of Hinduism, London: Oxford University Press, 1914; Modern Religious Movements in India, New York: Macmillan, 1915; An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, London: Oxford University Press, 1920; and The Crown of Hinduism, London: Oxford University Press, 1913. See E. Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfill: The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India Before 1914, Lund: Gleerup, 1965.

¹¹⁶ Sharpe, Faith Meets Faith: Some Christian Attitudes to Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, London: S.C.M. Press, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism, London: Oxford University Press, 1913.

startling vividness... The needs of the new time, so far as we can see, can only be met by Christianity.”¹¹⁸ The caste-oriented structure of Hinduism is, from the vantage point of Christian ethics, backwards in terms of social justice and egalitarianism. A society which embraces the heart of Christ’s message will inevitably develop greater social freedom for its citizens. The caste-system is itself a collective response to the pursuit of a structured, well-balanced society. Farquhar’s argument is that Christ and His message fulfills the quest for an ordered nation which gave rise to the institution of caste; the ethical instruction of Christ completes this quest in a way in which caste never could, since the system lacks the concept of social equality. Farquhar claims:

Christ provides the fulfilment of each of the highest aspirations and aims of Hinduism... Every line of light which is visible in the grossest parts of religion reappears in Him set in healthy institutions and spiritual worship. Every true motive which in Hinduism has found expression in unclear, debasing, or unworthy practices finds in Him fullest exercise in work for the downtrodden, the ignorant, the sick, and the sinful. In Him is focused every ray of light that shines in Hinduism. He is the Crown of the faith of India.¹¹⁹

This summary of Farquhar’s treatment of the issue of caste is exemplary of his “fulfillment” approach, where Christ completes the aspirations expressed in Hinduism. Sharpe summarizes the conclusion that Farquhar draws in The Crown of Hinduism: “Christ provides answers to the spiritual and social questions asked by Hindus- questions to which Hindu teachings either have no answer, or to which they provide only ‘dated’ answers, unsuited to life in the modern world.”¹²⁰ Farquhar was concerned that in the rise of nationalism, missionary polemics which sought to criticize and to “destroy” Indian religion would be viewed as an unwelcome criticizing of India itself. Instead, missionaries should have a sympathetic view of Hindu beliefs. Such a sympathetic outlook did not necessarily imply agreement; rather, it entailed an effort on the part of the missionaries to understand why particular beliefs may have been fashioned to meet certain spiritual needs. Farquhar was also a great proponent of the highest standards of scholarship being applied to the study of Indian religion and literature, including study of Sanskrit and relevant vernacular languages. He also promoted intimate knowledge and observation of Hinduism as practiced on the ground, rather than just an academic study of texts.

¹¹⁸ Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism, p. 32-33.

¹¹⁹ Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism, p. 457.

¹²⁰ Sharpe, Faith Meets Faith, p. 26.

Farquhar was convinced that Christ “is not the Destroyer but the restorer of the national heritage, and that all the gleams of light that make Hindu faith and worship so fascinating to the student find in Him their explanation and consummation.”¹²¹

Farquhar was an important contributor to the famous conference held at Edinburgh in 1910, where the fulfilment concept of the relation of Christianity to Hinduism first gained a significant voice. The Commission IV material of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary conference illustrates the way in which the theology of fulfilment was already informing the thinking of many working in India.¹²² The correspondents all agreed that sympathy for Hindu religion was a necessity for Christian workers; the reasons given for the importance of this sympathetic posture ranged from the practicalities of wanting to acquire a hearing from Hindus to the theological principles that Hinduism was a sincere quest for God and that Indian religion offered a starting-point for preaching the Christian message. While there were some dissenting opinions, many of the correspondents were comfortable referring to Christ as the Fulfiller of Hinduism, in the restricted sense that He brought to completion the deep spiritual yearnings which the best elements in Indian thought reflected. Hinduism demonstrates the needs that can only be satisfied in Christ. However, the correspondents did not refer to the model of the evolutionary development of the religions, which Farquhar had postulated as the scientific basis of his theological views. While there was a general acceptance of the language of fulfilment as the best depiction of the relation of Christianity to Hinduism, the evolutionary framework which pictured Christianity as a more developed step in a human process appears to have been questionable to the missionaries.

Johanns’ style of fulfilment theology reflects the nature-grace distinction which is distinctive to Catholic approaches informed by Thomism. He asserted that Hinduism is a natural religion that “prepares supernatural religion and calls for it as

¹²¹ Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 54.

¹²² See *The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions: Report of Commission IV of the World Missionary Conference, 1910*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1910. The following is a summation provided in the “General Conclusions” section of the Commission: “Nothing is more remarkable than the agreement that the true method is that of knowledge and charity, that the missionary should seek for the nobler elements in the non-Christian religions and use them as steps to higher things, that in fact all these religions without exception disclose elemental needs of the human soul which Christianity alone can satisfy, and that in their higher forms they plainly manifest the working of the Spirit of God. On all hands the merely iconoclastic attitude is condemned as radically unwise and unjust... The correspondents know that in Christ they have what meets the whole range of human need, and therefore they value all that reveals that need, however imperfect the revelation may be.” p. 267.

its fulfilment.”¹²³ According to him, the arduous spiritual pursuits of the Indian saints are truly a *praeparatio evangelica* which witnesses to the value of the quest for God; these impressive intuitions and experiences will find their culmination in the spirituality of Christianity. In fact, there is a natural progression from *Vedāntic* teaching and praxis to the religion of Christ, and Johanns asserted that “Hindus will find Christ if they find themselves fully... We would like to make it clear to them that we tread common ground with them- that there is a way which leads to Christ through the *Vedānta*.”¹²⁴ All the strivings and longings of the Indian heart ultimately point to Christ, who alone can satisfy these spiritual yearnings in a way that the pursuit of *Brahman* or the worship of Kṛṣṇa cannot.¹²⁵ These ideas of Johanns regarding the longings and yearnings of Hindus are reminiscent of certain features of Protestant fulfilment theology, with its insistence that Hinduism displays needs that can only be satiated by Christ. But by using the terminology of natural and supernatural religion, Johanns showed himself to be more in line with Catholic approaches. After surveying the philosophies of three major *Vedāntins* in *Light of the East*, Johanns concluded with a theological assessment which displays his endorsement of Catholic fulfilment theology:

All these dim visions of a mind left to its own religious devices must convince us that the human soul is unconsciously clamouring for a supernatural religion. How often did the early Fathers of the Church point to the theories of Plato as to a rational preparation for Christianity. In Indian philosophy this rational preparation has gone deeper and it is high time that this fact should be acknowledged and these unconscious clamourings satisfied.¹²⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the principal components of the theological methodology of Johanns are derived from his understanding of Thomist and fulfilment approaches to other religious systems. There are clear historical antecedents with regard to Catholic approaches to traditions which were not specifically Christian that would have influenced Johanns’ understanding of and attitude toward the *Vedāntic* materials. Nevertheless, the specific project of

¹²³ *Light of the East*, 5 (March, 1927), p. 4.

¹²⁴ *Light of the East*, 8 (October, 1929), p. 3.

¹²⁵ *Light of the East*, 8 (June, 1930), p. 6.

¹²⁶ *Light of the East*, 8 (October, 1929), p. 3.

synthesizing the *Vedānta* was entirely Johanns'. It is a mark of his creative thinking that he was able to apply certain recognizable theological methods to a new body of religious material with a fresh perspective all his own. Johanns argued, from a neo-Thomist viewpoint, that a synthesis of the three *Vedāntins* is necessary because each of the individual systems fails to articulate a holistic depiction of the metaphysical structure of reality. But by bringing the philosophical strengths and insights of the individual systems into creative harmonization, a comprehensive outlook can be developed. Johanns, following the example of Aquinas' interaction with his philosophical predecessors, allowed the thought of one *Vedāntic* philosopher to correct and supplement the ideas of another. He asserted that a synthesized *Vedāntic* outlook can form a viable natural theology from the indigenous resources of Indian thought. Johanns thought that, in the construction of a theological system in India, this natural theology should form the foundation upon which the supernatural elements of Christian revelation are positioned. The supernatural elements are in continuity with the natural components, and they bring the conceptions ascertained in the natural theology to completion.

There are several critical questions which are raised with regard to the appropriateness of this methodology. For instance, does the concept of synthesis occur in Indian philosophy, or is it merely an external importation of Johanns which is destructive of the *Vedānta*? Does the synthesis which Johanns proposes safeguard the central concerns that each *Vedāntin* emphasizes? How does Johanns' fulfilment theology compare with other models contemporaneous with his writings? Critical questions such as these are explored in the third Section of the thesis on the theological evaluation of Johanns' project. It will be the purpose of Section Two of the thesis to explore how he applied this methodology to three key *Vedāntic* philosophers.

Chapter Two

Intellectual Background

Introduction

In order to situate Johanns in his historical setting, this chapter seeks to analyze the intellectual influences that motivated him in his textual study of the *Vedānta*. There were certain presuppositions regarding the scholarly study of classical Indian texts, the purpose of the Jesuit educational process, and the responsibilities and tasks of Catholic mission work in Bengal that Johanns possessed, due to his academic training and religious affiliation. These influences contributed to his decision to initiate a project of expositing and synthesizing the *Vedānta*. The factors which were addressed in the previous chapter on theological methodology were explicit components of Johanns' project and were clearly and directly endorsed by him. The current chapter explores other factors which, while more implicit and less obvious, were just as important in framing the direction and outworking of the project.

This chapter sketches the rise of Orientalism, discusses the ideals that inspired Jesuit education, and considers some key Catholic predecessors in Calcutta who influenced Johanns' thinking. An exploration of these dimensions clarifies the intellectual climate in which he was working. Such a discussion helps the modern reader to appreciate what Johanns was trying to accomplish and to assess the level of his achievements against the ideals which he inherited from these influences.

A. Orientalism

This initial section focuses upon the emergence of Orientalism and particularly upon the study of India by Western scholars. After surveying contributions by missionaries, the emergence of scholarly attention to classical Indian texts is traced from British-occupied Bengal, to Germany, and then to Paris. It will not be possible to give a complete historical treatment of Orientalism; rather, this section attempts to sketch the beginnings and motivating concerns of nascent Indological study as well as the philosophical and cultural assumptions that many of the early Orientalists possessed. Many of these concerns and presuppositions were still functional well into the early twentieth century, when Johanns was writing.

1. Missionaries

The first impetus for the study of the Indian linguistic and cultural heritage by Westerners came from the missionary enterprise on the subcontinent. There were several notable attempts by Catholic missionaries to interact with the Indic languages. The sixteenth-century Jesuits Thomas Stephens, Antonio Criminali, and Henrique Henriques acquired writing skills in Marathi and Tamil in order to promote their Christian views.¹²⁷ It was Roberto de Nobili, however, who first took up the serious study of Hinduism, setting himself to the task of reading the Sanskrit and Tamil religious literature. He wrote treatises in Latin which surveyed Indian grammar, poetics, logic, law, and philosophy. He surveyed a whole range of Indian religious sects, including lesser known groups such as Buddhists, materialists, and Śaivas; also, de Nobili sketched the contents of the multi-layered *Vedic* texts.¹²⁸ Fr. Jean Calmette learned Telegu and composed several documents in Sanskrit.¹²⁹ The Jesuit J.F. Pons wrote knowledgeably about the classical systems of Indian philosophy, concentrating upon *Nyāya*, *Vedānta*, and *Sāṃkhya*.¹³⁰ Fr. Pons and his French associates collected Sanskrit manuscripts and had them catalogued back in Europe. Other important eighteenth-century Catholic missionaries who contributed to knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian culture were J.E. Hanxleden, J.Tieffentaller, and

¹²⁷ Stephens (1549-1619) worked in southern Goa for over thirty-five years; his most important writing was the *Krista Purāna*, a biblical epic poem in Marathi. Criminali (1520-1549) was the first martyr of the Society of Jesus and worked on the Fishery coast, acquiring fluency in Tamil. Henriques (1520-1600) also worked on the Fishery Coast and wrote books on Christian doctrine in Tamil. He also produced a grammar and dictionary for the Malabar (Tamil) language. See G. Schurhammer, "Thomas Stephens, 1549-1619," *Month*, 13 (1955), p. 197-210; Jesús López-Gay, "Antonio Criminali," *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. G. Anderson, New York: Macmillan, 1998, p. 158; J. Wicki, "P. Henrique Henriques S.J.," *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies*, 4 (1965), p. 142-150.

¹²⁸ De Nobili (1577-1656) wrote forty Tamil prose treatises, three Tamil poetic works, eight Sanskrit documents, and three Telegu works. See S. Rajamanickam, *The First Oriental Scholar*, Tirunelveli: De Nobili Research Institute, 1972, and V. Cronin, *A Pearl to India: the Life of Roberto de Nobili*, London: R. Hart-Davis, 1959.

¹²⁹ Jean Calmette (1693-1740) was a Jesuit priest working in the Carnatic mission from 1723 till his death. He wrote *Satyavedasarasamgraha*, which is a theological treatise utilizing *advaitic* terminology. For selections of Calmette's writings, see *The Indian Christiad: A Concise Anthology of Didactic and Devotional Literature in Early Church Sanskrit*, ed. A. Amaladass and R. Young, Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash, 1995.

¹³⁰ Pons sent his survey of classical Indian philosophy to France in 1740; he displayed a wide range of knowledge of Hindu literature. See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 147-148, and P.S. Filliozat, "The French Institute of Indology in Pondicherry," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens*, 28 (1984), p. 133.

P. Bartholomaeo.¹³¹

On the Protestant side, the seventeenth-century Dutch missionary Abraham Roger was the first scholar ever to publish a Sanskrit text; he prepared an edition of the poems of Bhartṛhari.¹³² Lutheran missionaries based in Tranquebar conducted research into South Indian lexicography. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg mastered spoken and written Tamil, producing a dictionary and a grammar. He also collected Tamil manuscripts and translated the entire Bible into Tamil, along with hymnbooks and catechisms.¹³³ Most famously, the Serampore Baptists Carey, Ward, and Marshman studied Sanskrit and Bengali and immersed themselves in linguistic endeavors. Ward displayed an interest in learning Indian philosophy, and Carey's aptitude for languages is well-known. Carey produced a Bengali grammar, dictionary, and reader; he prepared an edition of the *Hitopadeśa*, along with selections from the *Daśakumāracarita* and Bhartṛhari's *Śatakas*. He translated at least four volumes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and also published Marathi, Panjabi, Telegu and Kannada grammars.¹³⁴ The concern for the propagation of Christianity was not limited to

¹³¹ Hanxleden (1681-1732) was a Jesuit scholar in Kerala who wrote a Sanskrit grammar and lexicons for both Sanskrit and Malayalam. He also composed poems in Malayalam. Tieffentaller (1710-1785) was a Jesuit missionary to the Hindustan who produced scholarly studies of Hindustani religion, geography, and history. J. Bartholomaeo (1749-1806) wrote a Sanskrit grammar, as well as treatments of *vyākaraṇa* and *brahmanical* religion. See M. Mundadan, "An Unknown Oriental Scholar: Ernest Hanxleden (Arnos Pathiri)," *Indian Church History Review*, 23 (1989): p. 39-63; J. Wicki, "Joseph Tieffentaller," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 152. Ludo Rocher has published a translation of the introduction of Bartholomaeo's grammar along with a short assessment of his accomplishments. See P. Bartholomaeo, *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language*, tr. L. Rocher, Amsterdam: Studies in the History of Language Sciences, 1977.

¹³² Roger's (d. 1649) translation was published posthumously in Leiden in 1651 as an appendix to his work entitled *De Open Deure tot het verborgen Heydendom*, which was a reflection upon his time in South India. See Schwab, p. 138-140.

¹³³ Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) was the most prominent Lutheran missionary to Tranquebar. He produced two major scholarly treatises on Hindu religion entitled *Genealogie der malabarischen Götter* (ed. W. German, Madras, 1867) and *Ausführliche Beschreibung des malabarischen Heidentums* (ed. W. Caland, Amsterdam, 1926). See E. Lehmann, *It Began at Tranquebar*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1956, and G. Gensichen, "Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg," *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. G. Anderson, New York: Macmillan, 1998.

¹³⁴ Carey (1761-1834) was professor of Bengali and Sanskrit at Fort William College, Calcutta. As a Baptist missionary, he oversaw the translation of the Bible into dozens of languages. See Carey, *A Grammar of the Bengalee Language*, Serampore: Mission Press, 1813; Carey, *Grammar of the Sangskrit Language Composed from the Work of the Most Esteemed Grammarians*, Serampore: Mission Press, 1806. See also J. Brockington, "William Carey's Significance as an Indologist," *Indologica Taurinensia*, 17-18 (1991-1992), p. 81-102. Marshman (1768-1837) was co-founder of Serampore College and translated the Bible into Chinese while residing in Bengal. Marshman, *Works of Confucius to Which is Prefixed a Dissertation of Chinese Language and Character*, Serampore: Mission Press, 1809. Ward (1769-1832) was a printer and administrator for the Serampore Baptists who published a classic treatment called *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos*, London: Kingsbury, Parbury, Allen and Co, 1822. See E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist*

missionary circles; many academics conducted research with mission work as a motivating factor for their professional work. John Muir was an accomplished Indologist as well as an avid mission supporter, composing treatises in Sanskrit that promoted Christianity. He wrote a five volume study of Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the Indian People.¹³⁵ Even the Boden Professor of Sanskrit M. Monier-Williams, while not a missionary himself, explicitly indicated that his production of a Sanskrit dictionary was meant to aid in the propagation of Christianity in India: “I have made it the chief aim of my professorial life to provide facilities for the translation of our sacred Scriptures into Sanskrit...My very first public lecture delivered after my election (to the Boden Chair) in 1860 was on ‘The Study of Sanskrit in Relation to Missionary Work in India.’”¹³⁶ However, historically, it was in British-occupied Bengal that sustained focus upon “Oriental studies” was first cultivated.

2. Bengal

In 1772, the East India Company began to take administrative control of Bengal under the leadership of Warren Hastings.¹³⁷ This British governor-general helped to promote Orientalist scholarship which would be useful for his more practical concerns in Bengal. Hastings was determined that Hindu law which was codified in the ancient books be studied and applied to cases involving religious

Missionaries in India, 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and Its Missions, London: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

¹³⁵ John Muir (1810-1882) served in the Indian Civil Service with his brother William for many years before returning to Edinburgh to set up a chair of Sanskrit at the University. William took up Arabic and Islamic studies and became principal of Edinburgh University. See J. Muir, Reasons for the Establishment of a Sanskrit Chair in the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1860; Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, London: Trubner, 1868. John Muir published a Sanskrit work entitled *Mataparīkṣā* (Calcutta, 1839) that provided a critique of Hindu philosophy from his Christian perspective. For selections of Muir’s Sanskrit writings, see The Indian Christiad: A Concise Anthology of Didactic and Devotional Literature in Early Church Sanskrit, ed. A. Amaladass and R. Young, Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash, 1995.

¹³⁶ M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Preface to the New Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899, p. x. Monier-Williams (1819-1899), who studied under H. Wilson, occupied the Boden Chair after teaching Sanskrit at Haileybury College. He produced a landmark Sanskrit Dictionary and wrote several scholarly treatments on Hinduism and Buddhism. See Monier-Williams, The Study of Sanskrit in Relation to Missionary Work in India, London: Oxford Press, 1860.

¹³⁷ Hastings (1732-1818) was the first governor-general of British India from 1772-1784. See A.M. Davies, Strange Destiny: A Biography of Warren Hastings, New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1935, and J. Brockington, “Warren Hastings and Orientalism,” The Impeachment of Warren Hastings, ed. G. Carnall and C. Nicholson, Edinburgh: University Press, 1989, p. 91-108.

matters and institutions. Instead of relying upon local custom to deal with such issues, Hastings turned to the *dharmasāstra* literature. This policy fostered an early immersion by British Orientalists in the study of Sanskrit legal texts. Hastings commissioned a treatise on Hindu law entitled “A Code of Gentoo Laws;” Cornwallis, his successor as governor-general, commissioned “A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Successions.”¹³⁸ Sir William Jones studied the Sanskrit legal documents to enhance his professional concerns as a judge, but in his leisure time he devoted himself to translating and reading *belles lettres* such as the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and *Rtusamhāra* of Kālidāsa.¹³⁹ Jones regarded classical Indian literature as being of equal quality to ancient Greek literature, being “sublime and beautiful in a high degree” and “perfectly original.”¹⁴⁰ Jones was an eminent, acclaimed linguist and is regarded by many as the founder of British Orientalism. He was appointed a judge in the Supreme Court at Fort William in 1783. He founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. After only three years in India, Jones was already making his now-famous observation that Sanskrit appears to be related to the classical European languages:

The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than *Greek*, more copious than *Latin* and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists. There is similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothick* and the *Celtick*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might have been added to the same family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquities of *Persia*.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805) was governor-general of British India from 1786-1793 and later from July-October 1805. See A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, Manchester: University Press, 1931.

¹³⁹ For more on William Jones (1746-1794), see G. Cannon, *Oriental Jones*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964; S.N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1968. For excerpts of Jones’ writing, see P.J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: University Press, 1970, p. 196-289.

¹⁴⁰ Rosane Rocher, “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century,” *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed. C. Breckenridge, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 233.

¹⁴¹ A.J. Arberry, *British Orientalists*, London: William Collins, 1943, p. 30. Much earlier, Thomas Stevens (or Stephens; see footnote 1) and Fillipo Sassetti had already made such an observation in the late sixteenth century. It was Jones’ position as founder of the Asiatic

Early comparative philology proceeded upon the basis of such assessments.

The next pivotal figure in Bengal was Sir Charles Wilkins who arrived in India in 1770 at the age of twenty as a Company writer. He set himself to the task of mastering Persian, Bengali, and Sanskrit. Wilkins completed the first translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* for Warren Hastings in 1785. He considered the *Bhagavadgītā* to contain all the grand mysteries of the Hindu religion in concise form. Wilkins was one of the founding members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and produced a pioneering grammar of the Sanskrit language which was used to train students at the East India Company's Library and Museum in Leadenhall; he continued in the position of Company Librarian until his death in 1836.¹⁴² Another great Sanskritist of this period was Henry Colebrooke. Colebrooke was Chief Judge of the High Court of Appeal in Bengal; his own personal leisure was spent collecting Sanskrit manuscripts which he eventually delivered over to the Company's Library.¹⁴³ Horace Wilson, who worked at the Calcutta Mint, completed an original translation of the *R̥gveda*. He succeeded Wilkins as Company Librarian before assuming the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford University.¹⁴⁴

The promotion of Warren Hastings to governor-general of Calcutta, which had recently been made the capital of British India, was a landmark in the interaction between the British and the Bengalis. Kopf notes that "he was predisposed toward a new cultural policy in which he aimed at creating an Orientalized service elite competent in Indian languages and responsive to Indian traditions. Indianization should be conducted thenceforth not only on the level of social intercourse but also on that of intellectual exchange."¹⁴⁵ Hastings particularly saw the importance of

Society that enabled his views to have wide circulation and notoriety. See J. Brockington, "Warren Hastings and Orientalism," *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, ed. G. Carnall and C. Nicholson, Edinburgh: University Press, 1989, p. 100.

¹⁴² Wilkins (1749-1836) was also encouraged by Hastings to translate the *Hitopadeśa* and to spend time studying in Benares. See Wilkins, *Bhagavat-geeta*, London: Nourse, 1785; Wilkins, *Heetopades of Veeshnoo-Sarma*, Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1787. See also Marshall, p. 192-195.

¹⁴³ Colebrooke (1765-1837) was a specialist in Vedic India. He published his landmark "Study on the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus" in *Asiatick Researches* in 1805. He also wrote *Cośa: or Dictionary of the Sanskrit Language with Interpretation and Annotation*, Serampore: Mission Press, 1805, and *Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus*, 2 vols., London: W.H. Allen, 1837. See Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, p. 39-41.

¹⁴⁴ Wilson (1786-1860) was a Purāṇic scholar who translated *Vishnu Purāna: a System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, London: J. Murray, 1840, as well as *Megha dutt: a Poem in the Sanscrit Language*, Calcutta: Hindoostanee Press, 1813. See Kopf, p. 167-169.

¹⁴⁵ Kopf, p. 17.

linguistic training for his young civil-servants who were arriving in Bengal; he endorsed financial rewards for those servants who were able to translate fluently from Indian languages. Already by 1788, Nathaniel Halhed, who worked under Hastings, had published a grammar of the Bengali language; Charles Wilkins had set Bengali types for a printing press.¹⁴⁶ When Wellesley was made governor-general in 1798, his most important cultural contribution was the initiative to form the College of Fort William, which was meant to serve as an “Oxford of the East” to train prospective civil servants.¹⁴⁷ Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Indian vernaculars were taught, as well as Greek and Latin. English, Muslim, and Hindu law would be mastered. Courses in history and the natural sciences were also offered. Wellesley turned to the earlier generation of Orientalists who served under Hastings in recruiting his faculty, such as H.T. Colebrooke and John Baillie.¹⁴⁸ William Carey was an instructor in Bengali. Bengali Hindu literati worked in the College in order to assist in classroom instruction. Kopf notes that by 1805, the College “had become a center of a costly program of literary patronage and linguistic research. More than a hundred original works in Oriental languages were published by presses largely financed by the college. Expeditions to Mysore, Travancore, and Ceylon were organized and sponsored for the purpose of discovering and cataloguing manuscripts.”¹⁴⁹ By 1808, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta had its own building and could boast of being the first well-endowed society for the promotion of Oriental studies. Prior to the establishment of Fort William and the Asiatic society, the practicalities needed for an organized program of translating classic Indian texts were not available.

When the early Orientalists set themselves to the scrutiny of Indian religious and legal matters, they displayed a singular assumption: “the premise that the ultimate source of, and rationale for, religious beliefs and practices is to be sought in the scriptures, a presumption that a great religion, as opposed to a set of superstitions,

¹⁴⁶ Halhed (1751-1830) went to India in 1771 as a worker in the Company’s Bengal Service. He had his Code of Gentoo Laws, or Ordinations of the Pundits published in London in 1777. Halhed also wrote A Grammar of the Bengal Language, Hoogly: n.p., 1778. See Marshall, p. 140-182.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Wellesley (1760-1842) was the governor-general of British India from 1798-1805; see P.E. Roberts, India Under Wellesley, London: G. Bel and Sons, 1929.

¹⁴⁸ John Baillie (1772-1833) directed the Arabic Department of Fort William from 1801-1807 and published excerpts of medieval Arabic philosophy as well as a translation of the Koran. See Baillie, The Five Books Upon Arabic Grammar, Calcutta: Honorable Company’s Press, 1802-1803.

¹⁴⁹ Kopf, p. 67.

ought to be a religion of the book- or of many books, as soon became apparent in the case of Hindus.”¹⁵⁰ Such a predilection for scholarly attention to books is partly explained by the fact that many of the Orientalists had classical educations in Britain and were fluent in Latin and Greek. They respected the antiquity of the Hindu texts and had an intellectual curiosity in unraveling the philological details of Sanskrit. When comparing the contemporary religious practices in Bengal with the spirituality pervading the ancient texts, the British scholars were convinced that Indian religion was in a state of decline; such a presupposition corresponded with the mind-set that had been fostered in the Enlightenment of the scholarly importance of recovering the pristine “natural light” of the earliest stages of a civilization that had been obscured by subsequent superstition. The Hindu texts themselves referred to the concept that the world had fallen from the glorious conditions of an earlier golden age into the current decadent age where ignorance prevailed.¹⁵¹ Such factors caused the Orientalists to envision an ideal past in India which contained all that was best in Hindu religiosity.

Richard King argues that the Orientalists were also responsible for the modern construction of “Hinduism;” they did this “first by locating the core of Indian religiosity in certain Sanskrit texts (the textualization of Indian religion), and second by an implicit (and sometimes explicit) tendency to define Indian religion in terms of a normative paradigm of religion based upon contemporary Western understandings of the Judeo-Christian traditions.”¹⁵² Orientalists who had been academically trained in the West and who had come from societies which valued a fixed textual religious canon were naturally predisposed to elevate literary sources to a privileged position in order to understand Hindus and their beliefs. Religion as practiced on the popular level and conveyed through oral mediums was largely overlooked in this process. P.J. Marshall notes that there was a conscious separation “between ‘popular’ Hinduism, which they did not deem worthy of study, and ‘philosophical’ Hinduism, which they tried to define as a set of hard and fast doctrinal propositions and to place in current theories about the nature and history of religion. All of them wrote with

¹⁵⁰ R. Rocher, “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century,” p. 225.

¹⁵¹ This concept arose from the “*Purāṇically* inspired, *brahmanical* belief in the current deterioration of civilization in the age of *kaliyuga*.” King, p. 101. See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4:24, 6:1.

¹⁵² Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the ‘Mystic East,’* London: Routledge, 1999, p. 101. King is only one example of a scholar who advances certain post-colonial critiques of Orientalism. See also Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1995, and Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, London: Hurst, 2000.

contemporary European controversies and with their own religious preoccupations very much in mind.”¹⁵³ It was natural for the Orientalists to look upon *brahmanical* texts with respect, since their Judeo-Christian background conditioned them to see ecclesiastical authorities as the proper keepers and protectors of religion. Thus, the Orientalists aided in the increasing Sanskritization of Indian religion. By elevating such texts as the *Upaniṣads*, *Vedas*, and *Bhagavadgītā*, the common perception arose that stagnation had set in resulting in the current debased forms of Hinduism that the missionaries and Orientalists encountered. The ideas and attitudes of the Orientalists affected the self-perception of the Indians themselves. King writes: “It is clear, then, that from the nineteenth century onwards Indian self-awareness has resulted in the development of an intellectual and textually based ‘Hinduism’, which is then ‘read back’ (if you pardon the textual pun) into India’s religious history.”¹⁵⁴

Both British administrators and missionaries by and large perceived the advantage of “Anglicizing” a certain sector of Bengali society. Missionaries assumed that widespread Western education in India would undermine Hinduism; administrators hoped that Indians would become more “civilized” and would acquire a taste for British goods. After a period of initial discussion, Thomas Macaulay and governor-general Bentinck made the final decision in favor of English education.¹⁵⁵ This discussion took place in the famous Orientalist-Anglicist debate. The Orientalists favored education in the vernacular Indian languages, whereas the Anglicists, notably Alexander Duff, pressed for education in the medium of English.¹⁵⁶ The opening of English-medium schools and colleges revolutionized the cultural landscape of Bengal. Julius Lipner comments:

¹⁵³ P.J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: University Press, 1970, p. 43.

¹⁵⁴ King, p. 107. See also W. Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, for more discussion on the development of the modern notion of reified “Hinduism.”

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was a representative in Parliament who became a member of the Supreme Council of the governor-general in Bengal from 1834-1838; see Richmond Beatty, *Lord Macaulay, Victorian Liberal*, Hamden: Archen Books, 1971. William Bentinck (1774-1839) was governor-general of British India from 1828-1835. See *Correspondence of William Bentinck*, ed. C. Philips, Oxford: University Press, 1977.

¹⁵⁶ Duff (1806-1878) was a missionary to Calcutta who was superintendent of the Church of Scotland’s educational institution in Calcutta and who later held the first chair of mission at New College, Edinburgh. See Lal Behari Day, *Recollections of Alexander Duff and of the Mission College which he founded in Calcutta*, London: Nelson, 1879. See also Ian Maxwell, *Alexander Duff and the Theological and Philosophical Background to the General Assembly’s Mission in Calcutta to 1840*, Edinburgh: Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

What was formed by English education in Bengal was a new kind of Bengali usually referred to as the ‘*bhadralok*.’ In essence, *bhadralok*-mindedness consisted of cultural adaptability and migrational flexibility on the part of mainly the upper-caste Bengali. As English education took hold, the Bengali developed a taste not only for the writings of Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth and so on, but also for the ideas of thinkers such as Voltaire, Hume, Kant, Paine, Bentham, the Mills, and T. Parker. Western notions of law, freedom, patriotism, citizenship, equality, personhood, rights, happiness, literature, science, history and reason mingled with or supplanted their traditional Indian counterparts (if there were such).¹⁵⁷

The *bhadralok* youths were thus educated to view the current manifestations of Hinduism with a critical attitude, due to the influence of the Orientalists and the new values that were being presented in the Western education. They accepted the construct of a glorified Indian past, and they took great pride in the Sanskritic, “Aryan” heritage to which they were heirs. In fact, the *bhadralok* played an important part in Sanskritizing Hinduism. They sought to purge Hinduism of elements that they considered as degenerate and to revive features which they viewed as spiritually valuable. It is against this historical background that “Renaissant Hinduism” arose. The great Hindu reformers, such as Rām Mohan Roy of the *Brāhmo Samāj*, Henry Derozio of Young Bengal, Keshab Chandra Sen of the Church of the New Dispensation, and Dayānanda Sarasvatī of the *Ārya Samāj*, were all responding in various ways to the new impulses at work in Bengali culture.¹⁵⁸

The story of nascent Orientalism moves on from British-Bengal to key centers of learning in Europe. Schwab remarks: “The three principal homes of Indian studies in Europe- England, Germany, and France- held the leading position

¹⁵⁷ Julius Lipner, *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ Rām Mohan Roy (1772-1833) promoted a unique version of reformed Hinduism that blended *advaita* with the moral teachings of Jesus. See D. Killingley, *Rammohun Roy in Hindu and Christian Tradition*, Newcastle: Grevatt and Grevatt, 1993. Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) advocated a mystical harmony of the world religions in the New Dispensation that was emerging. See D. Scott, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1979. Derozio (1809-1831) was a lecturer at Hindu College, Calcutta and a renowned Anglo-Indian writer who questioned many Hindu social practices and advocated certain Western liberal ideals. See T. Edwards, *Henry Derozio: Eurasian Poet, Teacher, Journalist*, Calcutta: W. Newman and Co., 1884. Swami Dayānanda (1824-1883) was a reformer who rejected any practice which was not advocated in the *Samhitā Vedas*. See L. Rai, *The Ārya Samāj: An Account of its Origins, Doctrines, and Activities*, New Delhi: Renaissance, 1991. For the impact of the teachings of Jesus on the Hindu reformers, see M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970. For more information on the Bengali Reformers, see A. Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, and A. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-1835*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1965.

successively. The country of Wilkins and Jones started it all and withdrew at a rather early stage... The center of major activity after Calcutta... was in Jena, Weimar, and Heidelberg, and thereafter always Paris."¹⁵⁹ The foundation for the study of India through textual sources was laid by the seminal British Orientalists Jones, Wilkins, and Colebrooke. The Deistic tendencies that were prevalent in the Enlightenment can be glimpsed at times in their writings, especially in their claims that ancient Indian religion displayed the natural light functioning in an undimmed capacity, conveying fundamental truths. The assumption was that India was not able to successfully preserve its original spiritual purity against encroaching superstition. Also, the scholarly virtue of tolerance toward other traditions, whether philosophical or religious, was advocated in the Enlightenment. Britain's importance in Oriental studies soon waned, however; Indology as a specialized discipline in the academy was especially developed in Germany.

3. *Germany*

It is interesting that both Enlightenment and Romantic assumptions can be detected in the German Orientalist scholars; on certain themes and issues there was not a huge dichotomy between the two movements. Halbfass notes:

The Age of Enlightenment was characterized by a very distinct association between a general interest in non-European traditions and the motif of criticizing Christianity. One shape which the criticism of Christianity took was the attempt to trace it back to older, more original traditions, or the view that a more pristine religious consciousness could be found in Asia, and specifically in India. Both this motivation towards self-criticism and the theme of origins were assimilated into the Romantic awareness of India and the Orient. To be sure, they here entered a new context of self-awareness, specifically, a more concrete and organic awareness of culture and history that was not determined by abstract categories of progress and degeneration.¹⁶⁰

As Romanticism developed, there was a desire to hark back to the infant condition of the human race in order to find a sense of wholeness and wonder that was seen to be lacking in modern Europe. Herder, an important early exponent of Romanticism,

¹⁵⁹ Raymond Schwab, The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 47.

¹⁶⁰ Wilhelm Halbfass, India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, p. 69.

saw humanity as composed of multiple organic nations that had their distinct traditions; yet growth can be traced from the Orient on to Greece and then to Rome in the human spirit. India represents a pure, child-like state of spirit, with its perceived gentleness, moderation, and calm. The cold rationalism of Europe was to be opposed by a recovery of the inner harmony of India.¹⁶¹ Friedrich Schlegel, while immersing himself in Sanskrit literature, commented: “Here is the actual source of all languages, all the thoughts and poems of the human spirit; everything, everything without exception comes from India.”¹⁶² The philosophy cultivated in India was therefore seen to be superior to its European counter-parts, since it was not stifled by the hubris of autonomous, arid reason. Schlegel’s brother, August Wilhelm, became the first scholar to hold a chair in Sanskrit in Germany, at the University of Bonn.¹⁶³

Max Müller, the towering figure in nineteenth century Indology, spoke in this fashion about the study of Sanskrit: “It has added a new period to our historical consciousness, and revived the recollections of our childhood, which seemed to have vanished forever... We all come from the East- all that we value most has come to us from the East, and in the going to the East... everybody ought to feel that he is going to his old home.”¹⁶⁴ Müller was led to the deep study of the *R̥gveda* through his fascination with origins. Müller saw his Indological pursuits as essentially mapping the contours of the beginnings of the human spirit. All of these Romantic conceptions can be viewed as a critique of the modern situation in Europe, with its

¹⁶¹ Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) was a philosopher interested in the relationship between language, cultural traditions, and the concept of nationality. See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. 4 vols., Leipzig: J.F. Hartknoch, 1784-1791. See also Robert Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955.

¹⁶² Halbfass, p. 75. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) was a pioneer in comparative Indo-European linguistics and philology, as well as an early theoretician of the aesthetics of Romanticism. He lectured at the University of Jena; see *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Friedrich von Schlegel*, London: G. Bel and sons, 1860. See also J. Anstett, *La Pensée Religieuse de Friedrich Schlegel*, Paris: Société d’édition Les Belles lettres, 1941.

¹⁶³ August Schlegel (1767-1845) was a literary critic and skilled translator of Shakespeare as well as a Sanskrit scholar. He lectured at the University of Jena before taking up the Chair of Sanskrit at the University of Bonn. Schlegel wrote *Refléxions sur l’étude des langues asiatiques*, Bonn: E. Weber, 1832, and *Indische bibliothek*, 2 vol., Bonn: E. Weber, 1820-1830. See also R. Ewton, *Literary Theories of August Wilhelm Schlegel*, The Hague: Mouton, 1972.

¹⁶⁴ Halbfass, p. 82. Max Müller (1823-1900) was commissioned by the British East India Company to translate the *R̥g-Veda* and lectured at Oxford on Modern Languages and Comparative Philology. He initiated the famous *Sacred Books of the East* Series, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879-1910. Müller wrote *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2 vols., London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861-1864, and he also translated the *R̥g-Veda-Sanhita*, 6 vol., London: W.H. Allen, 1849-1874; see L. Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities*, Leiden: Brill, 2002.

loss of wholeness and its obsession with rationalism. Sheldon Pollock notes that the Romantic movement was a “complex confrontation with, on the one hand, Latin-Christian Europe, and on the other, the universalizing Enlightenment project of humanism... Sanskrit was thought to give evidence of a historical culture, and spiritual and ultimately racial consanguinity, for Germans independent of, and far more ancient than, Latin or Christian culture.”¹⁶⁵ Such diverse intellectuals as Goethe, Nietzsche, and Carlyle were influenced by the stimulus of contact with Indian literature.¹⁶⁶

The impact of Romanticism, especially fostered in Germany, was a key factor that contributed to the *Vedic* and *Vedāntic* materials being highly valued by the Orientalists, who were interested in the search for “origins” and “*Ur-language*.” These texts were viewed as providing a glimpse into the earliest Indo-European myths and language-forms. *Vedic* culture thus became a sort of primitive source from which all subsequent European tongues and beliefs may have sprung. Many scholars were interested in German idealist philosophy, and they found the “mystical” aspects of the *Upaniṣads* quite appealing. The philosopher Schopenhauer was intrigued by what he saw as the mystical wisdom of the *Vedānta*.¹⁶⁷ Once the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā* were elevated as the fountainheads of all that was best in Indian religion, the Orientalists turned to the commentarial traditions of the *Vedānta* which expounded these seminal texts in an attractive philosophical manner. Particularly the non-dualist stream of the *Vedānta* was exalted as the essence of Indian spirituality, since the notion of “pantheism” was fascinating to the Romantic mind. Schelling, a Romantic, sought to defend “pantheism,” especially of the Indian

¹⁶⁵ Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism?,” *Orientalism and the Post-colonial Predicament*, ed. C. Breckenridge, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 82.

¹⁶⁶ Goethe (1749-1832) was struck by the literature of Kālidāsa, writing that “*Nenn’ ich Sakuntala, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt*” (I simply mention your name, *Śakuntala*, and that says everything). Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a friend of the *Vedāntic* scholar Paul Deussen, and Deussen’s work influenced Nietzsche’s appraisal of the Indo-Iranian tradition and the figure of Zoroaster (Zarathustra). Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) eagerly read the works of English Orientalists and German Romantics alike. See Schwab, p. 59, 435-437, 198, respectively.

¹⁶⁷ Schopenhauer described his encounter with Anquetil-Duperron’s (1731-1805) Latin translation of a Persian version of the *Upaniṣads* as “the most rewarding and edifying reading (with the exception of the original text) that could be possible in the world; it has been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death,” *Parerga und Paralipomena*, vol. II, section 184, Berlin: A.W. Hahn, 1851. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) developed an intellectual system that was a unique combination of Kant, Plato, and Eastern mysticism. He lectured in Philosophy at Berlin; see *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wolfgang Schirmacher, New York: Continuum, 1994.

variety, from its detractors.¹⁶⁸ Śaṅkara became the premier exponent of the sort of monism that was intellectually captivating for these German scholars. This German idealism impacted the thinking of Orientalists such as Colebrooke, Müller, and Deussen to devote serious attention to *Vedāntic* materials. The scholarly writings of the Orientalists started subtly to conflate Hinduism with the *Vedānta*, and particularly with *advaita Vedānta*. King notes, “For Deussen, an avid disciple of Schopenhauer, the *Vedānta* philosophy of Śaṅkara represented the culmination of Hindu thought, providing evidence that the idealisms that were in vogue in nineteenth-century European thought were already present at the core of Hindu religion.”¹⁶⁹

4. *Paris*

Germany was not the only country in continental Europe interested in Indology. There was an interesting colloquy of scholars, German, English, and French, who engaged in Sanskrit studies in Paris in the early nineteenth century. Friedrich Schlegel himself spent time in Paris to broaden his knowledge. This scholarly enterprise was initiated in 1803, when a British navy officer named Alexander Hamilton came to Paris to collate manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale.¹⁷⁰ He began to teach the rudiments of Sanskrit to a small circle of Parisians interested in Oriental studies, inspiring them to study the texts and the elementary grammars that were housed in the Bibliothèque. Antoine de Sacy, a scholar of Persian and Arabic, was encouraged by the interest in Indology, and he helped to found a chair in Sanskrit in 1814 at the Collège de France, the first chair of Sanskrit in Europe; his student de Chézy took up this post.¹⁷¹ The great French

¹⁶⁸ Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) was an idealist philosopher influenced by Romanticism. He was an associate of the Schlegels and lectured at Jena and later at Berlin. Schelling wrote *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, Tübingen: Cotta, 1800. See also J. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977.

¹⁶⁹ King, p. 128. Paul Deussen (1845-1919) was Professor of Philosophy in the University of Kiel. He wrote *Die Geheimlehre des Veda*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1907, and *System des Vedānta*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1883.

¹⁷⁰ For information on Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824), see R. Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton, 1762-1824: a Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology*, New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1968.

¹⁷¹ Antoine de Sacy (1758-1838) achieved notoriety by deciphering the Pahlavi inscriptions of the Sassanian kings. He wrote *Mélanges de littérature orientale*, Paris: E. Docrocq, 1861, and *Chrestomathie arabe*, Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1826. Antoine de Chézy (1773-1832) was assistant Librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale before his position at the Collège de France. He wrote *La mort*

Sanskritist Eugene Burnouf succeeded de Chézy in this position, and he was followed by Foucaux and later by Sylvain Lévi.¹⁷² In 1816, the *Journal des Savants* was established to promote Oriental studies, with de Chézy contributing scholarly articles on Sanskrit literature. By 1821, the Société Asiatique de Paris was founded, and its publication, the *Journal Asiatique*, released its first installment two years later. Paris by this point was becoming a leading center of Oriental philology. It was in the area of philology that the French Orientalists distinguished themselves most. For example, when a large selection of Buddhist manuscripts was uncovered in Nepal and Tibet, a striking discovery at a time when Buddhism was not well understood, the texts were sent to Paris for Burnouf and Foucaux to translate and analyze. The Société had distinguished foreign associates such as Wilkins, Wilson, Colebrooke, Bopp, and Schlegel, as well as prominent French linguists such as Champollion and Chateaubriand.¹⁷³ The Asiatic Society in London was formed in 1823 on the model of the Société in Paris.

Thus, in the emergence of Orientalism, both Enlightenment and Romantic motifs can be detected in the assumptions of the early Orientalists. The search for the origins of the human spirit in the construct of a glorious Indian past was a guiding intellectual factor and enticement for many early scholars. The self-understanding of the Bengali intellectuals was affected by the ideas of the Western scholars, who were critical of the current state of Hinduism. Orientalists helped to

d'Yadynadatta, Paris: Imprimerie de F. Didot, 1826. For information on early Parisian Orientalism and its principal scholars, see Schwab, p. 64-68, 78-84, 289-299.

¹⁷² Eugène Burnouf (1801-1852), besides his seminal work on the Pali language, was also an important scholar of the Zoroastrian literature. He wrote *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876. Philippe Foucaux (1811-1894) was a pioneering scholar of the Tibetan language, as well as an established Indologist. He wrote *Doctrine des Bouddhistes sur le Nirvana*, Paris: B. Duprat, 1864, and *Le Mahabharata: onze épisodes tirés du ce poème épique*, Paris: B. Duprat, 1862. Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935) was acclaimed for publishing Mahayana Buddhist Sanskrit texts with fine translations. He wrote *L'Indianisme*, Paris: Larousse, 1915, and *Un Système de Philosophie Bouddhique*, Paris: H. Champion, 1932.

¹⁷³ Franz Bopp (1791-1867) taught Sanskrit and Comparative Grammar at the University of Berlin. He is considered the father of the scientific study of Indo-European Grammar; see Bopp, *A Comparative Grammar of the Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic, German, and Slavonic Languages*, 3 vols., tr. L. Eastwick, London: Madden and Malcolm, 1845; Jean François Champollion (1790-1832), the Egyptologist who deciphered hieroglyphics, wrote *Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Egyptiens*, Paris: 1828; see also L Adkins, *The Keys of Egypt: the Race to read the Hieroglyphs*, London: HarperCollins, 2001; François Chateaubriand (1768-1848) was one of the key founders of French literary Romanticism; he wrote *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, ed. M. Levaillant, Paris: Flammarion, 1948, and *Le génie du Christianisme*, Brussels: Demat, 1835.

form the modern conception of Hinduism as an intellectual, textualized system of beliefs, and this conception was still operative in Bengal at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. *Vedic* texts and *Vedāntic* commentaries were viewed as the sources of pure Indian spirituality, and *advaita* was seen as the culmination of Hindu thought. Missionaries, colonial administrators, and professional academics alike played a large part in the story of early Orientalism.

Aside from the transparent fact that Johanns received Indological training at the University of Oxford under A.A. MacDonell, it is clear that he operated with several assumptions which are indicative of his Orientalist background. Johanns certainly elevated the texts of the *Vedāntic* commentaries to a privileged position in the history of “Hinduism.” According to him, the culmination of Hindu thought came about when the *Vedāntins* “set themselves the task to systematize the confused mass of religious lore accumulating from the time of the *Vedas*.”¹⁷⁴ For Johanns, the earlier forms of Hinduism included sacerdotalism, mythology, and conflicting doctrines, which he viewed negatively. Johanns, in his survey of the history of Hinduism for the *Studies in Comparative Religion* Series, finished his discussion with Caitanya, Tulsidas, Kabir, and Nānak, who were sixteenth century saints.¹⁷⁵ He mentioned nothing about later forms of spirituality or about neo-Hindu reform movements. One might incorrectly infer from this omission that the four-hundred years between the period of these pre-modern saints and the time when Johanns was writing had produced nothing exciting or valuable in the Hindu quest. Johanns, like other Orientalists, afforded deep respect to the *Vedānta* over against other traditions of Indian spirituality. Johanns did make efforts to interact practically and personally with *Vaiṣṇava* devotees who lived in the Calcutta area, but his main form of engagement with Hinduism was through the study of medieval *Vedāntic* texts. His preference for theoretical, philosophically-consistent forms of Hinduism becomes obvious when he lamented the “endless complication in the conception of God, caused by mythological considerations.”¹⁷⁶ This entrancement with textualized, philosophical Hinduism as superior to the “inconsistent” popular forms of Hinduism reflects Orientalist presuppositions.

¹⁷⁴ Johanns, “Hinduism,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 18.

¹⁷⁵ “Hinduism,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938.

¹⁷⁶ Johanns, *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 28.

B. Jesuit Education

In order to appreciate the distinctive vocation of Johanns, it is necessary to understand the Jesuit philosophy of education that led to the formation of their colleges worldwide. The initial emergence of the educational institutions run by the Society will now be discussed, as well as the desired outcomes of the education. These ideals that motivated the establishment of the first colleges remained influential throughout Jesuit educational history. Within the Catholic Church, the Jesuits were the first order to view the development of educational programs in schools as a vital ministry to society. By 1560, the Jesuits had formally made the decision to include the running of schools within the list of ministries that they considered fundamental to their mission, alongside prayer, worship, sacraments, preaching, and works of mercy; the schools became a central feature of Jesuit identity. The Jesuits essentially became the educators of the Catholic Church, and the Society would increasingly take on the function of a teaching order. Their involvement in education would place the Jesuits in a singular position to interact with the intellectual culture and with the privileged classes of society. By the end of the eighteenth century, Jesuits were teaching in more than eight-hundred institutions all across the world. The existence of such a vast web of international schools administered by a unified organization was unprecedented.

1. Humanism

The architects of Jesuit educational policy who envisioned such a network of schools were influenced by the humanist tradition, and they wanted their schools to pass along certain humanist ideals to the students. The first Jesuits were themselves fluent in Latin, both in speaking and writing. John O'Malley remarks:

It is true, of course, that the Jesuits imbued their humanistic schools with features peculiarly their own, but they also accepted the basic premises shared by their contemporaries about the purpose and scope of such schools. The most fundamental of those premises was that the schools were directed toward *pietas*, that is, toward the development of character through the study of classical literature in preparation for a life of public service... (and toward) formation of character through a long process of formal schooling, moral inspiration from pagan sources, attainment of stylistic elegance from study of those same sources, promotion of the common weal through stable institutions of instruction.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ John O'Malley, The First Jesuits, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 90.

From the time of Petrarch (1304-1374), the humanists had stressed the value of reading quality literature in the cultivation of a life of virtue and in the formation of attitudes that would be helpful in service to society. They felt that medieval scholastic education had failed to encourage these practical outcomes in the lives of the students. Whereas scholastic education had elevated logical and intellectual acumen to a pre-eminent status, the humanists were concerned to provide an education which would assist in prudent, moral decision-making in daily affairs. Studying the humane letters of the past would assist in the formation of the person with regard to ethical and communicative capacities. Thus the Jesuit secondary schools, starting in Italy and extending across Europe, included a heavy dose of Greek and Roman classics in the curriculum.¹⁷⁸ Grammar and rhetoric were central elements stressed in the teaching. Such emphasis on style and persuasiveness in writing and speaking reflected the belief that the imagination, emotions, and will must be affected as well as the intellect in order for moral transformation to take place.

The Renaissance which Petrarch sought to initiate had less to do with a rediscovery of classical texts than with the development of a new way of reading and interpreting these sources. Many writings of the important Latin authors were already available in medieval Europe, so it is inaccurate to characterize the Renaissance as an unprecedented return to the classical sources. The medievals were conversant with the philosophical and moral positions of the Greco-Roman world. Medieval scholastics would marshal quotations from classical sources, both Christian and pagan, to buttress their arguments in their theological works. Scholastic works proceeded by introducing debatable issues (*quaestiones*); various statements of opinion (*sententiae*) from the classical writers expressing alternative viewpoints would be brought forth to display the range of traditional answers to the *quaestiones*. Rigorous analysis would then be employed to establish which authoritative opinion was logically coherent. The other views would then be refuted. Such was the

¹⁷⁸ Dainville gives an indication of the reading curriculum for a typical course in a Jesuit school, displaying the broad range of styles and subject-matters studied through selections: "En grec, après Ésope, et saint Jean Chrysostome, on expliquera quelques dialogues de Lucien, des discours d'Isocrate et de saint Basile, les *Lettres* de Platon et de Synésios, l'*Illiade*, le *Plutus* d'Aristophane, les poèmes de Théognis et de Grégoire de Nazianze... (En latin), après Ovide (les *Tristes*), Catulle et Tibulle, Properce, le maître de l'épigramme, Virgile, le poète de la nature... à lire l'*Énéide*, l'*Art poétique* et les *Odes* d'Horace, il apprendra en humanités, l'art de la poésie épique et lyrique." F. de Dainville, *La Naissance de l'Humanisme Moderne/ Tome 1, Les Jésuites et l'Éducation de la Société Française*, Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1940, p. 92.

scholastic intellectual method. Nauert writes: “The great intellectual vice of this method was that it simplified and distorted the opinions of authorities by reducing each author’s opinions to a single statement, totally divorced from the original context. This was precisely the weakness to which humanists began objecting.”¹⁷⁹ The scholastic method did not treat the authoritative writers as real persons writing for particular purposes in specific situations. The humanists were concerned to read each statement in the classical texts against the background of the whole work from which it was drawn. Also, discerning interpreters would situate the classical authors within their historical, socio-political contexts in order to avoid misrepresenting the ideas of the authors. The medieval approach of portraying the classical texts as containing a series of statements which could be quoted in a theological *summa* in a disconnected fashion was fundamentally flawed. Reading the humane writings of antiquity with a proper appreciation of the context would help promote a holistic pursuit of rhetorical eloquence and virtue instead of a mere quest for logical precision in argumentation.

In order to appreciate the emphasis on humanism that the Jesuits adopted, it is helpful to consider the educational background of the earliest Jesuits. Ignatius Loyola had studied at the University of Paris, and he found that the structure of the Parisian educational model was much more conducive to learning than the one practiced at the Spanish Universities such as Salamanca, which were modeled after the system at Bologna.¹⁸⁰ Many early Jesuits also studied at Coimbra, which was self-consciously following the Parisian template in an area dominated by Italian-style systems. Codina writes, “Paris was the archetype that served as a model for the Jesuit schools... For the Jesuits, the *modus Parisiensis* was an excellent method, the best in their view, synonymous with an active pedagogy that engaged all of the capacities of the student, a plan of studies that was well-founded and organized. For these reasons they chose it.”¹⁸¹ Paris had a structured system of colleges presided

¹⁷⁹ Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge: University Press, 1995, p. 18.

¹⁸⁰ “In the Bologna mode, predominant also in Spain, the students contracted the services of professors, the colleges of doctors and the colleges of the students were separated, and the power remained in the hands of the students. In Paris, on the other hand, the professors offered their services to students for a determined fee, and although the colleges were made up of both professor and students, the power remained in the hands of the professors.” Gabriel Codina, “The ‘*Modus Parisiensis*,’” *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum*, ed. Vincent Duminuco, New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, p. 31.

¹⁸¹ Gabriel Codina, “The ‘*Modus Parisiensis*,’” *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum*, ed. Vincent Duminuco, New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, p. 48.

over by the centralized authority of the Rector of the University. There were clear statutes for student life and job-descriptions for the officials. There were entrance examinations for all students. Lectures, prepared questions, and public disputations dominated the Parisian methodology. Reading *belles-lettres* was meant to foster eloquence, which was useful for inspiring action in others. By the time Ignatius had come to Paris, the humanist ethos had overtaken the scholastic approach in the University. Hughes asserts: "For the understanding of the Jesuit system, in its origin and in its form, attention must always be paid, in the first place, to the kinship subsisting between it and the University of Paris."¹⁸² By the time the Jesuits set up colleges in the prestigious Universities of Padua, Louvain, Valencia, and Cologne, they had firmly decided upon the *Modus Parisiensis*.

2. Jesuit Colleges

The task of establishing Jesuit colleges throughout European centers of culture was not initially anticipated by Loyola. At the time of the founding of the Society of Jesus in 1540, there was no indication that the Jesuits would undertake educational ministries. Within eight years, there was a thriving school at Messina in Sicily. In December of 1547, the Commune of Messina requested Loyola for ten Jesuits who could provide teaching, and Loyola was able to send seven scholars to instruct in grammar and writing. The only payment the Jesuits accepted was food, clothing, and housing from the community. The experiment was a wonderful success, and over one-hundred eighty students were enrolled in the school within a year's time. Free education of this quality to so many pupils was previously unknown in Italy, and the Jesuits viewed the lack of fees as being in keeping with their vows of poverty. Grendler writes:

Flushed with the success of the Messina experiment, Loyola began to see educating boys as one of the prime activities of the society... Italians responded enthusiastically by bombarding Loyola and his successors with five or six times as many requests to open schools as they could accept. Although they did not always spurn petitions from provincial towns, the Jesuits preferred to establish colleges in larger cities. And when they lacked an invitation to open a school in a key political and intellectual center, they contrived to obtain one or

¹⁸² Thomas Hughes, Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits, London: William Heinemann, 1892, p. 32.

founded a school without invitation.¹⁸³

While it was true that the Jesuits would educate boys from all sectors of society, it was clear that they were strategically hoping to mold the minds of the upper-class children, making them well disposed toward virtue and religion. By 1556, when Ignatius Loyala died, there were forty Jesuit schools and approximately one-thousand Jesuits. By 1599, there were over two-hundred Jesuit colleges in Europe, and the Society numbered over eight-thousand members. In this year, the Jesuits drafted the *Ratio Studiorum*. The *Ratio* was a result of extended consultation and deliberated the way in which education was to be carried out in all the Jesuit schools. There were several trial editions. The definitive 1599 document began with regulations for the administrators and for the professors of the higher disciplines, such as theology, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy. The remainder of the document detailed the expectations for the introductory subjects. The document was very precise in its expectations: “they legislated everything from the number of classes or the years in the school to material on repetitions, new students, exams, grading practices, promotions, books, and time for private study.”¹⁸⁴

The specific aim of Jesuit education was to develop a love for God and an attitude of service for others; the teachers were to look upon their vocation as caring for the souls of the pupils. The introductory statement of the *Ratio* begins in this fashion: “It is the principle ministry of the Society of Jesus to educate youth in every branch of knowledge that is in keeping with its Institute. The aim of our educational program is to lead people to the knowledge of our Creator and Redeemer.”¹⁸⁵ The Jesuits believed that their schools would inculcate knowledge that would be helpful in practical living; the schools would contribute to the betterment of society and its just administration. They would instill humanistic values in the individual, and they would lead people to a deeper appreciation of religious truth. This balanced approach of instilling civic, religious, and humane values into the students gave the Jesuit colleges their distinctive ethos. Many of the Universities were promoting the virtues of Greek and Latin prose and poetry, and “in much of this the Jesuit colleges were comparable to other colleges during the Renaissance. What made the Jesuit

¹⁸³ Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 366.

¹⁸⁴ John Padberg, “Development of the *Ratio Studiorum*,” *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum*, ed. Vincent Duminuco, New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, p. 96.

¹⁸⁵ Padberg, p. 97.

colleges unique was the combination of the humanist, classically oriented curriculum and the morally disciplined religion of the Catholic Reformation.”¹⁸⁶

The schools were generally received warmly by the local communities. And regularly the schools were perceived as being clearly superior to those that were already in operation within the community. In many of the European cities of cultural importance, the Jesuits distinguished themselves in the minds of the public as being the most skilled educators. In order to promote such an impression, the Jesuits held public disputations and speeches by both the students and the instructors, confirming the attractiveness of the oratorical skills the Society inculcated. Aristotelian philosophy and Thomistic theology were taught along with humane literature. Both written and oral skills were tested, and a balance of ideas with practice was encouraged. Given the large network of schools the Jesuits oversaw, many valuable exchanges took place between teachers as to what methods fostered successful education on a practical level.

Jesuit humanists believed that the study of human culture was not detrimental to religious development. They introduced the writings of both Christian and pagan thinkers, believing that valuable instruction can be found in both sources. Philosophical, moral, and even spiritual truths were to be found outside the boundaries of Christianity and Christian cultures. These truths demanded serious study and attention. Aristotle was helpful for learning about the moral and physical structure of the universe. Virgil and Cicero were repositories of wisdom regarding human nature and speech. No other Catholic order promoted the humanist ideals to such an extent, and most Jesuits were expected to be able to teach the Latin and Greek literary classic texts if requested.¹⁸⁷ O’Malley quips, ‘I do not know of any Jesuit going so far as the humanist Erasmus did in his famous prayer, ‘O, St. Socrates, pray for us,’ but some of them came close.”¹⁸⁸ It is no accident, therefore,

¹⁸⁶ A. Lynn Martin, *The Jesuit Mind: The Mentality of an Elite in Early Modern France*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 61.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Hughes comments regarding the Jesuit educational strategy: “All through the system, the field of pedagogical activity is that of a general culture... The great literatures of Rome and Greece have always been considered adequate instruments of universal culture. Under a literary aspect, the eloquence and poetry of Greece had been the mistress of Roman excellence. Under a philological aspect, the Latin tongue has been the principal basis of our modern languages, as formed in the history of Christendom. In both of them, the varied elements of richest thought are brought into contact with the undeveloped, but developing nature of the youth.” T. Hughes, *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits*, London: William Heinemann, 1892, p. 250.

¹⁸⁸ John O’Malley, “How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education,” *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum*, ed. Vincent Duminuco, New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, p. 69.

that Jesuit missionaries such as Matteo Ricci in China and Roberto de Nobili in India genuinely respected the Confucian and Hindu texts, expecting to find positive teachings in these classics.

The Jesuits began to teach mathematics, astronomy, physics, and architecture, in addition to the humane subjects. They sought to engage critically with all that was best in literary and scientific achievement. Their admiration for Thomistic theology encouraged their pursuit of knowledge in the realm of “nature,” which they expected to be harmonious with the truths of “grace.” In fact, in the secondary schools, theology proper was not even taught, since this discipline occupied the highest position in the hierarchy of learning. O’Malley notes: “Thus began an engagement with secular culture, modest enough at first, that became a hallmark of the order and an integral part of its self-definition, not present at the beginning. The engagement was not occasional or incidental, but systemic... As a result of the schools, they began to see themselves as having a cultural mission.”¹⁸⁹

Thus, humanist philosophy of education, which included a healthy dose of both sacred and secular literature, allowed the Jesuits to esteem the study of texts that were not explicitly Christian. They anticipated finding valuable truths in the classic literatures of the great civilizations. The study of humane texts would lead to the cultivation of civic and individual virtue, as well as the rhetorical skill and eloquence necessary to persuade. Spiritual development would be assisted by immersion in good literature. The Jesuits working in Bengal approached the study of Hindu texts with similar assumptions. Their humanist concerns would have motivated them to teach and study the Indian religious and philosophical writings at a high level of proficiency.

Johanns through personal choice and appointment by the Society was an educator for over fifteen years in Calcutta and for seven years in Belgium. He had himself undergone a lengthy classical Jesuit education, replete with theology, languages, and philosophy for over a decade, often requesting further periods of study. He was a committed student who read voraciously. Thus, Johanns valued the humanist tradition which was part of the Jesuit ethos. He was well acquainted with classical philosophy and literature, finding great value in the Greek and Roman authors. His training in Indology at Oxford reinforced his Jesuit inclination to

¹⁸⁹ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, p. 242.

esteem the study of the sacred and philosophical writings of the great civilizations of antiquity. He pursued the development of accurate and informed interpretations of the eminent Indian masters based upon thorough textual study. Johanns thought that a discriminating reading of the commentaries of the *Vedāntic ācāryas* would be as beneficial to spiritual development as reading Plato, Aristotle, or the other Hellenistic authors. He set himself to the task of expositing the *Vedāntins*, using the mediums of writing and lecturing to communicate their insights. Johanns did not directly speak of his project as a distinctively Jesuit work in his writings, yet one can see how his personal formation in a Jesuit climate which valued humane literature would have influenced his decision to take up the project of scrutinizing the major texts of the *Vedānta*.

C. The Calcutta Circle

Certain Catholics living and working in Bengal before Johanns arrived in Calcutta were already developing their stance on a Christian approach to Indian spirituality and on the particular nature and duty of mission work in Bengal. Several of these outstanding figures influenced the thinking of the Belgian Jesuits whose special province for apostolate was Bengal. This section describes the life and theological reflections of four key Catholics who left a deep impression upon the project and methodology of Fr. Johanns in his *Light of the East* writings. It will be shown that there was an unbroken line of influence from Upādhyāy and Animananda to the Jesuit William Wallace and on to Johanns and his Belgian associates- the group that formed the Calcutta circle.

Richard Fox Young describes the earliest attempts of Christian engagement with the *Vedānta*, beginning roughly four centuries ago, in the work of Jesuits such as Roberto de Nobili and Jean Calmette as the “first Catholic quest.” This initial quest for rapport was informed by Thomistic assumptions of the distinction between natural and supernatural religion and also by the employment of rational argumentation to establish natural truths. The period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was dominated by the “Protestant interregnum,” where missionaries such as Ziegenbalg, Carey, and Marshman developed their stance toward Indian philosophy and religions. This period was characterized by a more competitive attitude than was exhibited by the Catholic missionaries. The learned Protestant theologian, Nehemiah Goreh, who had an imposing knowledge of the

Vedānta, entitled his greatest work A Rational Refutation of Hindu Philosophical Systems.¹⁹⁰ Goreh's writing exemplified the combatative approach which was common in this era. By and large, with the Protestants "the *Vedānta* begins to be perceived as more malign and less benign...(There was) open confrontation, clear boundaries, and ...honest and forthright recognition of the *Vedāntic* "other" in all its concrete particularity and radical otherness."¹⁹¹ The subsequent phase of interaction Young designates the "second Catholic quest," which was initiated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the group identified as the Calcutta circle. Before this circle began their explorations, the Belgian Jesuits had been largely uninterested in giving serious attention to the spiritual culture of India. The Jesuit historian Steenhault writes:

The Belgian Jesuits from the inception of their apostolate in West Bengal up to the early twenties seemed to have forgotten the great examples, even the names of the 17th century Jesuits who had produced such enlightened missionaries, Roberto de Nobili in India and Matteo Ricci in China. To understand the culture of India and the importance of what has been called "Renascent India", in which Bengal had taken a leading part with men of the stature of Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore, no effort had been made by the missionaries in West Bengal of those days.¹⁹²

Young points to the Bengali convert and nationalist Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy as perhaps the touchstone figure in the second Catholic quest. He modeled an approach to the *Vedānta* which included both serious textual study and contemplative experience. Upadhyay's efforts inspired several Catholics who were stationed in Bengal to probe deeply into the *Vedāntic* tradition, and his influence is detectable in the theology developed by the missionary-scholars of the succeeding generations. Robin Boyd, in his classic work on Indian Christian Theology, describes this important movement as an "interesting revival within the Roman Catholic Church of the tradition inaugurated by Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy ...By 1920 a number of Roman Catholic thinkers, mainly Belgian Jesuits, were beginning to see his work in a

¹⁹⁰ Goreh (1825-1885) was an acclaimed apologist and convert to Christianity who wrote the very erudite A Rational Refutation of Hindu Philosophical Systems, Madras: CLS, 1911. See Richard Young, Resistant Hinduism, Vienna: Universität Wien, 1981, p. 169-172, and Robin Boyd, An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 40-57.

¹⁹¹ Richard Fox Young, "Seeking India's Christ-Bearing Word," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 19 (Fall, 2002), p. 22-23.

¹⁹² Y. Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Ranchi: Catholic Press, n.d., p. 82.

truer perspective and to realise its great and permanent significance.”¹⁹³

1. *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy*

Upādhyāy was born as Bhavani Charan Banerjee on Feb. 11, 1861 in a Brahmin family in a small village north of Calcutta.¹⁹⁴ He was educated in a Scottish mission school and then at Hoogly College and the Metropolitan College. In 1887, he joined Keshub Chandra Sen’s Church of the New Dispensation.¹⁹⁵ Banerjee became friends with Vivekananda, who had joined the *Brāhmo Samāj*.¹⁹⁶ He then moved to Hyderabad in 1888 to provide instruction in Sanskrit at the Union Academy. There he came into contact with two Church Mission Society missionaries who influenced his thinking about the person of Christ. After attending their Bible studies and becoming convinced of Christ’s resurrection and divine Sonship, Banerjee was baptized in 1891. He joined the Catholic Church that year.¹⁹⁷ In 1894, he became a *saṃnyāsīn* and wore the traditional ochre robe which signified his renunciation; he took on the name Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy, which is a Sanskrit translation of Theophilus. Upādhyāy in that year began a monthly journal entitled *Sophia*, which promoted the theological views he was developing. He was interested in exploring indigenous models of expressing the Christian message. Beginning in 1898, Upādhyāy worked for two years toward setting up a *maṭha*, or

¹⁹³ Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 91.

¹⁹⁴ For biographical information on Upādhyāy, along with discussion of his theological views, see Julius Lipner, *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, Oxford: University Press, 1999; Timothy Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: the Legacy of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

¹⁹⁵ Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) of Calcutta joined the *Brāhmo Samāj* in 1857 and worked with Debendranath Tagore until the two had differences in opinion in regard to how the *Samāj* should be run. Sen formed the *Brāhmo Samāj* of India in 1868, while Tagore led the branch which came to be known as the *Adi Brāhmo Samāj*. In 1878, dissenters broke away from Sen’s branch and formed the *Sadhārana Brāhmo Samāj*; Sen began to refer to his organization as the Church of the New Dispensation (*Navavidhān*). Sen sought for a synthesis of the great religions, which were mutually complementary interpretations of reality. See David C. Scott, ed., *Keshub Chunder Sen: a Selection*, Madras: CLS, 1979.

¹⁹⁶ Vivekananda (1863-1902) was born Narendranath Dutta in Calcutta and was a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886), who taught the mystical unity of religions. Vivekananda advocated a style of neo-*advaita Vedānta*. He is famous for his attractive representation of Hinduism in the 1892 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. See K.P. Aleaz, *Harmony of Religions: the Relevance of Swami Vivekananda*, Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1993.

¹⁹⁷ The Greek Theophilus, meaning “lover of God,” corresponds with Brahmabāndhab, which denotes attachment/connection with God. Upādhyāy means “sub-teacher.”

monastic center, in Jabalpur, but the Catholic authorities frustrated his efforts. Moving back to his native Calcutta in 1900, he concentrated on his journalistic endeavors, establishing monthlies and weeklies entitled *Sophia Weekly*, *Twentieth Century*, *Sandhya*, and *Swaraj*. Many of his articles took on a distinct political tone, and his views aroused the hostility of the British government in India. He was arrested for sedition but was transferred to the Campbell hospital for a hernia operation. He developed lockjaw as a result of complications to the surgery, and on October 27, 1907, he died in the hospital.

Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy's theological approach to the *Vedānta* took on a different shape after 1898.¹⁹⁸ His appreciation for the potentiality of *Vedāntic* philosophy to provide a natural foundation for Christian theology developed after this date. Upādhyāy initially argued that primitive *Vedic* faith was monotheistic and that the later polytheism and pantheism were accretions which tainted the original purity of the vision of the Indian seers. He indicated that the purpose of the journal *Sophia* was "to show on rational and historical grounds that Theism was the primitive religion of man: the fetishism, nature-worship, pantheism, polytheism, and other corrupt forms of religion are of later origin."¹⁹⁹ According to him, the present form of Hinduism was a corruption of the earliest tradition. The *Vedic* Gods were different names given by the seers for one great Deity. The *Vedānta* of Śaṅkara was viewed by Upādhyāy at this time as a departure from pure Hinduism in its nascent form. Primitive theism was universally ascertainable; Upādhyāy was convinced that natural reason could lead toward a recognition of the existence of a monotheistic personal God, a moral sense in man, and a law of retribution for deeds. He wrote: "A man is a born Theist. At the first dawn of his reason he naturally becomes a partaker of the universal light of Theism."²⁰⁰ The human conscience instinctively knows that there is a moral law and a divine Lawgiver, and various religious traditions in the world give ample testimony to this instinct. Humanity's reason can also discern that there must be a first cause which existed prior to all other entities. Upādhyāy quoted such *Vedic* passages as *Rg Veda* 8:7.17.2 ("Neither there was mortality nor immortality nor the knowledge of night and day; that alone breathed

¹⁹⁸ For selections from Upādhyāy's writings, see *The Writings of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: including a Resumé of his Life and Thought*, ed. J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, 2 vols., Bangalore: United Theological College, 1991, 2002.

¹⁹⁹ *Sophia Monthly*, 3 (Jan., 1896).

²⁰⁰ *Sophia Monthly*, 1 (Jan., 1894).

without air, self-sustained; there was nothing else besides that”) and *Ait. Up.* 1.1 (“In the beginning there was only one being; nothing else existed”) to substantiate his position.²⁰¹ He commented, “Amidst the darkest aberrations of the Indian intellect, irrepressibly flashes out the sublime idea of the One True God, to be darkened and corrupted again by the perversity of man.”²⁰² Upādhyāy was very optimistic in regard to the extent to which natural theology can construct a reasonable account of God’s basic nature and the fundamental features of the created order.

These considerations display Upādhyāy’s insistence that natural philosophy and human reasoning may serve as the foundation upon which to erect the superstructure of Christian revelation. He accepted the Thomistic nature-grace distinction, where supernatural truths perfect the limited truths acquired through rational inquiry. He wrote, “Though the religion of Christ is beyond the grasp of nature and reason, still its foundation rests upon truths of nature and reason. Destroy the religion of nature and reason (and) you destroy the supernatural religion of Christ.”²⁰³ This theological hermeneutic makes the relation between the great truths preserved in the Indian tradition and in the Christian revelation clear. General revelation is accessible to Hindus, whereas special revelation is not a component of their religious tradition. He wrote, “The truths which Hinduism possesses are all such as are attainable and as a matter of fact have been attained by the aid of mere human reason assisted on a manner by divine grace, whereas Christianity stands on an absolutely different pedestal, in that it is purely a Divine revelation of truth.”²⁰⁴

When Upādhyāy moved to Calcutta from Jabalpur, his attitude toward the *Vedānta*, and particularly Śāṅkara’s system, shifted to a more positive assessment. Śāṅkara expounds a philosophy of the Absolute at the highest level, and Upādhyāy was convinced that an indigenized Christianity must interact with the loftiest Indian metaphysics in order to give a proper account of itself. He rethought the *advaita* system and came to the conclusion that its basic tenets were not incommensurable with Christian theology. In fact, *advaita* was the best example of natural philosophy that had been formulated by humanity. Upon it could be erected the supernatural truths of the Christian revelation. In 1898, Upādhyāy began to advance this more

²⁰¹ *Sophia Monthly*, 1 (Mar., 1894) and *Sophia Monthly*, 5 (Jan., 1898), respectively.

²⁰² *Sophia Monthly*, 1 (Mar., 1894).

²⁰³ *Sophia Monthly*, 2 (Jan., 1895).

²⁰⁴ *Sophia Monthly*, 4 (Feb., 1897).

positive view of *advaita* with an article entitled “An Exposition of Catholic Belief compared with *Vedānta*.”²⁰⁵ He initiated a project of theologizing using *Vedāntic* categories, providing an interpretation of Christianity using the essential framework of *advaitic* philosophy. The concepts of *nirguṇa Brahman*, *māyā*, and *mokṣa* were utilized as theological categories through which to interpret the Christian understanding of God and His creation. For Upādhyāy, God is completely unrelated (*asaṅga*); nothing in God’s nature makes Him necessarily related to any other creature or entity: “the essence of *Vedāntic* teaching...teaches *Brahman* to be *asaṅga* (without need of company) to whom the creation of the finite is but an act proceeding out of munificence, luxury, sport (*līlā*) and not out of any necessity of His nature.”²⁰⁶ Another *advaitic* distinction that Upādhyāy used creatively is that of *nirguṇa/saguṇa Brahman*. There are certain attributes which are necessary to God’s person, and there are others that describe His functions of relating to the finite. The *nirguṇa* aspect of His being is unchanging and unaffected by the presence of a contingent creation. The *saguṇa* qualities have to do with the necessary being relating to the contingent. Thus, God’s being is so great that He is not related to anything out of necessity or dependent upon something else. Upādhyāy asserted, “The Supreme Being per se, is *nirguṇam*, that is, He possesses no external attributes, no necessary correlation with any other being other than His Infinite Self...But looked at from the standpoint of creation, He is *saguṇam*, he is *Īśvara*, creator of heaven and earth, possessing attributes relating Him to created nature.”²⁰⁷ For Upādhyāy, necessary external relationship implies that God is limited in some way. The categories of *asaṅga* and *nirguṇa* thus protect the self-sufficiency of God.

This raises the issue of the nature of the world’s relationship to the self-sufficient Absolute. Upādhyāy called into question the prevailing interpretation of Śaṅkara’s concept of *māyā*, which supposed that the philosopher teaches that the world is pure illusion. Instead, *māyā* refers to the mysterious realm of contingent (*vyavahārika*) reality which derives its existence from the necessary (*paramārthika*) being of God. What is deceptive about the realm of *māyā* is that many make the erroneous assumption that it has an independent existence of its own. Upādhyāy asked: “Who can explain how the phenomenal multiplicity results from the

²⁰⁵ *Sophia Monthly*, 5 (Jan., 1898).

²⁰⁶ *Sophia Weekly*, 1, New Series (1 Dec., 1900).

²⁰⁷ *Sophia Weekly*, 1, New Series (23 June, 1900).

immutable Unity, how being is communicated to the finite, how creatures come to possess being at all?”²⁰⁸ Through the operation of the power of God, finite being, which would not exist on its own, is enabled to enjoy existence, though it possesses only a borrowed existence. In His role as *Īśvara*, the *saguna* God bestows contingent being as a free act (*līlā*) of His will.

God is not an impersonal being, for He is internally related with intrinsic communion within Himself. In order to communicate the notion of the Trinity, Upādhyāy seized upon the rich formulation of the Ultimate as *sat, cit, ānanda*. He credited the Indian seers with catching a glimpse “into the Essence of God to contemplate His interior life.”²⁰⁹ God is self-existent, eternal Being. God is also Consciousness which involves self-knowledge; through the act of knowing Himself, an internal distinction arises within the divine Essence: “God begets in thought his infinite Self-Image and reposes on it with infinite delight while the begotten Self acknowledges responsively his eternal thought-generation.”²¹⁰ Lastly, God is blissful in His self-satisfaction. Needing nothing, the internal relations within the divine are characterized by joy. *Sat, cit, and ānanda* are personal distinctions within the *nirguna* God; these distinctions are unified within the one God. For Upādhyāy, God the Father is the unbegotten source of being. God the Son is the begotten image of the Father; He is the Logos-Word. God the Spirit is the blissful one who proceeds from the union of *sat* and *cit*.²¹¹ The ultimate end which humanity seeks is to enjoy the beatific vision, which denotes intimate communion with the divine essence. This direct vision of the divine essence is *mokṣa*, the end toward which *advaita* directs its practitioners. Upādhyāy described this state as “God-vision. To see God, face to face, without any intervening medium, to know His inner life which is full and complete without any correlation with the finite, to be nourished into perfection by feeding upon His substance, to be like Him, to be one with Him, is *mokṣa*.”²¹²

Upādhyāy attempted to show that one could be a Christian theologically and still retain a Hindu cultural identity. He extended this to Hindu cultural symbols, icons, and ceremonies, arguing that Christians could embrace them without feeling

²⁰⁸ *Sophia Monthly*, 6 (Feb., 1899).

²⁰⁹ *Sophia Monthly*, 4 (Dec., 1897).

²¹⁰ *The Twentieth Century*, 1 (Jan., 1901).

²¹¹ *Sophia Monthly*, 5 (Oct., 1898).

²¹² *Sophia Weekly*, 1, New Series (21 July, 1900).

that their faith is being compromised in any way. He accepted caste-structures and advocated that the system be integrated into the Church. Being a Christian, for Upādhyāy, did not take away from a person's Indian-ness or from the ability to be immersed in the culture.

2. *Animananda*

Born as Rewachand Gyanchand in Sindh, Animananda was first exposed to Christianity while attending a C.M.S. Anglican school.²¹³ His interest in exploring the Christian faith led Animananda to read Catholic theology, which he found intellectually rigorous and challenging. He decided to become a Catholic convert in 1893 due to his association with Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy, who became a kind of guru to him. Animananda recounted the story of his conversion:

When I learnt, however that a Bengali Brahmin, known as Upādhyāya Brahmabāndhav, had sacrificed position, prestige and felt the pinch of poverty for the cause of Christ, I said to myself that I too must make up my mind to be baptized. In the event of leaving my parental home, I could be quite happy in his company. It was on Good Friday, after his baptism on 26th February 1891, that Brahmabāndhav organized a meeting and his earnest pleading about the divine character of Our Lord influenced me so much that I desired to renounce the world and be a Christian missionary.²¹⁴

Animananda became co-editor of the monthly *Sophia* in 1894, working closely with Upādhyāy in the project of indigenizing Christianity. Animananda then followed Upādhyāy to Calcutta in 1898 and adopted the lifestyle of a *saṁnyāsin*. P. Turmes, Animananda's biographer, recounts, "Every morning you could see two *saṁnyāsins*, cymbals in hand and dressed in garic, singing down the Calcutta streets, going from door to door and begging alms as true mendicants. A small room had been rented in Simla Street. There they cooked and ate their simple meal. The rest of the day was spent in meditation and deep study."²¹⁵ Animananda assisted in Upādhyāy's efforts to establish a *maṭha* at Jabalpur. Fasting, begging, and the contemplative life were vigorously pursued by the men. Their lifestyle was in accordance with that of a traditional renunciant, sleeping on the floor, dressing simply, rising early in the

²¹³ See P. Turmes, *A Teacher of Genius: B. Animananda*, Calcutta: Xavier Publications, 1963, for a biography of Animananda.

²¹⁴ Animananda, "How I Found Christ," *Light of the East*, 13 (June, 1935), p. 101-102.

²¹⁵ P. Turmes, *A Teacher of Genius: B. Animananda*, Calcutta: Xavier Publications, 1963, p. 21.

morning. When the *maṭha* experiment was censured by the Catholic authorities, they returned to Calcutta in 1900 and set up a school in Bethune Row, which was then moved to Simla Bazar Street. Rabindranath Tagore paid a visit to this school and was deeply impressed by the educational atmosphere fostered in the school.²¹⁶ Tagore and Upādhyāy decided to transfer the school to Santiniketan in 1901, where an *āśram* was set up. What impressed Animananda the most about his master was the way in which Upādhyāy strove to express his faith in a truly Indian fashion. He would later recount:

By becoming a Christian one need not cease to be an Indian, but rather should become a better Indian. As a concrete exemplification of this I may just mention the name of a heroic convert to Catholicism: Swami Upādhyāya Brahmabāndhav who shrank from no sacrifice in the pursuit of truth, of the absolute divine Being. He called himself Brahmabāndhav for his great devotion to the Triune God... And though the Swami retained this name to the end of his life and prayed to the Incarnate God even to the last day of his life, he was a Hindu of Hindus, a national of nationals, not a whit less patriotic than Mahatmaji... May God raise up not one but hundreds of Brahmabāndhav's to keep burning within our hearts the ancient spiritual ideal of India's greatness.²¹⁷

Animananda was a gifted teacher of young pupils. After instructing at Santiniketan for a period of time, he decided that he needed to part from Tagore's *āśram*. The Tagores were concerned that Animananda's faith was strongly influencing the Hindu pupils studying under him. Establishing a school in Darzeepara, the Sarasvat Ayatan was formed in 1904. During the feast of Saraswati, Upādhyāy allowed the Hindu students to take part in the *puja*, and the disillusioned Animananda was unable to continue on as instructor for his master; he made an agonized decision to part ways with Upādhyāy. He initiated a school in Cossipore, called the "Little Boy's Own School." Animananda modeled his instructional methods upon the traditional Indian system of guru-disciple relation. His pupils were then to take on the role of teacher themselves when they had progressed in their studies. He served for forty years as a teacher in this school, right up to the time of his death in 1945. After the death of Upādhyāy, Animananda wrote a biography of his guru entitled The Blade, which sought to transmit the ideals modeled in

²¹⁶ Tagore (1861-1941) was an Indian patriot and Nobel laureate (1913). His educational venture at Santiniketan expanded in 1922 to become Visva-Bharati University. See K. Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore: a Biography, London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

²¹⁷ Animananda, "Appeal of Catholicism to India," *Light of the East*, 17 (March, 1939), p. 52.

Upādhyāy's life to younger Catholics.²¹⁸

Animananda's essays discussing his theological convictions show the influence of Upādhyāy. Animananda asserted:

The Supreme Being has not to make any pilgrimage out of Himself to know Himself, because He is infinite and therefore all-inclusive. Hence He cannot need any extraneous element to arouse His consciousness. He objectifies Himself in thought from all eternity and begets Himself, God the Father begets God the Son. He gives to the Eternal Son all that He has, all that He is, Himself- and God the Son acknowledges His thought-generation and reciprocates the love He receives from the Father, while the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth and Love proceeds from the Father and the Son. This completes the economy of Divine Life. This is the nature of God... What we say is that these divine Persons make one undivided Divine Substance, one Infinite Being. The doctrine of the Trinity shows how God can be one, related, and yet absolute. The truth has not been thought out and formulated by human reason, for it is beyond its highest flight, but it is the declaration of Eternal Love to man, his beloved.²¹⁹

One more citation illustrates Animananda theologizing in a way which has resonance with the thought of Upādhyāy: "This infinite Absolute Being, overflowing with bliss, enters into relation with this infinitesimally small thing, man. He loves him with an everlasting love. He loved him even when he did not exist, even when he was merely an idea in the mind of God, and because He loved him, he transferred the idea into an actuality by virtue of his omnipotence."²²⁰ Animananda was of the opinion that the ethos of Catholicism, with its focus on sacraments, social service, and the pursuit of the Beatific Vision, was especially appealing to the Indian temper. He remarked:

The Hindus were an intensely religious people. They stood out markedly apart from the other peoples of the earth by their passionate love for a religious ideal. They had realized that the phenomenal world passes away like a cloud. Their various schools of philosophy, though often at war with one another, go to show that our ancestors longed to possess the Infinite Truth... To quote the Editor of *Sophia*: "It is no exaggeration to say that in ancient India the natural reason of man reached its culmination in regard to speculation about the Infinite." They knew by the light of reason that God must be

²¹⁸ Animananda, *The Blade: The Life and Work of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy*, Calcutta: Roy and Son, n.d. Robin Boyd, in *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 63, suggests the publication date of 1947 for *The Blade*.

²¹⁹ Animananda, "Whom Should We Love," *Light of the East*, 18 (July, 1940), p. 106-107.

²²⁰ Animananda, "Whom Should We Love," *Light of the East*, 18 (July, 1940), p. 107.

absolute. He must be free from all necessary relationship with the universe....Ancient India also believed that the Supreme Being must be *Sat*, *Cit*, and *Ānanda*, but did not see how he could be so. This is a problem which baffles human intelligence.²²¹

For Animananda, Christ has unveiled the interior life of God, which the great sages had always pursued, and He has provided the way to union with the Trinity.

3. William Wallace

Wallace was born on March 2, 1863 in Dublin.²²² His father was an evangelical Presbyterian minister who personally tutored Wallace and enabled him to attend Dublin University in 1882. Wallace received a degree in Divinity and then sought ordination in the Anglican Church at the age of twenty-four. He took up parish work in England in the Midlands, but after an illness he returned home to Ireland to recuperate. When he had recovered after two years, Wallace decided to become a missionary with the Church Missionary Society; he was appointed to work in West Bengal in a place called Krishnagar in 1889. He was disillusioned with the Christianity practiced by his fellow Anglicans and soon left the Mission quarters to reside in the modest accommodations of a small hut in Krishnagar where he devoted himself to studying Bengali and *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.²²³ His life of simplicity and seeking enabled Wallace to endear himself to his Indian neighbors. Through his contact with Bengali Hindus, he developed the opinion that Protestant spirituality was inadequate to meet the needs of his deeply spiritual *Vaiṣṇava* friends.

After serving seven years in Bengal, he returned to Ireland for his furlough; he made a serious study of Catholic doctrine and spirituality. He became convinced that only Catholicism would provide him with a suitable means of dialoguing with his Hindu associates and only Catholic spirituality was worth preaching to the Bengalis. He was rejected by the Mill Hill Fathers when he sought to serve under their auspices in Bengal.²²⁴ So he decided to join the Jesuits who were working in

²²¹ Animananda, "Appeal of Catholicism to India," *Light of the East*, 17 (January, 1939), p. 6. The quotation from the Editor of *Sophia*, Upādhyāy, is taken from *Sophia Weekly*, 1 (August, 1900).

²²² See Wallace, *From Evangelical to Catholic by Way of the East*, *Light of the East Series* 35, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1923, for the autobiography of his life. See also H. Hosten, "In Memoriam: William Wallace, 1863-1922," *The Catholic Herald of India*, 5 (Nov. 22, 1922), p. 803-804.

²²³ This style of *Vaiṣṇavism* is associated with the teachings of Caitanya and is an emotive type of *Kriṣṇa bhakti*.

²²⁴ The reasons why the Mill Hill Fathers chose to reject Wallace are not recorded in his

Bengal, and the Belgian Provincial accepted him as a missionary candidate. After fulfilling his novitiate in England, he arrived in Calcutta on December 13th, 1901 to serve with the Belgian Jesuits. He engaged in further studies in philosophy and theology in Shembaganur and Kurseong before being appointed as a lecturer in English literature at St. Xavier's College. He was then sent to Darjeeling as a lecturer and a parish priest among Anglo-Indians. In his years at Darjeeling, he wrote his autobiography entitled From Evangelical to Catholic by Way of the East, and he wrote several works on Hindu philosophy and yoga.²²⁵ He desired to utilize Indian philosophy to make an acceptable presentation of Christianity to Hindus. His health was beginning to fail in 1921, and he was transferred back to St. Mary's, Kurseong, where he passed away on June 13th, 1922.

Wallace's significance rests in the influence he exerted upon his contemporaries and the younger Jesuits to rethink the way mission was done in Bengal. He helped to shift the mentality toward Indian spirituality amongst the Jesuits and influenced the intellectual formation of the novices who were training for service in India. Wallace entreated his superiors in Belgium to send some of their most talented scholastics to train in the deep study of the Hindu texts. Johanns and Dandoy were products of this vision of Wallace. These St. Xavier's Jesuits "produced a durable synthesis of Catholicism and Hinduism... The 'Bengal School,' which these came to be clubbed under, was the lasting contribution to India of Father William Wallace."²²⁶ The Jesuit historian Henry Hosten writes:

Fr. Wallace did not approve of the tactics of Catholic missionaries in Bengal; he said so and wrote so bluntly. Their modes of thinking, of living, of speaking were foreign, un-Indian, as such only fit for Europeans... For years and years he thus lectured, discussed, corrected and re-wrote his work, until his mind grew dim and his pen dropped from his hand. And as he lay silent on his bed of suffering, a new school of thought had arisen, young Jesuits had returned from Oxford as Doctors in Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy, the atmosphere was clear from the old prejudices.²²⁷

autobiography.

²²⁵ Wallace, *From Evangelical to Catholic by Way of the East*, *Light of the East Series 35*, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1923. The unpublished manuscripts by Wallace on Introduction to Hindoo Clairvoyance and A Bengali Commentary on the Yoga Philosophy are held at Goethals Library, St. Xavier's College, University of Calcutta.

²²⁶ Udayan Namboodiry, *St. Xavier's: The Making of a Calcutta Institution*, New Delhi: Viking/Penguin Books India, 1995, p. 116.

²²⁷ H. Hosten, "In Memoriam: William Wallace, 1863-1922," *The Catholic Herald of India*, 5 (Nov.

Wallace was inspired by the efforts of Upādhyāy and Animananda to establish a *maṭha* in Jabalpur. He felt that Christianity must be Indianized if it is to gain a successful hearing in Bengal. Wallace had read Upādhyāy's articles in *Sophia* and had been impressed by the basic motivations driving Upādhyāy's efforts. He described him as "no ordinary man; he thoroughly understood how the case stands with mission work in India: but he did not understand the extreme difficulty of the course he was recommending... He was despised and rejected as an impossible man, and he found he could do nothing. Yet the evil he saw was real, and the remedy he proposed was just."²²⁸ Wallace in his writings re-iterated the basic approach developed by Upādhyāy regarding the suitability of Indian philosophy to serve as a natural foundation for supernatural religion: "It is not only we who have a priceless gift for India, but India has a priceless gift for us in her Reason, ... not as spurious philosophy to be attacked and destroyed, but as the most stupendous expression of the Reason in which the whole universe is founded...to be utilized with gratitude for the exposition and defense of Catholic dogma and the Christian faith."²²⁹ Wallace felt that Indian philosophy was an expression of the light by which the people had been guided for centuries and which permeated their mindset. Beyond the usefulness of Hindu philosophy as the best example of natural philosophy, the missionaries must assimilate its teaching to catch a glimpse of the interior lives of the indigenous peoples, so that a presentation of the Christian faith will be appropriate for the Hindu temperament. Wallace explained: "For though the Faith be always one and the same, yet there are different ways of presenting it according to the genius and character of those who are to receive it, and the stage of moral and mental development at which they have arrived."²³⁰ And Wallace was of the opinion that the development of the Indian soul was exceedingly high. While the sages saw clearly the spiritual ideal and the means of attaining this lofty end through the submerging of the self in the Supreme, Wallace believed that the methods propounded in the Indian systems were long, solitary, and arduous. Christianity was a consummation of the ideals of India because Christ provides the spiritual dynamic to achieve this difficult religious end, "worked out in original by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made man" and

22, 1922), p. 803-804.

²²⁸ Wallace, Introduction to Hindoo Clairvoyance, Kurseong: typescript, 1920, p. 6.

²²⁹ Namboodiry, p. 121.

²³⁰ Wallace, A Bengali Commentary on the Yoga Philosophy, polycopied, 1923, n.p.

“effected in unison with this original.”²³¹ For Wallace, Jesus Christ is the “true Consummator and the legitimate goal not only of Jewish religion and of the law given to Moses, but of all religion in the world which has its source in the spiritual element in man.”²³²

4. Georges Dandoy

George Dandoy was born in Hemptinne, Belgium on February 5, 1882.²³³ At the age of seventeen, he decided to join the Society of Jesus. He studied philosophy at Namur, Louvain, and Stonyhurst from 1904-1906. Due to the suggestion of Fr. Wallace, Dandoy engaged in Sanskrit studies at the Pope’s Hall in Oxford for two years.²³⁴ He arrived in India in September, 1909, where he taught English at St. Xavier’s College, Calcutta from 1910-1911. He pursued further theological studies at St. Mary’s, Kurseong and was ordained in 1914. After a Tertianship at Ranchi and the completion of his last vows, he was appointed lecturer in theology at St. Mary’s from 1917 to June 1922. In 1919, Dandoy published An Essay on the Doctrine of the Unreality of the World in the Advaita.²³⁵ He arrived in Calcutta in October, 1922 and began forty years of work at St. Xavier’s. Dandoy was Professor of History during this time. His most important responsibility, in retrospect, was his role as the chief editor of the *Light of the East* monthly. Karl Muller writes, “In his work for the *Light of the East* Dandoy provided ideas, did the day-to-day routine work of publishing, and personally wrote many articles, some of which were published in condensed form as books.”²³⁶ In 1932, Dandoy published L’Ontologie du Vedānta: Essai sur L’Acosmisme de L’Advaita; Jacques Maritain and Olivier Lacombe both

²³¹ Wallace, The Everlasting Religion of the Hindoo Sages in its relation to the Catholic Religion of the Christian Fathers, a typescript copy in *Varia* of Wallace at Goethals Library, St. Xavier’s College, University of Calcutta, n.p.

²³² Wallace, Introduction to Hindoo Clairvoyance, p. 267.

²³³ See Y. Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Ranchi: Catholic Press, n.d., p. 90-91, for biographical details on Dandoy.

²³⁴ According to the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia, at Oxford “there are at present three ‘private halls’ conducted by licensed masters...Two of these halls are in Catholic hands, one (Pope’s Hall) founded for students belonging to the Society of Jesus, and the other (Parker’s Hall) established by the Ampleforth Abbey, in Yorkshire, for Benedictine students.” D. Hunter-Blair, “University of Oxford,” The Catholic Encyclopedia, London: Caxton Publishing Company, 1911.

²³⁵ Dandoy, An Essay on the Doctrine of the Unreality of the World in the Advaita, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1919.

²³⁶ Karl Muller, “George Dandoy,” Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions, ed. G. Anderson, New York: Macmillan, 1998, p. 168.

contributed commentaries at the end of the work.²³⁷ In 1940, *Karma, Evil, Punishment* was published.²³⁸ He carried out his editorial duties until the *Light of the East* publication was suspended in December, 1946. He was also appointed superintendent and chaplain of the Hostel at the College and overseer of matrimonial cases in the Calcutta diocese. He was a spiritual director for many priests and laypeople. For the last ten years of his life, Dandoy suffered memory lapses and increasing lack of mental clarity. He died at the age of eighty in a Calcutta nursing home on June 11, 1962.

Dandoy followed the general theological framework of his predecessors by fully expecting to find truths in Hindu philosophy that are harmonious with and beneficial to Christian revelation. He explained in the opening issue of *Light of the East*:

We shall ever remember that before giving to men His supernatural revelation, the Word of God has implanted in their hearts true notions of God, of their origin and of their end. From this dispensation the East has not been excluded: rather it received it abundantly. The East has lights already: religious, philosophical, moral. We have no intention to put out these lights. Rather we shall use them to guide both ourselves and our readers on the path that leads to the fullness of the Light. We shall try to show that the best thought of the East is a bud that, fully expanded, blossoms into Christian thought.²³⁹

Dandoy was an advocate of looking for “stepping stones,” meaning concepts and values found within Indian spirituality which could provide a natural point of contact for discussion between Hindus and Christians. These stepping stones would enable Christians to explain meaningfully the fundamental features of their faith and beliefs, and they would lead both Hindus and Christians to a more profound apprehension of truth. Dandoy believed that the Jesuits had an opportunity for the formation of a special apostolate, one which would reach out to the educated sector of Calcutta. He stated: “Et voilà le but ce qu’on a appelé l’Apostolat intellectuel. Rechercher quelles sont dans un peuple les pierres d’attente que Dieu s’est préparées surnaturellement... puis faire comprendre que le Catholicisme est l’hôte pour lequel

²³⁷ Dandoy, *L’Ontologie du Vedānta: Essai sur L’Acosmisme de L’Advaita*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932.

²³⁸ Dandoy, *Karma, Evil, Punishment, Light of the East Series 31*, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1940.

²³⁹ *Light of the East*, 1 (October, 1922), p. 2.

le seuil de la maison de l'âme a été si soigneusement préparé.”²⁴⁰ Dandoy picked up Fr. Wallace's emphasis on the need for patient study of Hindu philosophy and religion. Respect and sensitivity would foster mutual understanding. The presentation of the Christian faith must not be perceived as something foreign and intrusive into the spirituality of India, but rather there must be continuity between the best of India's religious thought and the Christian proclamation. Dandoy studied and wrote with this attitude always in his mind. He advocated the following:

...rechercher, plus attentivement que jamais, avec une science exacte et une charité tout évangélique, les pierres d'attente que la grace de Dieu s'est probablement ménagées dans ces vastes milieux culturels. De façon qu'un hindou de bonne foi invité à entrer dans la véritable demeure du Père commun, dans l'Eglise visible du Christ, n'eût pas l'impression d'être condamné à renier sa face et ses traditions pour habiter une maison étrangère. Que de barrières s'abaissent d'elles-mêmes, s'il pouvait pressentir, dans la foi chrétienne, non pas la rupture brutale avec le passé, mais l'épanouissement, la compréhension supérieure, l'avènement inespéré de tout ce que ses pères désirèrent obscurément de meilleur.²⁴¹

Light of the East, under Dandoy's editorship, sought to interact in an intelligent manner with the profundities of Indian philosophy in order to carry out this apostolate.

These four key figures, Upādhyāy, Animananda, Wallace, and Dandoy, were to prove the most influential to the intellectual approach of Fr. Johanns to Indian spirituality. It would be difficult to appreciate the project of Johanns without knowing about these key Catholics working in Bengal. One may examine certain suggestions and comments that they recorded in their writings to ascertain the way in which their thinking influenced Johanns. Many have noted the impact that Upādhyāy's example and writings had on Johanns.²⁴² Steenhault, the historian of the

²⁴⁰ Georges Dandoy, "L'Apostolat Intellectuel aux Indes," *Missions Belges de la Compagnie de Jesus*, Brussels: Charles Bulens, 1925, p. 328. This concept of an intellectual apostolate in the early twentieth century is unique to Catholic missionaries; there does not seem to be a comparable sense of intellectual apostolate in Protestant circles.

²⁴¹ Georges Dandoy, "L'Apostolat Intellectuel aux Indes," *Missions Belges de la Compagnie de Jesus*, Brussels: Charles Bulens, 1925, p. 183.

²⁴² See Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 91, and A. Mookenthottam, *Indian Theological Tendencies*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1978. Mookenthottam writes: "The initiates of Brahmabāndhab had been assumed and developed by far-sighted missionaries like G. Dandoy and P. Johanns... Johanns is to be seen in the context of the work of Brahmabāndhab and that of his disciples and followers." p. 47-48.

Jesuits of West Bengal, notes Upādhyāy's importance upon Johanns: "An important article which he published in *Sophia*, 'Hindu philosophy and Christianity,' became the ideal that inspired Fr. Johanns' life task. Upādhyāy wrote, 'We are of the opinion that attempts should be made to win over Hindu philosophy to the service of Christianity, as Greek philosophy was won over in the Middle Ages.'"²⁴³ The modern desire for serious Christian engagement with *Vedāntic* philosophy as a potential means of contributing to the life of the Church and to Indian spirituality originated with Upādhyāy, but the project was carried out in a more comprehensive fashion by Johanns. Whereas Upādhyāy's life and vision for rapport with Indian philosophy was tragically cut short and his innovative plans left unrealized, Johanns had the time and support necessary to enact Upādhyāy's fertile suggestions. Johanns picked up on many of the central motifs of Upādhyāy, such as the notion of God as *saccidānanda*, necessary being (*paramārthika*), and completely independent (*asaṅga*). He also considered Hinduism as a natural religion which can assist in laying the rational foundation of a substructure upon which the supernatural revelation can rest. Thus, both in methodology and content, Johanns followed many suggestions of Upādhyāy.

Animananda met the young Jesuits Dandoy and Johanns when they were new arrivals to Calcutta and encouraged them in their desire to begin a journal which carried on the spirit of theological enquiry initiated by Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy. They would confer with Animananda, strategizing how best to use their leisure time when they were not involved in teaching and administrative responsibilities at St. Xavier's. They brought several proposals to Animananda and sought his advice. The biographer Turmes recounts Animananda's response: "When the plan was mooted of a review whose main purpose would be to present Christ to India in a way adapted to her culture and mentality, his face brightened up, and his casting vote was given at once in favour of this new proposal. Thus *Light of the East* was born. 'To Christ through the Vedanta' must have come to him like a trumpet-call from the Jabalpure Monastery or from the far-off discussions in Hyderabad."²⁴⁴ Animananda contributed articles of his own to *Light of the East*, lending his support to the endeavor.²⁴⁵ William Wallace carried on the tradition of respectful engagement with

²⁴³ Y. Steenhault, *History of the Jesuits in West Bengal*, Ranchi: Catholic Press, n.d., p. 89. This is a quotation from *Sophia Monthly*, 4 (July, 1897).

²⁴⁴ P. Turmes, *A Teacher of Genius: B. Animananda*, Calcutta: Xavier Publications, 1963, p. 63.

²⁴⁵ See "Appeal of Catholicism to India," *Light of the East*, 17 (Jan.-March), 1939, as well as "What I

Hindu philosophy. He felt that “Hinduism is logically sound in itself when stated as it is in the original and collated in its orthodox schools... It must be cleared of any distortion or obscurity that may have gathered around it in individual or party hands, and adopted as the rational and philosophical basis of theological science in the East.”²⁴⁶ Surely this is a clear statement of the project that Johanns undertook in his articles in *Light of the East*. Wallace was the man who petitioned the Society for young Jesuits such as Dandoy and Johanns to be trained in Indology so that they would be equipped to deal with the subtleties of Indian philosophy. Wallace’s positive assessment of intellectual Hinduism and his commitment to a high level of scholarship on Indian religions set the tone for the younger Jesuits working in Calcutta. Dandoy had already published a study on *advaitic* metaphysics before Johanns arrived at St. Xavier’s. He was a proponent of looking for “stepping-stones” in Hindu philosophy and religion which would lead to fulfilment in Christ. Johanns entitled one of his articles “*Pierres d’attente du Christianisme dans la philosophie Indienne*,” echoing the terminology and sentiments of his senior colleague Dandoy.²⁴⁷ Thus, portions of the theology, motifs, and terminology of Upādhyāy, Animananda, Wallace, and Dandoy re-appear in the articles composed by Johanns, illustrating his indebtedness to these earlier Catholics working in Bengal.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced important figures and factors that contributed to the approach of Johanns to the *Vedāntic* texts and his attitude toward the apostolate in Bengal. Johanns’ predilection for concentrating upon the schools of the *Vedānta* as representing the culmination of Hindu thought was inspired by his Orientalist training in Indology. He was certainly influenced by this textualized conception of Hinduism. His desire to teach philosophy, both Eastern and Western, in a college in the University of Calcutta reflected his basic Jesuit humanist orientation, where studying texts and philosophies from other traditions could be both beneficial and rewarding to a Christian. Johanns had a genuine respect for the writings of the

Found in the Church,” *Light of the East*, 15 (March, 1937), and “How I Found Christ,” *Light of The East*, 13 (June, 1935).

²⁴⁶ Namboodiry, p. 122.

²⁴⁷ Johanns, “*Pierres d’attente du Christianisme dans la philosophie Indienne*,” *Lumen Vitae*, I (1946), p. 173-193.

Vedāntic masters, and he eagerly engaged with the spiritualities represented in the writings. His predecessors in the Bengal apostolate influenced him to see Christianity as the supernatural fulfilment of the natural philosophy of Indian thought.

Johanns was indebted to his predecessors in Calcutta, but he exhibited a combination of depth and breadth of study that none of them had individually attained. Johanns achieved a greater level of learning and understanding of Indian philosophy than Wallace; he did not limit himself to *advaita* in his theological explorations, as Upādhyāy and Animananda had done.²⁴⁸ Thus, Johanns took the ideas and ideals of his predecessors and worked them out in a far more comprehensive scope. He went beyond his influences in terms of range and detail. Johanns worked through a significant amount of *Vedāntic* material, addressing its mystical, devotional, and emotive dimensions. He explored both the theoretical and practical philosophy in each system. As a fulfilment theologian, he moved beyond the superficial language of many Protestants who spoke vaguely of Christ satisfying “needs” which are displayed in the Hindu religion. By contrast, he addressed the doctrinal and practical components of the *Vedānta* and proposed definite ways by which these could be said to be fulfilled by Christian theology. As a neo-Thomist, he applied the accepted methodology of synthesis to a completely new body of material, attempting to build a perennial philosophy on Indian soil. He utilized his Indological training for the purpose of Jesuit educational work, lifting the standard of scholarship for the study of Indian religions and literature. He assisted in rehabilitating in Bengal a central motif of Jesuit mission work, namely the notion that the cultural and intellectual expressions of a classical Asian culture were worthy of respectful engagement. When viewed against his historical and intellectual background, Johanns can be regarded as displaying innovation, creativity, and rigor in his theological and scholarly endeavors.

²⁴⁸ Johanns wrote: “Upādhyāy, le fameux catholique indien, a voulu rebâtir notre théologie en lui donnant, pour fondement unique, Śaṅkara. C’est que beaucoup de penseurs indiens voient, dans Śaṅkara, leur seul philosophe orthodoxe et considèrent tous les autres comme plus ou moins hérétiques. Śaṅkara, d’ailleurs, par son concept incomplet, certes, mais tellement sublime du Dieu spirituel surpasse les non-*advaitistes* qui sont incapables d’accorder, à la spiritualité divine, une telle pureté et une telle transcendance. Cependant nous ne partageons pas l’avis d’Upādhyāy. Animananda, un illustre *saṃnyāsīn* catholique, a cherché, mais en vain, de nous convertir à l’Upādhyāyisme. Nous devons rester fidèles à la méthode de Saint Thomas; celui-ci, bien sûr, considérait Aristote comme le philosophe par excellence; mais il se servait aussi de Platon ou de Plotin quand leur théorie, sur un point déterminé, lui semblait plus satisfaisante.” Johanns, “*Theologie Catholique et Sagesse Des Indes*,” *Doctor Communis*, II (1951), p. 15.

Part Two

Chapter Three

Johanns on Śaṅkara

Introduction

The first *Vedāntic* philosopher with whom Johanns chose to interact was Śaṅkara, the proponent of *advaita* non-dualism. Johanns faced several challenges when attempting this engagement. Śaṅkara's philosophy is esoteric and is difficult to grasp. The expositor of *advaita* must be skilled in communicating abstract concepts and in describing a type of religious experience unfamiliar to most. In addition, the *advaitic* view of God and of the world does not immediately appear to be compatible with a Christian understanding of reality. How should a Christian theologian assess Śaṅkara's notion of an unqualified Absolute who is completely unrelated to a world of *māyā*? Yet, Johanns was convinced that Śaṅkara's philosophy should be the cornerstone of a proper understanding of metaphysics.

Śaṅkara is the great eighth-century *Vedāntic* philosopher and exponent of non-dualism (*advaita*). According to tradition, Śaṅkara was born of Brahmin descent in Kaladi in Kerala in 788 and died in 820 A.D.²⁴⁹ Most scholars of the systems of Indian philosophy acknowledge that Śaṅkara is one of the key figures in the intellectual and spiritual history of Hinduism. Not much biographical information handed down by tradition regarding Śaṅkara's life can be verified. After becoming a *saṃnyāsīn*, it is believed that Śaṅkara travelled throughout India, debating in Benares and establishing four prominent *maṭha* (monasteries) in each corner of the subcontinent. Despite the fact that over three hundred literary works are attributed to him, only a limited number of these are regarded by the scholarly community as genuine compositions of Śaṅkara. The works generally regarded as valid are the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, commentaries on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Kena*, *Īśa*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna*, and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads*, the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, and the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. Sankara's commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* is also widely accepted as authentic.

²⁴⁹ David Lorenzen, "Śaṅkara," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 13, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1987, p. 64.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way in which Johanns engaged with the *advaitic* system of Śaṅkara. First, the contours of the philosophy of Śaṅkara, as described by Johanns, are detailed. Second, the contributions that Johanns recognized Śaṅkara to make to the synthesis are discussed. Third, Johanns' criticisms of *advaitic* metaphysics are explored, particularly from the perspective of his Thomist theology. Fourth, the central motifs of Aquinas' and Śaṅkara's thought are briefly compared. In the sections on explication and on contributions to the synthesis, both the theoretical and the practical aspects of *advaita* are addressed.

A. Johanns' Exposition of Śaṅkara's Philosophy

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. God

Johanns began his explication of Śaṅkara's view of God by noting that the most basic feature that characterizes ultimate Reality is its identity as Being.²⁵⁰ God is Being in "absolute concentration and intensity." Such a characterization marks off Śaṅkara's *advaita* from the Buddhist schools that envision reality as "emptiness" and "void." The fundamental ontological ground in the theoretical philosophy of *advaita* is the Being of God. The Being of God is not only pure and intense, but it is also a "concentration of awareness."²⁵¹ The nature of Being is that it is consciousness; indeed, it is absolute Intelligence. Johanns portrayed Śaṅkara as viewing God as the absolute "That," since God is Being (*sat*). The "What-ness" of God is best elucidated by the statement that Being is awareness, or consciousness (*cit*).²⁵² However, the Intelligence of God is not univocally the same as the intelligence of humans. If Śaṅkara asserts that God is Knowledge, the immediate qualification needs to be added that comparisons between divine and human intellects are invalid and misleading, for no human mind "can by its own power coincide with the Knowledge which is... God Himself."²⁵³ Human intellectual capacities commonly

²⁵⁰ Although Johanns uses the term "God" as a translation of the Sanskrit "*Brahman*" in his theological writings, he is aware that the personal associations and relatedness conveyed by the term in the Judeo-Christian tradition are inappropriate to *nirguṇa Brahman*.

²⁵¹ *Synopsis of "To Christ Through the Vedānta (TCV),"* Ranchi: Catholic Press, 1930, Part I, p. 1.

²⁵² *Light of the East*, 13 (December, 1934), p. 32.

²⁵³ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 43.

function by a subject perceiving an object and cogitating upon the external entity. Johanns asserted that the *advaitic* position on God's Knowledge is that "God is absolute awareness, and any distinction between what is cognized and what is cognizing is blotted out and transcended."²⁵⁴ There is no subject-object polarity in the *cit* of God. Indeed, there are no entities save for the one Being which is Awareness, whose consciousness is content-less.

This identification of Being with Intelligence is the key to Johanns' conception of God in *advaita*. God is absolute Intelligence subsisting in itself; God is "absolute intelligibility in act."²⁵⁵ Johanns described Śaṅkara's metaphysical vision in this way: "As Being, God is the absolute substrate; as Awareness the absolute form; as the identity of both, God is the absolute form of Awareness which is its own substrate, or the absolute Vision which is its own Visibility."²⁵⁶ The example that is provided by Śaṅkara to illustrate God as the form that subsists in itself is Light. Light is an important metaphor for the divine in *advaitic* philosophy. Light is pure, intense, complete, concentrated, and penetrating. Johanns asserted:

Light appears as a mere form subsisting in itself. It supplies therefore the best illustration of the divine form that subsists in itself. What is the substrate of light? Its self-illuminability. What is its form? Its self-illuminativity. What is it as the compenetration of both? Pure self-luminosity. And Śaṅkara characterizes God as pure self-luminosity.²⁵⁷

Another way that Johanns expressed this identification of Being with Awareness is by asserting that for Śaṅkara, "the Absolute Subject is identical with the Absolute Object."²⁵⁸ For, "God's intelligence is identical with God's being, or to put it in terms of modern philosophy, the Pure Subject is also the Pure Object."²⁵⁹ In the

²⁵⁴ "Śaṅkara's God," *New Review*, 6 (1937), p. 282.

²⁵⁵ Johanns, "Hinduism," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 19. To be in "act" means to be fully manifested and existing, without potentiality. This is Thomistic terminology that Johanns is employing; see Chapter One for a discussion of God as act of Being.

²⁵⁶ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 1. Self-subsistence, substantiality, and substrate relate to objectivity and being; form, or principle of intelligibility, is related to subjectivity, consciousness, and illuminating awareness.

²⁵⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 2. Johanns commented: "The more a being is "form" the more it is subject (*cognoscens*), the more also it is object (*cognoscibile*). The perfect Form is, therefore, absolute subject and absolute object." *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

²⁵⁸ *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

²⁵⁹ *Light of the East*, 1 (April, 1923), p. 3.

writings of Johanns, the language of subject and subjectivity has to do with knowledge and epistemology, whereas the language of object and objectivity has to do with being and ontology.²⁶⁰

When it is noted that in Śaṅkara's God, pure intelligence is identical with pure being, Johanns claimed that these are not distinct attributes in the divine but are an indescribable unity. God is simplicity itself. There cannot be any division or composition within pure Being. The human mind has difficulty conceiving of God as the complete identification of Being and Awareness without resorting to the logical functions of synthesis and analysis. But God is attributeless (*nirguṇa*) and undifferentiated. God does not possess such attributes as *cit*. Johanns explained that Śaṅkara's God "has no awareness, not even of His attributes; God *is* the awareness of His attributes, and in this awareness transcends them and reduces them to Himself."²⁶¹ The divine simplicity rules out any internal opposition or composition that would be introduced into God's Being by the presence of multiple attributes. The unicity of God's Being contains the divine Awareness in a way that transcends the normal manner of an attribute inhering in a substance. Johanns wrote:

We think of God as a synthetical substance that displays itself in an infinite number of attributes. But this is an outside view of God, a construction superimposed on Him; it is not an inside view of Him. God precedes all synthesis and analysis, as the ray of light precedes its display through the prism in all the colours of the rainbow. It is through the prism of our mind that we see the divine luminous simplicity display itself in the infinite wealth of its attributes.²⁶²

As the simple concentrated unity of Being and Awareness, the God of *advaita* is a plenitude that has need of nothing. The best way to describe this self-sufficiency is to further characterize God as Bliss (*ānanda*). To repose in infinite self-sufficiency is the very nature of the blissful Being of God. There is no limitation to be found in the Being of God. Pure Being can have no finitude or restriction within itself due to the simplicity of God, and therefore God is completely infinite.

²⁶⁰ "The Absolute is not only absolute subjectivity (*tvam, sat*), but it is also absolute objectivity (*tat, sat*) or substantiality. But this is possible only if the absolute subjectivity finds in itself absolute substantiality, if God is self-subsisting subjectivity, or, as a scholastic would say, pure form." *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

²⁶¹ "Śaṅkara's God," *New Review*, 6 (1937), p. 282.

²⁶² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 3.

Furthermore, the Being of God is already fully manifested, and any movement from implication to explication in God is unnecessary. There is never any motivation for change or transformation within the nature of God; God is Immutability itself. As the self-existent Aware One, by Himself and for Himself, God is absolute Selfness. Johanns lastly described Śaṅkara's God as completely independent and without relations. God is not dependent upon anything, nor is His essence limited by relations with any entity; Śaṅkara considers relatedness an aspect of dependence and limitation. God's claim to absolute Being cannot be restricted or diluted by the presence of, or interaction with another being. Even the relation of Being to Awareness is transcended in the simple Absoluteness of God. Johanns put it this way: "God is His own substrate and thus by Himself; His own form and thus for Himself; the identity of both, and thus in Himself. God therefore can never become the form of some deeper substrate nor the substrate of some other form, were it even the world."²⁶³ God is utterly transcendent and unrelated. The complete independence of God is a doctrine that Śaṅkara is willing to protect at all costs.

God's identity as pure Being and perfect Awareness rules out participation with other entities, since such an Absoluteness transcends and absorbs all other finite substrates and forms. The only Being is the self-sufficient, independent God who is complete in Himself. Johanns provided a succinct description of the *advaitic* God:

God, for Śaṅkara, is the Absolute Self, and His nature is throughout selfness and nothing else. We may call God being. But God is being itself or the self of being. He is by Himself, for Himself, and thus perfect selfness and interiority of being. Moreover, as absolute form or subjectivity that finds in itself its absolute objectivity, God cannot be anything but self-sufficiency or bliss (*ānanda*). Being, consciousness and bliss are but three aspects of the absolute selfness which is nothing else than itself.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 3. For Johanns, Śaṅkara's God is complete in His unrelated transcendency. Johanns summarized Śaṅkara in this way: "What is God? Abstract from God all His world-attributes, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His all-pervasiveness: in one word, His being a participial God, - and what remains? Pure Being and Awareness, or pure Awareness that is its own Being, the absolute Light of Spirituality." *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 24.

²⁶⁴ *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

b. The World

The identity of God as pure Being which is unrelated to finitude and which cannot be the substrate for some other form naturally raises the question of the relation of the world to the divine in Śaṅkara's metaphysics. Johanns stressed in his explication of the *advaitic* position that for Śaṅkara the doctrine of the complete independence of God was of utmost importance. Johanns noted that "for this great thinker, the truth that God exists of Himself, is but Himself, without relation to anything that is not Himself, was central and paramount."²⁶⁵ Throughout his writings, Śaṅkara is determined to establish the utter independence of God through all the traditional *pramāṇas*;²⁶⁶ he clings tenaciously to this fundamental truth despite the extreme metaphysical position which he believes such an uncompromising affirmation entails. Johanns explained that "Śaṅkara is so convinced of the independence of God that he will sacrifice to that doctrine the existence of the changing world which we all touch and see."²⁶⁷ Again, he remarked that "to keep the pearl of God's self-subsisting completeness, Śaṅkara was ready to sacrifice all the other good things: the reality of the world, the knowability of God from the world, or what is the same, the knowability of God from mere reason."²⁶⁸

In order to make clear why Śaṅkara feels compelled to deny the reality of the world to safeguard God's independence, Johanns drew attention to the teaching preserved in the Scriptures that God, in the process of world-production, must be not only the efficient but also the material cause of the world. In other words, causality necessarily implies the self-evolution of the first cause.²⁶⁹ The agent of causality must pass into the effect in some fashion, whether completely or incompletely. The resulting implication is clear: "God has evolved the world either from His whole substance or from a part of that substance."²⁷⁰ For Śaṅkara, this implication impinges upon his most cherished belief in God's independence. For if God had

²⁶⁵ *Light of the East*, 1 (December, 1922), p. 3.

²⁶⁶ *Pramāṇas* in the Hindu tradition were sources of religious authority, such as *śruti* (Scripture), *anubhava* (experience), and *yukti* (reason).

²⁶⁷ *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 3.

²⁶⁸ *Light of the East*, 1 (December, 1922), p. 3.

²⁶⁹ For instance, Johanns quoted *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* III,12,6: "One foot of Him has become the universe, while the other three feet remained unaffected." *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 4.

evolved the world from His whole substance, which is essentially pantheism, then the self-subsistence of God was tainted; God in his unmanifested state would be only a “potential God whom the world actualizes, a golden germ from which a greater reality is born.”²⁷¹ God would need to pass into the world in a manifested state in order to reach completeness in Himself. Such a notion of the Absolute was repulsive to Śaṅkara. Similarly, if God had passed into the world only partially, then God’s simplicity is denied. Division would be introduced within the Absolute, and such a “composite” God could not be viewed as completely independent. This option was also unappealing for Śaṅkara. Therefore, Śaṅkara rejects both notions that God could have either completely or incompletely passed into the world. Johanns pointed out that, for Śaṅkara, God remains ever within Himself, His own substance never departing from Himself. Interpreting Śaṅkara, Johanns explained that “the Supreme does not undergo changes, cannot undergo them. There is no *pariṇāma*, no real evolution of *Brahman* possible, but only a *vivarta*, the illusion of an evolution.” God remains completely unaffected, despite all appearances of change or appearances of the existence of a transitory world.²⁷²

Although the *Vedas* declared that God was the material cause of the world, Śaṅkara detects an inherent contradiction in the notion of the self-evolution of a God who is entirely independent and complete in Himself. The question then arises how Śaṅkara chooses to handle those texts in the *śruti* which spoke of God as the material cause of the universe. Johanns described how he adopts a particular hermeneutical procedure whereby only those texts which affirm the absolute independence of God are taken literally. The other texts which seem to compromise this fundamental doctrine are treated as having only a “symbolic” or preparatory value, orienting the seeker to the final reality of the unrelated God. Johanns explained:

Some *Upaniṣads* seemed to teach that God evolves Himself into the world; some of the *Brahma-Sūtras* seem also to imply this view. But Śaṅkara declared that the texts which set forth a dependent God are no

²⁷¹ *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 4.

²⁷² *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 3. Johanns cited the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II,1,27 in his discussion of Śaṅkara’s hesitation to affirm that God passes into the universe completely or incompletely. Śaṅkara writes: “That the entire *Brahman* undergoes change, by no means follows from our doctrine... If it be said that it changes partly and persists partly, a break is effected in its nature, and from that it follows that it consists of parts.” *The Vedānta-sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya, Part I*, tr. G. Thibaut, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890, p. 350-351.

final doctrines, but only anthropomorphic representations of the Absolute, who by definition dwells beyond representations. These texts feed pious minds as substitutes for inaccessible truth and thus materially acquaint them with God and prepare them for the final intuition. In themselves, taken apart from the whole *Upaniṣadic* context, they are misrepresentations.²⁷³

The texts which portray God as the material cause of His effect, the world, cannot be affirmed as being ultimately true. Śaṅkara therefore assigns these texts to an inferior position beneath the higher *Upaniṣadic* texts which speak of God as the Absolute who is beyond all relations and predication (*neti, neti*). These higher *Upaniṣadic* texts become the controlling grid through which Śaṅkara derives his philosophy of the Absolute. The Scriptures which speak of God as World-Spirit or as material cause are mere teaching devices that are meant to lead beyond themselves into the higher *Upaniṣadic* truth that God “ensouls nothing and is related to nothing- *neti, neti*; it is independent.”²⁷⁴ Once more, Johanns reasserted Śaṅkara’s fear in taking such preparatory texts at face value: “God, if He causes, ceases to be independent and unrelated. For a material cause passes into the effect and thus is either actualized or divided. If the world existed, God had lost His independence, His self-existence. This Śaṅkara refused to admit to be possible. He consequently denied the reality and even the possibility of the world.”²⁷⁵

A corollary to the idea that the world lacks reality in the sphere of being is the belief that the world cannot always be trusted to impart correct knowledge about God. The ontological and epistemic connection of God with the world is thus completely severed in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. In traditional Hindu thought, the world reveals a self-evolving God; but to Śaṅkara such a “revelation” is an affront to the truth of the self-subsisting, independent Absolute. The world may reveal a dependent, related (*saguṇa*) God who is intimately connected with the phenomenal realm, but this “revelation” is really a veil which deceitfully obscures the actual nature of God. Johanns imagined the thinking of Śaṅkara went something like this:

How can God- as the world told Śaṅkara- draw, spiderlike, the web of finitude out of His own utterly self-contained substance? How again can the Absolute Self be in reality an All-Self, a Universal Self; the utterly intangible be in reality an All-Soul linked up with unconscious

²⁷³ *Light of the East*, 1 (March, 1923), p. 3.

²⁷⁴ *Light of the East*, 1 (January, 1923), p. 4.

²⁷⁵ *Light of the East*, 1 (November, 1922), p. 4.

Nature or Matter; the Fully Spiritual be connected with an all-Body?
How, finally, can this Supreme Self, by splitting up the Universal
Body, reveal Itself as split into a multitude of finite spirits and
souls.”²⁷⁶

These erroneous assumptions regarding the Absolute debase and taint the perfection of God. Any of these false ways of understanding God, whether as self-evolving, related, or unconscious, are dangerous. In the end, Śaṅkara feels that he has to declare that the world is ultimately (*paramārtha*) a lie and perpetrates false knowledge about God.

The notion that the world is a deception and constitutes false knowledge about God touches upon the doctrine of *māyā* that Śaṅkara develops. Anything which appears to participate in God external to Him is *māyā*. *Māyā* is essentially “the principle which makes the world and the soul appear as if they existed outside God, as His participations. *Māyā* would be the participability of God: and since participability in God is impossible, the divine participability is an illusion.”²⁷⁷ Johanns further described the nature of *māyā* in *advaitic* philosophy as “the principle which connects to God, as it were, an unreal world unreally correlated to Him. The omnipotence, the omniscience and the all-pervasiveness of God are illusions, and the existence of the world as evolved from, sustained by a personal God is an illusion.”²⁷⁸ There is ultimately no world, for “Śaṅkara is an acosmist.”²⁷⁹ Upon the absolute Simplicity of God, false notions are superimposed, whereby the Absolute is viewed improperly. This incorrect way of viewing God leads to the belief that the divine is connected in some way with a differentiated world of finitude. The form of externality and finitude is therefore superimposed upon the pure substratum of God, as the form of a snake is falsely superimposed upon the substratum of a rope. The

²⁷⁶ *Light of the East*, 1 (December, 1922), p. 3. Johanns noted that Śaṅkara addresses these misconceptions in *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II,1,14. Śaṅkara writes: “A number of Scriptural passages, by denying all modification of *Brahman*, teach it to be absolutely changeless... Moreover, while the cognition of the unity of *Brahman* is the instrument of final release, there is nothing to show that any independent result is connected with the view of *Brahman*, by undergoing a modification, passing over into the form of this world.” *The Vedānta-sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya, Part I*, tr. G. Thibaut, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890, p. 327.

²⁷⁷ *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 24.

²⁷⁸ *Light of the East*, 13 (December, 1934), p. 32.

²⁷⁹ “Hinduism,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 20.

appearance of individual souls and inanimate nature arises, and these illusory entities seem to have a reality all their own, albeit limited and outside of God. The illusory souls then begin to identify themselves with their bodies and mental functions. The soul imagines that it is separate from God and nature, though connected with them. Through the operations of *māyā*, finite forms such as the soul and the multitudinous entities of the world appear to have primacy, and thus God is veiled from the sight of the deceived. That which appears to be external deforms the purity of the Absolute. The external world is a plane of opposition between finite being and awareness. But God as infinite Identity transcends all dualities and restrictions. To the discerning, the appearance of a limited world of composition and division can be finally reduced to the Simple Being. For “in Being, all being that may appear with limits is contained, but without its limits.”²⁸⁰ To summarize this complex concept, Johanns stated that “*māyā* is the wrong superimposition of the laws of finiteness and externality on God. It is the principle that makes us see the one and the same Reality distributed into three reals, outside one another, and correlated with one another.”²⁸¹

Thus, Johanns understood Śaṅkara’s theoretical philosophy as depicting only one Reality who is the perfect unity of Being and Awareness. God is this self-sufficient Reality, and He is absolutely independent and unrelated. Śaṅkara denies any division or composition within Reality, and thus the appearance of a differentiated world where being and awareness are in opposition is false. All polarities and subject-object dichotomies of finite reality can be correctly identified as unwarranted superimpositions upon the absolute, infinite Being of God.

2. Practical philosophy

a. Liberation

Johanns asserted that Śaṅkara’s understanding of liberation is intimately connected with a removal of this incorrect way of viewing God that arises through the operations of *māyā*. The path toward liberation is the practical outworking of the theoretical philosophy previously discussed. The pursuit of liberation is the key that joins the theoretical philosophy to the practical philosophy of Śaṅkara. There was

²⁸⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 2.

²⁸¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 8.

one supreme truth elucidated in the *śruti* which would lead to a correct way of understanding reality. The great truth that is expounded in the *Upaniṣadic* texts which Śaṅkara so highly values is encapsulated in the declaration *Tat-tvam-asi* (“Thou art That”). For “according to Śaṅkara this great saying of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (VI, 8, 7, etc.) embodies all truth; we might almost say, is Truth itself. *Thou*, the individual subject, art *that*, the Absolute.”²⁸² Johanns asserted that this aphorism does not mean that the individual *person* is the Absolute, because God does not evolve into material bodies, nor does the Absolute diffuse itself in any way. The Absolute is not some kind of “universal soul,” for a universal soul would by definition ensoul a cosmic body, which contradicts Śaṅkara’s previous assertions about God. *Tat-tvam-asi* more precisely indicates that God is neither individual nor universal but is simply “pure subject.” And that which appears to be the individual is in reality the divine pure subject. Johanns drew out the implications of the *Tat-tvam-asi* statement:

How can the individual soul be one with the absolute intelligibility in act or the absolute form of the knowledge shining within itself? There is but one answer. By total absorption. The law of intelligibility makes us reduce all reality to God who contains all reality in the shape of absolute Reality. This reduction makes it clear that the world and the souls in their foundation are one with God by absolute identity...Our last end therefore consists in realizing by knowledge that we are absorbed in God and that we have never left this absorption to be distinct from God or to participate in His reality outside, so to say, of this reality.²⁸³

In truth, the soul does not need to be liberated, for it is none other than the “pure subject” of God. It is the false superimpositions and distorted ways of viewing reality that need to be cleared away by a correct understanding of the *Tat-tvam-asi* principle. The soul needs to understand and existentially realize that the world is absorbed in the absoluteness of God by way of complete identity. The link between the *Tat-tvam-asi* declaration and the removal of the misperceptions of *māyā* is described by Johanns in the following way:

But, as the man who mistakes the rope for the snake is delivered from his illusion by a friend that invites him to look more closely at reality, so the soul is delivered from *māyā* by Scripture through the proclamation of the *Tat-tvam-asi*. “Look, it is but a rope,” says the

²⁸² *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

²⁸³ *Light of the East*, 13 (December, 1934), p. 32.

friend to the deluded man. The *Tat-tvam-asi* is a similar exhortation. “Look at Reality,” it says, “Reality is only Light and this Light is neither embedded in a universal body nor in an individual body; it is but itself and this Self thou art.”²⁸⁴

Thus, liberation involves the removal of the misperceptions of *māyā* so that all false superimpositions over the pure subject are destroyed, and only God remains.

The experience of *Tat-tvam-asi* includes an awareness where subject and object disappear in “absolute self-being,” for God is “perfect self and perfect identity.”²⁸⁵ Johanns described this *advaitic* realization: “One must have the experience of what God is and be this experience. One must experience the identification proper to the *Tat-tvam-asi*, transcend the identification, and repose in the identity.”²⁸⁶ In keeping with the notion that the Absolute subject is identical with the Absolute object, there can be neither separate subject and object nor any kind of opposition arising from the antithesis of subject and object. There is only “indeterminate self-subsisting Form.”²⁸⁷ Essentially, there is no entanglement of souls in *saṃsāra*, no *karmic* stranglehold on the universe, as well as no ultimate release. No person is God, becomes God, or attains God-consciousness. God does not become, nor does He go out from Himself; He is only self-sufficiency and independence, beyond change. Rather, the assertion of *Tat-tvam-asi* “denies the universality and the individuality of the subject-object and clings to the mere indeterminate self-subsisting form... There is only the absolute identity of consciousness which is and self-subsists the absolute perfection of the *Sac-Cid-Ānanda*.”²⁸⁸ Only God, the pure subject, exists. And God is the Self that is absolute subjectivity and objectivity held together in complete unity in His undivided selfness. He is beyond any predication or human conception, for there is nothing with which to compare God. All analogies and attributions are inadequate and portray a

²⁸⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 14.

²⁸⁵ *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3. Johanns wrote, “Voyons les conditions d’une pareille intuition directe et immédiate de Dieu? Il faut le sujet contemplant, l’âme mystique et l’objet contemplé, Dieu comme absolue transparence indéterminée de spiritualité. Śaṅkara dit à bon droit que le sujet contemplant qui est fini, ne saurait pas se maintenir devant l’éblouissement infini de cette transparence absolue. Il pâlirait et s’évanouirait comme au matin, la lune devant l’envahissement du soleil levant.” *Etude Comparative de la Religion des Indes et de la Religion Chrétienne*, p. 28.

²⁸⁶ “Śaṅkara’s God,” *New Review*, 6 (1937), p. 283.

²⁸⁷ *Light of the East*, 1 (March, 1923), p. 3.

²⁸⁸ *Light of the East*, 1 (March, 1923), p. 3.

distortion of the divine if taken literally.²⁸⁹ The world of souls and matter is simply a series of false superimpositions upon the *Sac-Cid-Ānanda*, which reposes in absolute self-subsistence and simplicity. Johanns summarized Śaṅkara's view of the Absolute in this way:

There is only one definition of God- identically *Sac-Cid-Ānanda*, i.e., Being absolutely pure, Intelligence absolutely unmixed, Self-sufficiency absolutely complete. And there is only one doctrine about God which transcends *avidyā* (false subject) and *māyā* (false object): the doctrine of God's independence: God is of Himself, is nothing but His self, and could not without an impossible contradiction be anything but Himself, or be related to anything else.²⁹⁰

Liberation occurs when truth shines through and dispels the *avidyā* and *māyā* that cloud a true perception of reality. One's identity is non-dual with the pure subject that is the Absolute. The Scriptural teachings are meant to unlock this great mystery. Johanns commented, "It is well known that Śaṅkara makes of the experience or realization (*anubhava*) of the truth expressed by the *Tat-tvam-asi* the golden door that leads from bondage to release... The meaning of the *Tat-tvam-asi* is that God is perfect selfness and perfect identity. The experience of this meaning would consist in pure absolute awareness without subject and object, in self-being."²⁹¹

b. Freedom from Selfishness

If the journey toward liberation involves the intellectual and existential realization that the separateness of the world of selves and nature from God is an illusion, then there must be a process by which the soul is freed from its delusions. Śaṅkara's practical philosophy details the stages that the soul will typically move through in its spiritual development. Johanns noted that, for Śaṅkara, the deluded souls "are not all prepared to pass over at once into Truth itself, sacrificing at one stroke our world, ourself, our God with whom we want to enter into relations of fellowship. We may be ready to sacrifice our body for the sake of our soul. But are we ready to sacrifice our soul also?"²⁹² The soul must be weaned from its self-

²⁸⁹ *Light of the East*, 1 (June, 1923), p. 4.

²⁹⁰ *Light of the East*, 1 (April, 1923), p. 3.

²⁹¹ *Light of the East*, 1 (February, 1923), p. 3.

²⁹² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 16.

centered individuality by which it views all of reality with reference to itself. Selfishness is the great enemy in the spiritual quest, and this orientation which attempts to place the soul at the center of reality must be eradicated. The first step in the journey is the recognition that such a manner of living leads only to the buildup of bad *karma* and a painful round of rebirths. The individual will begin to obey the *Vedic* instruction and will practice the sacrifices and sacraments that accrue beneficial *karma*, hoping for success in the present life and a good rebirth. Johanns described this initial step: “At this stage we remain attached to worldly happiness, but we enlist divine help to gain it. We resort to sacrifice, to the faithful observance of the rules of caste and of the stages of life. In one word, we try to gain temporal favors from God by religious and social legalism.”²⁹³

But the soul soon becomes weary of life and its vain pleasures and realizes that the selfish accumulation of holy *karma* does not lead to liberation. Despite being elevated to higher stations in successive lives and even paradises, the individual cannot find lasting contentment. Abiding satisfaction remains elusive, and the ephemeral pleasures of world or paradise become hollow. A world-weariness arises in the person, and this outlook leads the soul to look beyond itself and its world for rest. Then the soul instinctively starts to practice its duties with an unselfish motivation and begins to be purified of attachment to the world. Johanns explained that “at this stage we are not told to become merely passive. On the contrary, we ought to act, but we should not aim through our acts for selfish satisfactions. Such a disposition, by and by, frees us from the bonds of selfishness and allows us to extend our aspirations beyond the world.”²⁹⁴ The soul is progressing along the path of the *karma-mārga*, but it is allowing itself to be purged of selfish motivations. And “when *karma* is practiced unselfishly, without aiming at pleasure, it is a pre-requisite for liberation.”²⁹⁵ It will take several lifetimes of internal purgation before the soul is sufficiently detached from the allurements of worldly concerns.

²⁹³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 17.

²⁹⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 18.

²⁹⁵ “Hinduism,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 20.

c. The Path of *Jñāna*

This process of purification of ego-driven desires and attachments leads the soul gradually to embrace the path of *jñāna*. The soul begins to see reality in a truer perspective and “begins to realize the true values; it is detached from all that is transitory and looks up to what is eternal.”²⁹⁶ Looking away from the world in detachment, it looks to the Absolute. Śaṅkara describes the various internal means of attachment to the Absolute. Complete trust is placed in the guru and the Scriptures, so that contemplation of the *Tat-tvam-asi* formula may yield fruitful results. An ascetic lifestyle is cultivated so that all pursuits, religious and worldly, are subordinated to the one desire for experiential realization of the Absolute. Meditation upon the Absolute is habitually practiced so that the spiritual exercise becomes natural and spontaneous. The sense-impressions are withdrawn from the multitude of objects that allure the attention and distract from God. They become concentrated upon a single focus, God-ward. Internal memories and impressions are suppressed, especially painful ones that cause the mind to become agitated. And so the intense desire for liberation is cultivated; this internal compulsion is what drives the individual to restrain the lusts of the body and the distractions of the mind. Johanns asserted, “Such is the preparation that Śaṅkara requires of a soul that intends to become one with Truth, and thus reach its last end. The preparation however does not achieve the result. What it achieves is wholesale attention to Truth... It is Truth itself that is the ultimate means and end of liberation. And Truth rises on its own account, in virtue of its eternal existence.”²⁹⁷ These internal means of preparation clear away the last remaining obstacles so that the soul can intuit Reality in the experience of *samādhi*.

Liberation involves cultivating an elevated consciousness. There are four different levels of consciousness in which the soul can participate. First, there is the experience of everyday life, where the senses are responding to objects in the external world. Then, there is the state of dreaming, where the sensory organs are not directly stimulated. This state is a deeper level of consciousness than the waking state. Third, deep sleep occurs when dreams cease; all objects that may be perceived by the mind or body vanish. The self is essentially in a condition of complete

²⁹⁶ *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 26.

²⁹⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 19.

isolation. Only the pure light of subjectivity illumines within. There is no consciousness of the world. The final state is that of *samādhi*, where the self completely disappears in the splendor of the Absolute Light. *Samādhi* “is a trance during which the soul feels itself drawn out of the world and out of its world-self, beyond even the personal God, into sheer Absoluteness. It is the absolute Repose and Quietude, the Silence of the summits, the transfiguration of Spirituality.”²⁹⁸ Once this great Realization has occurred, the individual is liberated, for illusion and misperception have vanished completely. The individual is dispassionate about living in the world, for knowledge has arisen which has burned away all the improper attachments.

Johanns summarized the final stage of spiritual development:

The soul concentrates its awareness on the great saying “thou art that,” i.e. Thou art one with God in absolute absorption, till at the end the divine light breaks forth, the light of absolute truth blotting out by its very appearance all that had made the soul believe in its distinction from God. This state is a mystical trance wherein the soul feels the light of its mind withdrawn from its illusory dispersion on the world and concentrated on one focus till it disappears in its own absoluteness and subsists as the absolute Selfness of intelligibility shining within itself with no outlet on any exteriority.²⁹⁹

The soul is then truly awakened. It lives as a *jīvan-mukta*, one who is liberated while still alive. The soul realizes that it is non-distinct from the pure subject which is God. The individual is not deceived by the world of *māyā* anymore. At death, the soul will enjoy supreme liberation, *paramamukti*, where it subsists in absolute Selfness as *Sac-Cid-Ānanda*.

²⁹⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 20.

²⁹⁹ *Light of the East*, 13 (December, 1934), p. 33. Johanns stated that “Śaṅkara ne serait pas le mystique qu’il est, s’il ne demandait pas l’intuition de Dieu comme un être en soi qui est sa propre évidence et sa propre auto-suffisance. Il faut le *samādhi*, l’intuition mystique, l’extase. Śaṅkara est un mystique du genre des ontologistes. Ils nous disent que nous voyons Dieu directement par la lumière spirituelle mais obscurément. L’idéal serait donc d’écarter de plus en plus cette obscurité pour voir Dieu tel qu’il est. Śaṅkara, dans son extase voit tomber le voile de la finitude. La lumière intérieure se fait alors si brillante que, de son éblouissement, il efface les ténèbres de la finitude et de ses corrélations avec Dieu, qu’il éblouit le sujet contemplant et l’objet contemplé comme une dernière ombre du rêve; il apparaît dans toute sa pureté, comme le soleil levant apparaît dans toute sa clarté lumineuse, en dissipant les brouillards du matin. Alors, c’est la libération. Après l’extase, les ombres peuvent revenir. Mais on n’est pas tourmenté par un rêve, si on sait que c’est un rêve. On est libéré.” *Le Caractère Chrétien et la Mystique Indienne*, p. 24.

The quest for liberation is essentially a journey toward self-understanding. The individual must “look itself away into God.”³⁰⁰ All of the incorrect identifications that it makes must be discarded. The self is not to be identified with a coarse body, which soon disintegrates at death. Neither is the self to be identified with the subtle body that transmigrates and pays off *karmic* debts through successive lifetimes. This subtle body will be dissipated when liberation arises. The self is not the physical sensations or psychological states that alter with each passing moment. These are unstable and do not lead to the lasting quietude that characterizes *samādhi*. Neither is the soul to be identified as a doer of actions, such as loving, killing, or sacrificing, for actions bind the individual in the cycle of *saṃsāra*. After dis-identifying itself with ephemeral entities, the soul can find its identity in God. To consider itself as an independent, external entity and to confuse itself with bodily activities and mental processes is sheer illusion. Johanns noted that for Śāṅkara, “the soul does not know, nor feel, nor act. It does not know, for it is Knowledge itself; it does not feel, for it is Repose itself; and it does not act, for it is Actuality itself. In other words, the soul is spiritual self-awareness, spiritual self-reality, and spiritual self-repose.”³⁰¹

In the final analysis, the doctrine to which Śāṅkara gives full validity is expressed in the great *Tat-tvam-asi* statement. Johanns expounded upon this final *advaitic* truth:

This means that the absolute subject or absolute form is identical with the absolute object. It denies the universality and the individuality of the subject-object and clings to the mere indeterminate self-subsisting Form. Once this truth is realized- and, if it is truth, it is always realized, never forgotten, never recovered- all opposition is mere empty dream, all *karma* a mere ridiculous nightmare. By the reconciliation or rather in virtue of the manifest non-existence of the antithesis of subject and object all basis of opposition is clearly excluded. There is only the absolute identity of consciousness which is and self-subsists the absolute perfection of the *Sac-Cid-Ānanda*.³⁰²

Thus, Johanns understood the practical philosophy of Śāṅkara as attempting to move the individual away from a self-centered perspective into a type of consciousness which correctly intuits that the inner self is none other than the pure

³⁰⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 32.

³⁰¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 13.

³⁰² *Light of the East*, 1 (March, 1923), p. 3.

subject of God, who is the perfect union of Being and Consciousness. Once this intuition is cultivated, the illusions and attachments of a world of *māyā* are left behind for the bliss of infinite self-repose.

B. Contributions of Śaṅkara to the Synthesis

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. Definition of God

In the synthesis which Johanns tried to fashion, Śaṅkara occupies a key position. Śaṅkara's system of metaphysics reduces all of the world's reality to God as its ultimate Principle. By focusing so sharply on the complete transcendence and absoluteness of God, Śaṅkara's philosophy is particularly lucid in portraying God as He is in Himself. Johanns was laudatory of Śaṅkara's insights into God's lofty nature, for this Hindu philosopher "reached this highest intuition in spite of a presupposition that seemed to make it impossible, the presupposition of immanent creation."³⁰³ Immanent creation refers to the notion of God as the material cause of the world. Śaṅkara openly challenges prevalent notions current in Indian thought, such as immanent creation, so that the independence of God is not compromised.

For Johanns, Śaṅkara provides the most appropriate definition of God, namely the designation of God as "the absolute That, or Being, and the absolute What or the absolute intelligibility in act" as well as the identification of God as "the absolute identity of the That and the What or the absolute Intelligence subsisting in itself." This description of God, which Johanns deemed "excellent" and which has been "set forth in all its purity" by Śaṅkara, may readily serve as the "foundation stone of our philosophical edifice."³⁰⁴ The model of God as self-subsistent

³⁰³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 21.

³⁰⁴ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 43. Johanns asserted: "Pure spiritualité, absolue transparence, absolue non-relativité, il nous faut ajouter encore absolue simplicité: aucune composition interne ou externe en cet éther spirituel plein de son propre éclat et de sa propre irradiation. ... Toutes ces caractéristiques montrent que Dieu est auto-suffisance. Aucune déficience du côté de la connaissance, aucune déficience du côté de l'être et nulle déficience du côté de l'union des deux, puisque la connaissance est la forme de Dieu et que l'être désigne la subsistance de cette forme dans sa propre luminosité. Śaṅkara appelle béatitude cette auto-suffisance, et de fait la béatitude en est la marque." *L'Advaitism*, p. 17.

intelligence is related to the notion of the divine as *saccidānanda*,³⁰⁵ and Śaṅkara's reflections upon God as self-subsistent awareness are profoundly rich and latent with much theological potential. The depiction of God as the unity of being, consciousness, and bliss is the best characterization of the divine available for human meditation. There can be no higher conception of God, according to Johannis, than the notion of the divine as the self-sufficient Absolute. Any sustained examination of reality will reveal that God as *saccidānanda* is the foundation of everything. For example, in an interesting analysis of all human acts of knowledge, Johannis commented that such acts of judgment presuppose this particular conception of God:

For in all our judgments we ascribe a predicate taken from the sphere of subjectivity or knowledge to a subject from the sphere of objectivity or being, we identify a thing with an idea. But these are but so many steps or efforts to the explication of the absolute judgment, implicit in our mind from the first, by which the whole sphere of subjectivity or knowledge is identified with the whole sphere of objectivity or being: all our individual judgments presuppose, anticipate the affirmation that Being as such is Thought as such, that God, the ideal of our mind is identically Thinking and Being self-subsistent. Not a substratum with attributes but identically *saccidānanda*.³⁰⁶

Human acts of knowledge try to discern a unity between two terms, whereby a subject is linked with a predicate, or a mode is identified with a substratum. Although the linguistic relation never exceeds that of inherence and does not indicate complete identity, the finite human mind is striving in such acts for the perfection of absolute unity which can only be found in the realm of the infinite *saccidānanda*.

Johannis noted that Śaṅkara's most stunning insight is that God is complete in Himself, needing no other entity for support or explanation. That which is truly independent in an absolute sense subsists in itself. A perfect Being must subsist in itself. Since Śaṅkara gives a precise explanation of God as a self-subsistent Being, his philosophy can be said to resemble closely the fundamental conception of Thomism regarding God. Johannis explained:

³⁰⁵ For the remainder of the thesis, *Sac-Cid-Ānanda* will be written as *saccidānanda*, and *Tat-tvam-asi* will be written as *tattvamasi*.

³⁰⁶ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4. See *Light of the East*, 2 (May, 1923), p. 4 for further elaboration of the ideal which the mind moves toward in its acquisition of knowledge. Johannis commented: "If God is not, or is not *sat* and *cit*, the whole movement of our mind is aimless, it is wrong at its base, in its progress and at its end; its measure of truth is a false measure and its ideal is a chimera." *Light of the East*, 1 (May, 1923), p. 4.

“Is it right then to call God a form that is self-subsistent or rather the self-subsistent Form? Yes, and on this point again Śāṅkara and Saint Thomas agree. Does not Saint Thomas show that, the more a being becomes perfect, the more also its form becomes perfect and even tends to subsist in itself?...And what is God if not the absolute Spirituality or the absolute Form that subsists in itself? Śāṅkara therefore has admirably understood what Spirituality means and how it has to be described and illustrated.”³⁰⁷

Johanns also concurred that God is blissful self-repose; His being and awareness are so pure that God needs no support outside Himself. He is the perfect union of objectivity and subjectivity. This is the most adequate human description of divine self-sufficiency. Commenting further upon the relation of God’s nature as *saccidānanda* to God’s identity as the foundation of the absolute judgment (*tattvamasi*), Johanns provided a summation:

The three attributes- *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*- are identical with the terms of the absolute judgment *tattvamasi* and its copula. *Sat* is identical with *tat*: the absolute implication of Being in which, as the predicate requires, knowledge or explicitation is still in the state of implication. *Cit* coincides with *tvam*, the absolute implication of Being, or implicit consciousness. *Ānanda* corresponds to the copula *asi*, for the copula signifies that the absolute explicitation of knowledge is identical with its absolute complement, the absolute knowable, and *vice versa*. Every deficiency is thus excluded from the Absolute. It is its own complement and thus Self-Sufficiency. And, as the Absolute is posited as Self-Consciousness itself, we rightly call it Self-Satisfaction or *ānandam*. The absolute judgment is convertible, *tattvam-asi* or *tvam-tat-asi*: hence it signifies the absolute process by which being finds its complement in knowledge and reciprocally knowledge in being,... the bliss of absolute spiritual activity.³⁰⁸

The ultimate significance of the *tattvamasi* and the *saccidānanda* formulas is that they establish God as a unity of utter simplicity, and then they show that God is the unity of Being and Knowledge. The formulas are expressing the same reality from different angles.

Not only does Śāṅkara’s conception and definition of the divine establish God’s identity as the most perfect and complete Being, but it also allows for an element of linguistic self-criticism in regard to predications of the divine. The way in which most humans conceive of God, as an infinite substance replete with a

³⁰⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 26.

³⁰⁸ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4.

multitude of attributes, is recognized by Śaṅkara to be an analogous conception of the divine which is based upon invalid comparisons with the finite realm. In reality, that which is perceived by individuals as displaying a host of divine attributes is merely the simple, unified essence of God. Johanns therefore agreed that “the conception of *Brahman* as transcending the relation of substance and attribute is ultimate and must be resorted to in order to correct analogous conceptions.”³⁰⁹ Śaṅkara asserts that the multiple attributes are in God in the form of absolute Unity; for “God is perfect identity with His attributes, *is* the attributes and *has* them *not*.”³¹⁰ Since Śaṅkara has put forth an understanding of God as self-subsistent Awareness, he is careful to nuance his position so that the utter simplicity of God is not compromised. For qualifying God as “self-subsistent” and as “awareness” runs the risk of viewing God as possessing many attributes, which would introduce multiplicity into the absolute Unity. Johanns described the “*negativa theologia*” of Śaṅkara:

For God is absolute Identity and Self-ness, in which Awareness and self-subsistence are contained but without any distinction. But we cannot express this identity. If we call it mere identity, we may mean a mere abstraction and if we call it an identity of Being and Awareness we again set it forth by analysis and synthesis. It is obvious then that we cannot name God and define Him.³¹¹

In the same manner, God cannot be reduced simply to unified Being, which is the most fundamental feature that characterizes Him. This reduction would be an unwarranted limitation imposed upon God. Yet God surely is Being, for “His ultimate expression absorbs Being.” As Saint Thomas would also affirm, Śaṅkara seems to indicate that God is *nec ens, nec non-ens, sed super-ens*. God’s manner of Being is quite beyond the analogical expressions that humans use to speak of the That-ness of God. Johanns spoke of Śaṅkara’s apophatic theology in this way: “In

³⁰⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 26.

³¹⁰ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4. Emphasis by Johanns. According to Johanns, “Ces trois attributs d’être de connaissance et de béatitude infinies, ne sont pas des attributs qui se distinguent les uns des autres et déterminent Dieu mais ils désignent une chose, une infiniment simple et infiniment indéterminé. Tenant compte de ce fait disons donc que Dieu est l’être qui est sa propre évidence et sa propre auto-suffisance et béatitude que notre expression ne rend pas encore justice à la simplicité indéterminée de Dieu, elle la suggère pourtant et peut suffire pour la pratique.” *La Mystique Indienne et Chrétienne*, p. 1.

³¹¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 27.

one word, if we want to pronounce God as He pronounces Himself, in the one subsistent Word which He is, we can only point to Him as at an infinite distance and keep silent. *Brahman* is silence.”³¹² For Johanns, Śaṅkara has successfully communicated the necessity of the *via transcendentiae* with his constant reminder that “to know God as He is, we have to transcend the form of judgment which is natural to us and confess that God is not only good, nor only good infinitely and without admixture of imperfection, but that God, although we conceive Him as possessing goodness, etc., is really Goodness itself, identically and inseparably.”³¹³

b. God and the World

Among the *Vedāntic* masters, Śaṅkara’s understanding of God alone protects the absoluteness of God, according to Johanns. The other systems taint the absoluteness of the divine by associating the world in an inappropriate manner with God. Johanns made this assertion regarding Sankara’s vision of God’s absoluteness:

We say that all philosophy which does not build on this absoluteness is incomplete and hence we maintain that all other *Vedāntic* systems ought to be recast according to the truth which Śaṅkara considers as the only truth. Śaṅkara has proved with a vengeance that the world is not by itself and for itself.³¹⁴

Johanns’ presentation of Śaṅkara’s contributions to the synthesis when dealing with the metaphysical relation of God to the world drew attention to a few key points. First, the world does not have its own being. It does not have an independent *sat, cit,* or *ānanda* that it can claim for itself. Only God has this sort of existence. Second, the finite world (and especially the world pictured in the Hindu tradition), when it mimics an independence of its own, is quite simply unreal and a great deception if viewed from the perspective of truth. To those who are wise, the feigned “independence” of finite being is absorbed into the intensity of God’s infinite Being. When Johanns, following Śaṅkara, spoke of the “unreality” of the finite world or of its ultimate “identity” with God, he was describing in varying ways the ontological truth that the world is not self-subsistent. The world which Johanns dismissed as false and which he reduced to God’s being is a world which claims self-subsistence

³¹² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 27.

³¹³ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4.

³¹⁴ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 43.

and absoluteness for itself. Most of Johanns' discussion of Śaṅkara on this issue of the relation of God to the world sought to draw out these essential truths.

Śaṅkara's way of addressing the issue of God's unrelatedness to the finite world is eminently profound and sublime in Johanns' opinion. Śaṅkara does not expound a pessimistic doctrine whereby God is infinitely removed from the world in a state of sheer transcendency. Rather, the "reality" which the world claims for itself is absorbed in the Reality of God in an absolute way. The world's "own-being" is so completely identified with God that it has passed over into utter absorption. This is the most profound relation possible. The reason that God is unrelated to the world is that the world does not possess an independent reality that may be externally related to the Reality of God. Rather, God contains everything that appears to have an independent finite form in the infinite form of Himself. Johanns explained:

This is one of Śaṅkara's most sublime doctrines. In the world, Being and Awareness appear, but in a finite form. Lift these Being and Awareness from their plane of finitude, abstract from them their relation and exteriority to one another and to their foundation, conceive of them in the form of absolute Simplicity and Transcendancy and you will find out that God is Reality and that in God all that appears in the world is one with this Reality.³¹⁵

Thus, the complete perfection of God is such that He contains all appearances of self-subsistent, finite reality within His absolute Reality in the manner of utter identity. The world has lost itself within the Reality of God; its feigned independence has vanished. Śaṅkara's zeal to protect God's independence precludes the possibility of his affirming a self-subsistent world. Johanns noted that "if the world were true by an independent actualization or 'realization,' the world would surely be an illusion, for such a world would deny the independence of God... If the world be independent from God, it is unrelated to God and thus an absolute world."³¹⁶ Thus, the world cannot exist as an independent world, but it can only be said to exist in an absolute sense "in the way of God." Johanns immediately asked a difficult question for the purpose of clarification:

But how can the world be in such an absolute, divine way? We know what the world is. It is in a way quite different from the way in which God is. In God Being and Knowledge are one; in the world the sphere

³¹⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 25.

³¹⁶ *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 4.

of being is opposed to the sphere of knowledge. In God Being and Knowledge are identical terms and coincide in unrelated unity; in the world being and knowledge are antagonistic terms, and are related by a unity of opposition. Again, in God the unity of Being and Knowledge results in absolute plenitude and Bliss. In the world the opposition of being and knowledge results in pain and the shortcomings of *saṃsāra*. Hence the world, although it represents God, --it is, like God, being and knowledge and their interrelation-- misrepresents Him totally.³¹⁷

If the world is so different from God and misrepresents Him, what is its ontological status? Śaṅkara had no difficulty declaring that this finite world which appears as self-subsistent could not be said to exist in any ultimate sense, for its only reality is found in God. But by mimicking an absoluteness, an opposition of knowledge and being is produced in the world, leading to the horrors of *saṃsāra*. In fact, the world exists, from the perspective of absolute being, only “in God’s way of being- as infinite and spiritual, without any opposition or limitation...God transcends the world but by including its reality in an infinite way.”³¹⁸

Śaṅkara saw clearly that the transcendence of God does not mean that God is “in an infinite way what the world is in a finite way.” For it is misleading to think that the world’s reality is of a comparable quality to God’s. The infinite Reality of God’s Being renders all of the world’s feigned absolute reality as simple unreality. Johanns wrote, “When there is question of what the world is *by itself, in itself, and for itself*, the answer must always be that it is nothing, thorough unreality.”³¹⁹ When Johanns, inspired by Śaṅkara, spoke of the unreality of the world, he was drawing attention to the fact that the world has no reality of its own. It does not exist in this ultimate sense. The world-appearance is related to God, in the way of complete absorption, but in no way is God related to the finite-unreality of a world which mimics self-subsistence. Śaṅkara understood this aspect of God’s unrelatedness better than the other *Vedāntic* philosophers. Johanns asserted about the “independent” finite world: “This world is unreal and yet acts as if it were real. It is by essence a contradiction and yet a fact as long as it lasts...The world is related to God as an unreality that behaves as if it were real: that whereas God is not related to

³¹⁷ *Light of the East*, 3 (January, 1925), p. 4.

³¹⁸ *Light of the East*, 3 (January, 1925), p. 4.

³¹⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 22. Emphasis mine.

the world, neither to its reality nor to its unreality, the world is related to God in spite of its being unreal.”³²⁰

And so Śaṅkara condemns the finite world as an illusion, an unreality. To understand Śaṅkara’s firm stance on these matters, it is essential to grasp that the finite world in the Hindu tradition is governed by the law of *karma*, which allows the world to function independently according to its own built-in system of providence. Certain Scriptural passages in the tradition also envisioned the world as the result of an inner modification of God. Śaṅkara dismisses this as “an impossible world, and if it did exist, we would have to say that ignorance and illusion are its principles.” He dismissed “the false world that he knew to the realm of sheer nothingness. For nothingness it is, since it disappears like mist at the arising of the absolute Sun.”³²¹ For Johanns, it is an *absolute* world that offends Śaṅkara; his reasons for dismissing this sort of world are theological. The traditional Hindu conception impugned God’s lofty character. And thus, “Śaṅkara declares the world to be an illusion, but the world which he thus eliminates from reality is the world of *karma*, the world that would negate the independence of God and thus destroy the first reality. That world, says Śaṅkara, is a world that exists nowhere, but in the wrong belief in its existence.”³²² From the vantage point of the wise, the finite world, ruled by its own *karma*, is not an effect of God, and its supposed “reality” adds nothing to God. Śaṅkara, with his philosophy, seeks to clear away such misconceptions in the Indian tradition regarding the status of the world:

Conceived as evolved from God by *pariṇāma*, the world revealed a related God, a God who has a body and with this body moves from *kalpa* to *kalpa* according to the alternating rhythm of evolution and involution, it revealed God as He is not, the unrelated under the form of relation. Śaṅkara in his *parā vidyā* did away with this error. He sundered the relation and there remained a God that has no body and no relation, but is wholly spiritual and independent. No doubt Śaṅkara did thus away with the God of religion also, but this was the God of religion taught in the Epics and the *Pūrānas*, the God described as He is not. Śaṅkara left intact the God of metaphysical insight and concentration, the God that is neither dependent on the

³²⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 22-23.

³²¹ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 44.

³²² *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 5.

world nor related to the world, the God that contains the world in His own way.³²³

The *advaitic* notion, which Johanns readily endorsed, that the material and finite world cannot inhere within God as a modality is due to Śāṅkara's conception of God as absolute Completeness and Actuality which excludes limitation or lack of perfection. The world cannot be an immanent effect of a divine material cause, for then its status would be that of a divine mode. And introducing divine modes within the essence of God makes God a composite Being, no longer simple and unified. For "if God contains the world in His own divine way, neither the possible nor the real world can be a mode of God, since God would have to change in order to produce the world as an intrinsic reality existing in a different way. The world modality cannot therefore subsist in God."³²⁴ The principle that Śāṅkara applies to the issue of multiple attributes inhering in the divine essence is much the same as the one that he applies to the notion of multiple modes inhering in God. In the same way that God's possession of attributes would make Him internally composite, His possession of modes would make Him externally composite. Johanns remarked that "the contents of the divine attributes and the divine modes are in God, but not in the form of attributes or modalities. These forms belong to our mind, they constitute its finitude. We must exclude them from God, from the infinite way in which He is and knows Himself."³²⁵ As far as an absolute ontological ground is concerned, the relation between God and the world of finiteness goes far beyond that of substratum to mode and passes over into identity. And thus Johanns lauded Śāṅkara's refusal to taint the inner being of God with improper associations with finiteness. Śāṅkara, considering the *pariṇāma* doctrine, feels compelled to relegate such a world to unreality. Johanns affirmed: "The world becomes a self-contradiction, if we consider it as absolute, its reality being unconceivable without its essential relation to God. Śāṅkara asked the world to reveal itself as God or as divine, and the world gave the true answer: 'In that case I am no longer.'"³²⁶ The true identity of the world, as it is in itself, becomes clear when it vanishes before the sheer intensity of the Being of God.

³²³ *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 5.

³²⁴ *Light of the East*, 3 (June, 1925), p. 5.

³²⁵ *Light of the East*, 3 (January, 1925), p. 5.

³²⁶ *Light of the East*, 3 (February, 1925), p. 3.

The *advaitic* metaphysics of Śaṅkara struck Johanns as a grand view of the divine in its aseity. Śaṅkara's system of thought is both penetrating and profound. Johanns summarized the strength of Śaṅkara's theoretical philosophy in this way:

Śaṅkara therefore admirably describes God as He is in Himself and as the foundation of all possibility. Our human way of describing God is to represent Him as a substance that has attributes; but Śaṅkara has seen that God is absolute selfness and identity; that He is indeed a substance but a substance identical with its attributes. For *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* are but aspects in the absolute substratum with which they are identical. And the modality of God which consists in His containing the reality of all the possible in His own divine way is again identical with substance and attributes. We find in Śaṅkara the fundamental doctrine of a true philosophy: God is transcendent and yet, as such, the foundation of all the possible.³²⁷

2. Practical Philosophy

a. Loving God for His own Sake

Perhaps the most striking feature of Śaṅkara's practical philosophy, according to Johanns, is the recognition that God is to be loved for His own sake.³²⁸ Śaṅkara's practical philosophy is very helpful in highlighting this recognition. This acknowledgment involves cultivating a mental disposition where one is able to see oneself only with reference to God. What is needed is to "look ourselves away into God;" the individual must break the habitual pattern of living as if "the finite has a value in itself."³²⁹ God is the absolute ground of reality, and a presumed personal reality is not in fact one's own possession, even in a relative way. The individual must acknowledge that its reality is ultimately referable to God's reality, and to aid this realization it must consciously see its reality mystically absorbed into God's. Johanns admitted Śaṅkara's astuteness in observing that the continual danger for humans is that "we are inclined to love our individuality and to esteem it as if it were the ideal. If we do that, we refer ourselves to ourselves, as if we were the absolute; we divinise ourselves and fall into self-idolatry. Besides we try to impose our

³²⁷ *Light of the East*, 5 (January, 1927), p. 5.

³²⁸ Johanns asserted, "Je dis que Śaṅkara prescrit un abandon total à Dieu, lequel inclut l'amour de Dieu pour lui-même et l'amour de toutes les autres choses pour lui, un amour d'absolue donation de soi. Prouvons le en exposant les éléments constitutifs de la *via purificativa*." *L'Advaitism*, p. 12.

³²⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 32.

absoluteness on others. The selfish man does not only refer himself to himself, but he refers the world and even God to himself.”³³⁰ In contrast, when an individual consents to the Absolute Unity by giving up false notions of a personal finite reality that it can call its own-being, that person may then repose in perfect identity with Reality. Such a resting in the Being of God is mystical and existential; although descriptive language may not be able to capture perfectly this type of personal repose within Absoluteness, the individual senses intuitively that this resting is entirely proper within the ontological status of Reality. The individual is conforming ontologically and epistemically with the way that things truly *are*. Johanns expanded upon Śaṅkara’s wisdom in referring our individual reality to God’s:

Śaṅkara is right when he refers our self to that of God. He really proposes to us a love of God for God’s sake. He has admirably shown that even in loving God, apart from our own individual self-interest, we do not go against self but we love ourselves in our own absolute self-transfiguration, and he was not abashed at all at the fact that the love of God for His own sake should entail the sacrifice of ourselves and the world without any compensation whatsoever. He therefore exhorts us to love God for His own sake, accepting it as a consequence of the glory of God that we have to disappear together with our world, that God may appear in His absolute transcendency and self-sufficient isolation... We admit with Śaṅkara that God deserves such a sacrifice.³³¹

This reduction of all reality to God as its ultimate principle allows the person to truly grasp that all being is grounded in God’s Being. Therefore, the individual may truly rest upon its source, sensing that its very being as well as the world’s very reality are ultimately God’s. Johanns argued, “Hence, if we like to repose on our inmost foundation, on the Self by whom in whom and for whom we are, we must rest in God and delight in God, we must know God as He is in Himself, delight in Him as He is in Himself, abide in Him as He is in Himself. If the ray could become conscious of the sun, would it not seek the sun as its own truest self?”³³² Thus, a person’s primary obligation is to attain the correct knowledge of the nature of reality and to existentially realize this knowledge. As Johanns put it: “this obligation is ultimately based on an implicit appreciation of God for His own sake and an implicit

³³⁰ *Light of the East*, 4 (November, 1925), p. 4.

³³¹ *Light of the East*, 4 (December, 1925), p. 5.

³³² *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 6.

recognition of His absolute right to be Reality itself and thus all reality in the form of reality.”³³³ By admitting that God’s Reality is the only way-of-being that has any ontological status in and of itself, the individual may become attuned to the continual correlation of its being with God’s. For the sensitive person who is attuned to the way that Reality is ontologically composed, the surrender of an improper view of human absoluteness will entail a type of sacrifice of all claims, rights, and pride. Johanns developed this principle of loving God for His own sake:

God therefore is *worthy* of the total surrender of our world, of our self, and even of our God with whom we could enter into relations of fellowship and by whom we could be loved in return. Śaṅkara thus rightly contends that we should sacrifice all that we are and all that we have to God, and not even think of any return.³³⁴

God is to be loved without any thought of personal merit; He is to be loved excessively. Such an extravagant love that is willing to sacrifice everything to God is but an admission that God is “plenitude” and that finite reality is itself “nothingness” in comparison with the infinite Absolute. Johanns admitted, “As far as divine *rights* are concerned therefore Śaṅkara is well inspired. God has a *right* to be loved by the world to the world’s utter extinction.”³³⁵ The great practical lesson that Śaṅkara tries to inculcate is that radically identifying oneself with God is the one essential key to liberation. Reposing in the Absoluteness of God is the path to peace. This pursuit of union with the Absolute is the most difficult but spiritually proper venture an individual can undertake. Johanns concluded:

Let us suppose that we forget everything about our individual self, so that practically it does no longer exist for us, we would not have lost much. The difficulty however is to forget it, for it cannot thus live away from itself, abstain from desiring to return to its own standpoint. Hence, Śaṅkara tries to teach us the way to get rid of the stress of individuality and universality in order to abide for ever in the centre of absoluteness. Śaṅkara has thus discovered the necessity of loving God for Himself and in Himself.³³⁶

³³³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 32.

³³⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 32. Emphasis by Johanns.

³³⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 33. Emphasis by Johanns.

³³⁶ *Light of the East*, 5 (March, 1927), p. 4.

b. The Way of Purgation, Illumination, and Unity

In order to intuit the Reality of God, a process of purification needs to take place for the person to be purged of selfish desires and attitudes. The practical philosophy of Śaṅkara recognizes the necessity of uprooting deep-seated wrong inclinations. In this sense, Śaṅkara advocates a method of purgation of the soul. All perceptions or attitudes based upon a “selfish standpoint” must be eradicated completely. Humans want to live within a world constructed by their own selfish desires, and they tend to live within this artificial world in a state of fixation upon themselves and other transitory pursuits and objects. But ironically, in a vain attempt to live in a world “outside God,” humans end up living in a deformed world that is based upon illusion, or *māyā*. It is clear that humans are prone to be entranced by a “world-wide *avidyā*. It is the fundamental ignorance that induces us to consider our individuality as absolute, and to act on this conviction.”³³⁷ Such a world that is constructed by deception and misunderstanding can only provide pain and disappointment. Johans commented:

“We therefore restrict the principle of illusion to the free will of man which, by its perverse tendency to be independent, tries to build up a world-plan which is opposed to the plan of God. Ye shall be like God! It is from this false ideal that the world of illusion originates within man. But this view...simply excludes the selfish man with his illusory world from the harmonious world of reality.”³³⁸

All worldly griefs in Śaṅkara’s system can be traced to the perverse tendency to disidentify oneself with God and to place too great a value on one’s individuality and world. This issue of improper identification with entities that are unworthy of affection is the heart of Śaṅkara’s practical philosophy, for spiritual advancement consists in realizing that “from wrong identification with what we are not, we are to ascend to the right identification with what we are.”³³⁹ There is indeed a great “principle of ignorance” which operates when the individual refuses to recognize his or her true relation to God. Constructing a world-view where one may live in independence from God, serving the inclinations of one’s pride and lusts, is a prime example of selfishness based upon an erroneous understanding of reality. For

³³⁷ *Light of the East*, 4 (November, 1925), p. 4.

³³⁸ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 46.

³³⁹ *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 6.

Johanns, Śaṅkara correctly teaches that it is necessary to disassociate oneself from the world and the body when one is enslaved to them, using them as means to an end, driven by selfishness. Johanns indicated how the end result of self-absorption is the nightmare of *saṃsāra*:

We make of our individuality the world-ideal and this endeavor causes a world to arise which is broken in all its joints, is full of contradictions and self-oppositions, a nightmare, a *saṃsāra*. We also admit therefore, that so far as *saṃsāra*, the world ordered and organized from the standpoint of selfishness, is thus a world of error and perversity, it must be transcended.³⁴⁰

The seeker must begin to differentiate sharply what is of eternal significance and what is merely transitory and ephemeral. The moral disposition must undergo a radical “transvaluation” so that it is perceived that the concerns of the finite world are insignificant. A dispassionate outlook will soon replace undue attachment to the world; a healthy indifference to the pleasures and pains of ephemeral existence will take root in the person. It is not that all desires are eradicated, for “Śaṅkara does not ask for the destruction of our desires, but for their co-ordination. We must bring back all our desires from their dispersion on worldly objects to concentrate them on one point, till they take fire and arise towards the eternal summits of goodness and bliss itself. And when our desire, made of all our desires, has taken this direction, then and only then do we possess the will to liberation and are prepared.”³⁴¹ The world-consciousness that dominates the perceptions will be replaced with an acute God-consciousness, so that only what is Real and eternal is valued. The soul must radically identify itself with God as its only true end and its only true means. The renunciation of one’s own-identity will allow for an internal transformation to be enacted. By identifying oneself with God, one will be enabled to reconstruct reality on a more adequate foundation. Johanns spoke of rebuilding this foundation in a world reconceived after a true God-consciousness:

And first the foundation is required. We know what it is. It is the absolute Spirituality which contains the world in its own absolute way. What has to be done then? As Śaṅkara tells us, we must be attentive to this absolute Value. We must gather all our mental rays and focus them on this Centre till we disappear in it. Or, to look at it from another side, we must withdraw our light from our senses, intellect

³⁴⁰ *Light of the East*, 5 (February, 1927), p. 6.

³⁴¹ *Light of the East*, 4 (January, 1926), p. 2-3.

and heart and remain in holy recollection until the Light flames up within us and transforms us in itself.³⁴²

Once the process of purification accomplishes its work in the individual, “we begin to see the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, as it is in God.” The mental capacities are focused upon the interior luminosity. The person recognizes that the internal Light is a “mere participation of the Light of God.”³⁴³ The individual’s internal luminosity is overshadowed by the blaze of God’s reality, as the light of a star is obscured by the risen sun. This mystical intuition, *samādhi*, does not bring about a change in the way that things really are; rather, it denotes a change in apprehension whereby “the veil has fallen, not from God’s face but from our eyes.”³⁴⁴ The eternal blaze of God’s Being was always there in its full intensity. Johanns found Śaṅkara’s description of the journey toward God-centeredness spiritually and mystically profound. This movement toward progressive purification entails the development of the perceptual consciousness where the finite world and the notion of individuality gradually begin to fade away. Śaṅkara’s practical philosophy is particularly strong in regard to the cultivation of this type of consciousness. Johanns commented upon mystical purgation in this way:

At a higher degree of realization, the mystics inform us, we should inhibit even our senses, our intellect, our will, in order to allow the inner Light to function by itself in a mysterious operation that transcends our world-consciousness and even our self-consciousness. It is then as if the absolute Light were building up within us a transfigured consciousness in which God appears as the only Value and Reality and the world as a mere shadow without any meaning within itself.³⁴⁵

According to Johanns, Śaṅkara teaches India to sacrifice all for the love of God. He shows the way to properly readjust the mind toward that which is of absolute value and to hate that which obstructs the attainment of God-consciousness.³⁴⁶ Śaṅkara articulates a cogent explanation of the moral problem that

³⁴² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 35.

³⁴³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 36.

³⁴⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 37.

³⁴⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 34.

³⁴⁶ In a fascinating comparison, Johanns attempted to show that the contours of the practical philosophy of Śaṅkara move in a similar direction as those of Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuit order: “Hence the only requisite for liberation is the will to liberation, and this will implies an intellectual outlook on the goal of liberation, the eternal, and a heartfelt affection and appreciation of this goal, as our absolute value, as the Value. Saint Ignatius is at one with Śaṅkara on this point. To

the individual faces when turning away from God toward transient things. Johanns summarized the path of purification that is necessary for spiritual progress: “We agree therefore with Śaṅkara that the *via purgativa* consists in a complete overthrow of our selfish consciousness from top to root. There is something wrong with us, as long as we do not discover in the world and in ourselves the divine meaning and want to impose on world and self a meaning of our own.”³⁴⁷ Śaṅkara also stresses the dangers that come with living in the world, since the world easily hides the God who lays claim to all reality. For truly “this world and this self is *māyā* and it will be driven out of the plane of universal harmony into utter chaos when arises the Great Experience of the beatific vision. In the end, only God matters. Śaṅkara has finally taught us to adjust ourselves to a God that, in all justice, has every right to claim back from us all that we are and have.”³⁴⁸ By destroying the selfish illusions of ignorance, “we become divinely one with Him and divinely one with ourselves.”³⁴⁹

And so Johanns felt that Śaṅkara’s practical philosophy is lucid in identifying the path toward radical identification with the God who is to be pursued for His own sake. Śaṅkara teaches that undue attachments to ephemeral and transitory things must be abandoned in order for this mystical union between the soul and God to be intuited. Purgation of the soul and the cultivation of a consciousness that is attuned to the reality of God are vital components of a journey toward liberation.

the would-be convert he gives as introduction in his *Spiritual Exercises* the consideration about our last end with the view to create within him a total disposition of indifference and *vairāgya* (dispassion). It is but common-sense psychology that we should spurn the world and its selfish standard, if we intend our eternal self-realization; but when our last end is in question, which requires the sacrifice of self, this obvious truth becomes a mystery, for we cannot apprehend it from our perverted standpoint. Hence Śaṅkara and Saint Ignatius find it absolutely necessary to remind their adepts of this obvious truth, that to reach the goal we must take the direction towards the goal. There is but one last end, and there is but one means to reach it, to will it which is evident, and as it is the last end, to will it only which is still more evident.”³⁴⁶ *Light of the East*, 4 (January, 1926), p. 3.

³⁴⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 35.

³⁴⁸ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 46.

³⁴⁹ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 47.

C. Critique of Śaṅkara's Position- Creatio Ex Nihilo

1. The Ontological Status of the World

Johanns deeply believed that the practical and theoretical philosophy of Śaṅkara provides a sure foundation for rebuilding the *philosophia perennis* on *Vedāntic* soil. He was continually struck by the profundity of Śaṅkara's thought. And yet he felt that there were certain areas in the *advaitic* system that could be subject to critique. The following section elucidates Johanns' critique of Śaṅkara.

The essential problem that Johanns detected in Śaṅkara's metaphysic is that Śaṅkara has a conception of reality that is not holistic. He allows a great truth, the ultimate value of God's reality, to block up another equally profound truth, the relative value of the contingent existence of the world. Johanns commented:

Śaṅkara is right in following the law of intelligibility which brings back the world and the souls to the absolute act of intelligibility, to the absolute intelligence subsisting in itself, which transcends all relations, even that of substance and attribute, and reveals itself as the absolute selfness which has no other determination than this indeterminate selfness. But Śaṅkara is one-sided. The reductive process makes us find the cause of the world, the principle of the world. But when we have discovered this principle we must realize how the world arises from it. The principle of the world is reality itself, as Śaṅkara has it, *parama-artha*. Now from reality you can only deduce a real world.³⁵⁰

Since God is reality, it can be said that all reality originates from His Being and finds its principle in Him. His Being cannot give rise to any sort of unreality. Therefore, the notion that a "realm" of unreality appears and associates itself with the principle of reality is absurd. The conception of an illusory world is a difficulty in Śaṅkara's system that seems to encroach upon the all-encompassing Reality of God. Johanns was of the opinion that the *advaitic* metaphysic struggles to account for the origination and locale of *avidyā* and *māyā*. To Johanns' mind, surely it is a better hypothesis that the principle of reality communicates contingent reality to a world of relative reality than to involve oneself in a metaphysical position where one has to explain the phenomenon of an unreal, illusory world that has the appearance of reality and which feigns a necessary reality of its own. The idea of *creatio ex nihilo*

³⁵⁰ *Light of the East*, 13 (December, 1934), p. 32. The opinion of Johanns was that "Śaṅkara is only intent on reducing the world to God and that in this reduction alone he can account for a world-meaning. His deduction on the other hand is only carried on with the help of *māyā*, the principle of illusion." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 15.

is much more intelligible than Śāṅkara's realm of *māyā* and *avidyā* to Johanns. *Creatio ex nihilo* preserves the untainted, lofty status of God that Śāṅkara is so determined to protect, and it also avoids the difficulties of counter-intuitively explaining away the world as complete deception. The world is given an appropriate status, neither too grandiose nor too illusive. Śāṅkara only has recourse to a *pariṇāma* doctrine, which he denies as illusion (*vivarta*) for theological reasons; the model of *creatio ex nihilo* was not attested in the Indian tradition.³⁵¹ However, the act of conferring reality into a void of nothingness also raises some questions, as well. Johanns asked:

But how can God communicate reality to what has no reality, to what is nothing of itself and nothing of God? The answer is that the creativity of God presupposes creability as its necessary term. Creability belongs to God since it is a term of his creativity. But if it belongs to God as coming from Him, it is received into nothingness. There is therefore no nothingness for God. But besides God, if we may thus express ourselves, there is absolute privation of reality, a sphere which is nothing of itself and of God, but which, on account of God, is receptive of itself and of God. On account of its creativity the divine essence thus fecundates the abyss of nothingness and turns it into a fertile soil from which the world can arise.³⁵²

God's ability to create (creativity), which is an aspect of His identity as act of being, presupposes the possibility of passive receptivity (creability) which can participate in this act.³⁵³ Johanns, as it will be shown, nuanced Śāṅkara's conception of God, so

³⁵¹ Johanns also questioned the presupposition that the effect must be a transformation of the cause, "must come from the cause and be received into it." He believed that this is a "limited causality, a causality which extends only to the surface of a thing but not to its substance. Now it is absurd to ascribe to God a limited causality. If God's causality has to be unlimited, it must reach down to the substance and the form of a thing...and must reach down to the negation of all things as its only possible term." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part I, p. 23.

³⁵² *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 44. What does the terminology of "privation" and "nothingness" signify? For Johanns, privation is not a material, a substratum, or a locality which exists before God creates. He wrote: "And if one were to say that the concept of total privation also reminds of dualism, we would answer that this term is only adduced to help our poor imagination. As total privation and nothing else, it is as well the privation of any substratum whatever." *Light of the East*, 4 (May, 1926), p. 5. Through God's actuating presence, the very passive possibility of the world arises as well as the sphere of privation of reality. Privative possibility does not subsist in itself. The Pure Act "turns the world's nothingness into the world's privation, its passive privation into its materiality, its materiality into its ideality, its ideality into reality... This synthesis we can only describe analogically. There is of course no succession in the divine actuality. The succession, like all changes, belongs to the effect, the world, and does not concern the Cause which does not change but causes the changes." *Light of the East*, 3 (June, 1925), p. 4.

³⁵³ See Chapter One for a discussion of how entities are possible and "might exist" in relation to the active power of God.

that the self-sufficient *saccidānanda* is able to conceive of and execute an act of creativity.

Johanns posited an act of creation whereby reality is bestowed into the sphere of total privation. God does not receive the world's contingent reality into His own essence; such an immanent causality was appropriately denigrated by Śaṅkara. For if God receives limitation within Himself, in some sense God's Being is affected. "God would no longer be exclusively His own substance and thus no longer independent."³⁵⁴ But, what Śaṅkara does not ascertain, according to Johanns, is that the conferring of a relative world-reality to the void does not detract from the Being of God. Such a metaphysical position maintains a clear ontological distinction between God and the world. The Being of God and the being of the world cannot be understood to be univocal. God is pure concentration of Being, and the world is contingent being that has "compenetrated" privation. The act of creation is an absolute giving on the part of God to a world which is nothingness in and of itself. Johanns asserted, "We understand now how the world borrows from God a subsistence of its own. It is a limited world. It has therefore its own basis, the absolute limitation, the privation from which it arises. The continual influence of the divine creativity in act is thus constantly required, if the world is not, by its own movement, to return to its own privation."³⁵⁵ The world's status is such that if God would remove His sustaining creativity, the world would vanish into nothingness. Of itself, the world is absolute void. But due to God's continual act of conferring being into the void, the world does have a contingent reality, not of itself but of God. Johanns stated, "We can say with Śaṅkara that there is but one Reality, adding the qualification 'absolute': there is but one absolute Reality, which leaves room for a real world of relative reality and does not compel us to consider the world as an unreality. The absolute Reality contains the relative reality in the form of Reality, but such 'being contained' designates not the existence of the world but its possibility."³⁵⁶

The world does not have its own-being. Before the act of creation, it was completely absorbed within the Reality of God in the way of complete unity. God

³⁵⁴ *Light of the East*, 1 (March, 1923), p. 2.

³⁵⁵ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 44-45.

³⁵⁶ *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 37.

“contained” the world-possibility but not the world-explication in His Being, for the *sat, cit, and ānanda* which would be exhibited in the world are derived from God.³⁵⁷ For Johanns, Śaṅkara is entirely correct in the contours of his metaphysic if one is seeking to describe reality *prior to* the act of creation.³⁵⁸ And if God’s sustaining influence upon the world were removed, things would return to the state so aptly described by Śaṅkara. But what Śaṅkara does not see is that the Being of God is so intense and complete that it is able to fecundate complete privation. Contingent being, when bestowed as a gift from God, it is able to “compenetrate” the substratum of privation. The world then takes on the form and image of God. It is not an identical production of the divine essence, however, because it is a merging of reality with limitation. Johanns explained:

But the world must have a form. How can the form of the world come from God and subsist in the field of privation? All being that acts, acts according to its form. Therefore what God tries to communicate to the world is His own form. But this form can only be received in the substratum of privation and according to the nature of this privation. The world therefore will be the form of God but in another substratum. But a form that subsists in another substratum is an image and hence the world will exist as an image of the divine Reality, as a reproduction of God. Now we understand the possibility of the world. An image is distinct from its original but, as image, it has no meaning except through its relation to the Original. In so far as it fails to reproduce the original, it does not image and hence is nothing in its own line.³⁵⁹

There can be no doubt that a world which is an internal mode of God, a notion duly dismissed by Śaṅkara, is indeed a falsity. A world which exists “by itself and for itself outside God” or that exists internally within the essence of God as a “partial self-transformation of God” is also a dangerous notion which taints the

³⁵⁷ Johanns drew out the implications of this position: “But if the world from all eternity resides within this absolute light, it is there as implicit truth, as implicit perfection and as implicit beauty. If therefore God, by His creation, explicits the world, away from Himself into itself, the world cannot forego its implicit character: it must remain true, beautiful and good. But the creation of the world is its explication and expression into the sphere of exteriority and privation... and thus God is expressed in the world in a privative or limited way.” *Light of the East*, 4 (April, 1926), p. 4.

³⁵⁸ This language is analogical, because time, space, and succession do not exist without the act of creation. For the Pure Act, there is no before and after. Time is a category that relates only to the created order. Johanns warned that “when we reconstruct the creative process we try to reach by analysis and synthesis what is but the simple creative activity of God.” *Light of the East*, 14 (March, 1936), p. 69.

³⁵⁹ *Light of the East*, 13 (January, 1935), p. 45.

Absolute. But a world which exists “outside God as a reproduction of God” is quite a satisfactory position, for it would be “real *by* this Reality and *for* this Reality.”³⁶⁰ In this sort of cosmology, God is the only Absolute reality. But the existence of a Being which is Absolute reality does not preclude the possibility of a real world of relative reality. As an image, the world re-produces God’s qualities in a different substratum; the world is not an identical production or super-emanation of the divine. Johanns concluded, “Hence God can only reproduce Himself and this presupposes that God contains the reality which He reproduces, as a cause contains its effect; that He exteriorises this reality in the only medium open to Him: in total privation or creability itself; and that this reality reproduces a form of God but in its own substratum of total finitude.”³⁶¹ This description of creation as the reproduction of the attributes of God, rather than the production of the divine essence, in a sphere of exteriority and limitation illustrates how Johanns’ view is distinct from an emanationist doctrine, where the divine substance merely spills out and further extends itself.

A world which is a reproduction of God is able to convey information about the God who granted from His own Being the contingent being of the world. Johanns asserted that the world may reveal certain aspects of God’s nature, since it is an image of Him. Śaṅkara severs the epistemic link between God and the world, in an effort to protect God’s unrelatedness; Johanns called this dichotomization of Śaṅkara into question:

Where Śaṅkara goes wrong is when he thinks that the world can teach us nothing about God. He is right in distinguishing essential attributes, such as being, knowing, and self-sufficiency, from attributes which imply relation, for it is evident that God is not creator in the same sense that He is being. The latter is a necessary attribute, the former can only be predicated of God if He creates. But this should not mean, as it does for Śaṅkara, that when God creates, the creature reveals nothing of the divine essence of its creator. Instead of rejecting the *saguna Brahman* because the relation of God with the world was a projection of our minds, Śaṅkara should have tried to find what foundation or reality in God justified in part those subjective

³⁶⁰ *Introduction to the Vedānta*, p. 38. Emphasis by Johanns.

³⁶¹ *Light of the East*, 13 (July, 1935), p. 116- Johanns explained: “Il faudrait s’assurer que Dieu peut se faire donation de soi-même à l’autre. Pour se donner il faut se posséder. Quand nous disons Dieu est l’Être qui contient tout être à l’état éminent nous admirons l’infinie Richesse de cette possession.” *Sankara et l’idéal*, p. 3.

representations. He should have remembered that if God is not related to the world, the world is very much related to God, depending on Him for its very existence and preservation, and can therefore represent Him.³⁶²

b. God's Nature

Creatio ex nihilo presumes that God has self-consciousness and that He has the capacity to perform an act of self-giving. For Śāṅkara, for God to be self-conscious or to give would lessen His stature, for this conception of God implies the divine essence has inward polarization or has need of something or has tainting associations with finiteness. Johanns did not think that these conclusions necessarily follow from such an understanding of God. For instance, Śāṅkara indicates that God is *cit*, or consciousness. But, interestingly, God has no object upon which His consciousness is fixed, for this would imply the polarization of subject and object. God does not exhibit self-consciousness, either, for this would introduce opposition (I and myself) within the unified essence of God. Śāṅkara views God as a pure subject, without any perception or consciousness of another, including Himself. God's consciousness is content-less. But Johanns argued that self-consciousness need not imply a compromise of divine unity: "Perfect self-consciousness does not consist in the opposition of I and me, but precisely in the identity of both... We are not conscious of what is completely foreign to us; we get conscious of a thing when we begin to assimilate it, make it part and parcel of our consciousness; perfect consciousness would be the perfect compenetration of subject and object: their identity."³⁶³ Since God is pure subjectivity (thinking) which is objectivity (being), His thinking is in a unified relation with his Being. Pure consciousness would have holistic cognizance of its own Being. God would surely be self-conscious, not in the same way that a human is self-conscious, but in a transcendent fashion in which there is no dichotomy between *cit* and *sat*.³⁶⁴

³⁶² *Light of the East*, 1 (July, 1923), p. 3-4.

³⁶³ *Light of the East*, 1 (April, 1923), p. 3.

³⁶⁴ Johanns noted that "if the *tattvamasi* is true, God's Self-luminosity cannot be conceived as mere ideality, as mere interiority without content, as an impersonal light, a mere ether of consciousness. For in God ideality is identical with reality. God is a pure centre of light, but in this simple absolute brightness the whole reality is ablaze... He is therefore the subjectivity that in the very act of opening itself, embraces the infinite reality and returns, thus enriched, to itself as the absolute centre of consciousness." *Light of the East*, 1 (June, 1923), p. 4.

For Johannis, a metaphysic of *creatio ex nihilo* indicates not only that God is self-conscious but also that God is self-giving. God has need of nothing. Bestowing reality into the void does not imply that God has any lack, for privation can give nothing to Him. He does not gain anything by creating; it is the world that gains everything. God is not “related” to the world in the sense that He is dependent in any way upon the world-reality; it is the world that is related to God in that it depends upon Him for every moment of its contingent being. And thus God’s essence is not tainted by the act of creating a world of finiteness. God has complete freedom to give to the world-privation. In fact, His nature is that of self-surrender:

God is not absolute “absorbing away,” but absolute “self-giving to.” The darkness and emptiness which reason becomes aware of in the Absolute only indicates the infinite range of our soul and its capacity to receive the self-giving God- Must we not be emptiness itself if God has to give Himself to us? But Śaṅkara never interpreted the divine darkness and emptiness in this way. For him they signified the impossibility of God’s giving Himself to us; they signified the fact that God in his self-reference and self-assertion had taken away all that was ours. Śaṅkara therefore missed what we may call the centrifugal direction of God: His direction towards the other, towards being Himself in the other and for the other. He only saw the “centripetal direction” which but signifies that God can take all from us in justice, but forgets all that He can give in absolute condescension... Our relation to God is indeed that of sheer emptiness but an emptiness opening on the self-giving Act of God.³⁶⁵

If God is absolute fullness and the world is absolute privation, then the world is emptiness that is complete receptivity to God. And, therefore, the created order must return everything that it is to God in a total surrender, for the world is merely a vacuum that has received the divine self-communication. The distance that separates the plenitude of God from the void is an immense gulf. The only reason that the world is realizable is that the Reality of God engages in a self-giving act of creation. The created realm is not realizable in and of itself, for its substratum is mere vacuity.³⁶⁶ The contingent reality that this creation enjoys is a wondrous gift from the self-sufficient, necessary reality.

³⁶⁵ *Light of the East*, 14 (May, 1936), p. 94. Johannis stated that “donc Dieu peut se donner non par une nécessité interne ou pour acquérir quelque chose mais uniquement pour manifester sa bonté sa communication de soi donc gratuitement, par la seule générosité. Mais cette gratuite générosité ne peut apparaître que si le don s’appartient entièrement.” *Sankara et l’idéal*, p. 4.

³⁶⁶ The world as deprivation of existence and essence in itself becomes a possibility due to the Act of God’s Being allowing it to become a substratum of complete receptivity. Johannis asked: “The *Actus*

And so Johanns defended the reality of the finite world and the capacity of God to think and to give against the *advaitic* suspicions of such possibilities. But despite these critiques of Śāṅkara's thought, Johanns was ever respectful of the profundity of Śāṅkara's *advaita*. He felt that there was no greater system to be found amongst the natural religions that gave such a pristine description of the divine. And thus he selected *advaita* as the foundation of the synthesis which he hoped to fashion. Johanns sought to preserve a holistic viewpoint which allows God to be absolutely independent and not related of necessity to anything, but which also permits the notion of a world of contingent reality which is dependent upon God for its very being. He believed that the causation envisioned in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* will protect both the self-sufficiency of God and the reality of the world. Neither the character of God nor the reality of the world will need to be denigrated or explained away in this model.

D. Śāṅkara and Aquinas

There is resonance between the contributions that Johanns felt Śāṅkara makes to the synthesis and certain features of the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas refers to God as the "pure act of being" who alone can account for His own existence. God's essence is *esse* (to-be), and thus He is completely self-subsistent. His essence is fully manifested, without any sort of potentiality. He is not dependent upon anything for ontological support. God is the only Reality who is the pure act of being.³⁶⁷ Since He is the unity of existence and essence, His nature is absolutely simple, without any sort of composition.³⁶⁸ God is perfect awareness of His unified Being.³⁶⁹ The perfection that is entailed in God's identity as pure act means that He

Purus therefore must, as creative, be directed away from itself towards...what? There is nothing outside the *Actus Purus* who is reality itself. Is the *Actus Purus* directed towards nothing? No, it is directed towards the passive possibility of the world, which in this case must be mere eligibility... It is the existence of God that by its very essence posits our probability." *Light of the East*, 14 (March, 1936), p. 68.

³⁶⁷ "And because everything that exists through another is led back to that which exists through itself as to its first cause, there must be one thing which is the cause of existence in all things because it alone is the act-of-being." Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia* 4, 8, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 42. See *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.3, a.4 for Aquinas' defense of God as *esse*.

³⁶⁸ See *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.18.

³⁶⁹ "Since God possesses no potentiality but is pure actuality, intellect in Him and what is known must be utterly identical...In Him the knowledge itself is the divine intellect itself. And so He knows

is self-sufficient, needing nothing.³⁷⁰ These brief descriptions of the nature of God as conceived by Aquinas help to illustrate why Johannis may have seized upon certain ideas that Śaṅkara develops as particularly helpful for the construction of a perennial philosophy using *Vedāntic* materials.

Aquinas, like Śaṅkara, was wary of the temptation to extrapolate from a knowledge of human qualities and operations to a knowledge of God's character. Aquinas asserts that God is utterly simple, while speech and predication are intrinsically complex, and therefore the task of positing what "God is not" brings us closer to removing false conceptions of the divine. He therefore affirms the usefulness of apophatic theology.³⁷¹ There is an innate disparity between all human articulation regarding God and the actual essence of God. Nothing creaturely or finite has an essence which is *esse*; this simplicity of God's essence makes all comparisons between God and composite things misleading. God is not wise or aware or merciful through an attribute, but through the divine essence which is pure act. There is no need to posit separate attributes distinct from or extrinsic to the pure act's essence in order to explain His perfection. A creature can have the attribute of wisdom, but it is not perfectly wise through its quiddity.³⁷² Thus, there is a disparity between God's manner of being wise and the creature's manner of being wise. God's very manner of being wise is beyond understanding. Aquinas' apophatic theology thus resembles Śaṅkara's in terms of cautioning against unnuanced predications of the divine. This brief sketch demonstrates that Śaṅkara's "contributions" move in a similar direction as those of Thomas Aquinas.

Himself through Himself." *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.14, a.2, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 69.

³⁷⁰ "A thing is perfect in so far as it is in act: and imperfect in so far as it is in potentiality and void of act. Wherefore that which is nowise in potentiality but is pure act, must needs be most perfect. Now such is God. Therefore He is most perfect." Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 28, translated in *The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas: literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers*, vol. 1, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924, p. 69.

³⁷¹ "The chief way to consider the divine essence is the way of negation, for by its immensity the divine essence transcends every form attained by our intellect... But by knowing what it is not we get some knowledge of it, and the more things we are able to deny of it, the nearer we come to knowing it. For we know anything so much the more perfectly the more completely we recognize it as different from others." Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 14, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 39.

³⁷² See *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.28.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarized how Johanns explicated the philosophy of Śaṅkara, identified certain features of the *advaitic* metaphysic which he thought were valuable for a synthesis of the *Vedāntic* systems, and critiqued some weaknesses in Śaṅkara's thought which he considered as imbalanced or deficient. Johanns argued that Śaṅkara asserts an understanding of God as completed unrelated and utterly self-sufficient. According to Johanns, Śaṅkara ultimately denies the reality of the world, on the argument that the existence of a finite world encroaches upon the absoluteness of God. He made the claim that Śaṅkara does not allow any internal or external division to compromise the simplicity of the unity of God, whether in the form of an improper understanding of divine attribution or a misguided valuing of the being of the world. For Johanns, Śaṅkara is thus an acosmist who only posits the existence of a divine pure subject. Johanns sought to demonstrate that the practical philosophy of the *advaita* attempts to clear away false notions of the self in order to cultivate an awareness that the self is non-dual with the pure subject of God. In his view, Śaṅkara teaches that only God exists, and God alone matters; the fact that the self and the world need to be sacrificed in order to safeguard the elevated position of God is a perfectly acceptable consequence for him.

Johanns appreciated Śaṅkara's desire to protect the lofty status of the independent God and to keep His nature from being tainted with improper associations. He accepted the basic portrait of an utterly independent God who is the simple unity of being and awareness that Śaṅkara depicts. This description of the divine forms the foundation for his synthesis of the *Vedāntic* systems. Such a God is worthy of any sacrifice. He accepted the teaching in *advaita* that God is the highest Value and that the soul must actively attune itself to the being of God. He then argued that Śaṅkara is correct in his assertion that the world of souls and nature does not have its own being that it can claim as its own possession. Only God possesses His own necessary being in self-sufficiency. Thus, from Śaṅkara's acosmism, Johanns developed the idea that the world does not have necessary or absolute being in itself. And from Śaṅkara's pristine view of an unrelated God, Johanns argued that God cannot be dependent upon the world in any way or necessarily related to it. Division and finiteness cannot exist within the essence of God.

But Johanns did not accept Śaṅkara's acosmism or his static *Brahman* wholesale. He attempted to synthesize the *advaitic* position with the viewpoint of

creatio ex nihilo, which posits the existence of a world of relative reality that is dependent upon a God who is personal and interactive with the world. Johanns wanted to form a synthesis which enables God to be unadulterated, absolute reality, yet which values the world as a contingent reality participating in the being which it receives from God. God remains untainted in His character, while at the same time the world is real and the souls are able to enjoy communion with God. Neither God nor the world should be explained away or denigrated.

Having summarized Johanns' thought, a preliminary critique is now offered in relation to the research questions detailed in the introduction of the thesis. Johanns provided a clear, cogent exposition of the complex system of *advaitic* thought. His basic interpretation of Śaṅkara was consonant with the view of the majority of scholars before and after his time. The notion that Śaṅkara advocates illusionism with regard to the world and a strict monism has been the predominant opinion in scholarly circles. Johanns' particular strength lay in the succinct, striking way in which he described *advaitic* metaphysics. He quickly and skillfully brings his reader to the heart of the *advaitic* worldview without extraneous or tangential discussion. Thus, the general accuracy of his exposition and interpretation was certainly affirmed by scholars of his generation; modern scholars would probably want to see more documentation of sources and engagement with critical issues, separating the genuine thought of Śaṅkara from later accretions. The fact remains that the scholarly consensus favors Johanns' interpretation of Śaṅkara as an acosmist. Johanns' particular use of terminology can be problematic, however. He often employed Thomist terminology which is not derived from *advaitic* sources (pure form, act of being). He even coined his own terms (creability, illuminativity) to describe features of Śaṅkara's theoretical philosophy. One may suspect that this shift in terminology away from the technical language used by the *advaitins* may subtly prepare Śaṅkara to be synthesized and incorporated within Johanns' desired perennial philosophy.

In seeking to fashion a synthesis of the *Vedānta*, beginning with Śaṅkara's thought, Johanns correctly identified the doctrine of the complete independence of God, which even the world cannot taint, as a central feature of *advaitic* philosophy. The fact that he was concerned not to compromise the original emphases and thrust of *advaita* is amply displayed by his adamancy that, in the synthesis, this sheer independence must be protected in order that a vital *advaitic* doctrine should not be

damaged. Johanns provided an intelligible defense of his conception of *creatio ex nihilo*, and he argued cogently that God’s independent nature is not compromised by this model. Thus, the “supernatural” doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, hidden from the unaided human intellect, completes the “natural” doctrine of God’s unrelatedness and transcendence which Śaṅkara ascertained through reason and intuition. Johanns argued that a fulfilment theology where grace (implied in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*) perfects nature (implied in Śaṅkara’s *nirguṇa/asaṅga Brahman*) is the best way of conceiving the relation between Christian theology and *advaita*. His subtle arguments regarding *creatio ex nihilo* versus *pariṇāma* causality add depth to his advocacy of a fulfilment model. It must be noted, however, that a strict *advaitin* may still question whether Johanns’ model introduces a crypto-dualism or a nuanced form of emanation, thereby blunting the divine independence.³⁷³ This engagement with Śaṅkara and the model of *creatio ex nihilo* is a first step by Johanns toward a synthesis and an integration of *Vedāntic*/Thomist insights. In order to accomplish this synthesis of the *Vedāntic* systems, Johanns believed that one must appeal to the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine, as something revealed by grace. Johanns thus accepted the central truths of Śaṅkara’s “natural” philosophy but appealed to this “supernatural” doctrine as a way of preserving the affirmed value of the world.

This approach raises some critical questions. Given that *creatio ex nihilo* is foreign to *Vedāntic* philosophy, is this imposition of an alien causality the best way of reconciling the *Vedāntic* systems? Since the respective *Vedāntic* philosophies each have their own intellectual methods of safeguarding important metaphysical emphases, wouldn’t a synthesis be better accomplished by developing and expanding upon these methods rather than by importing a foreign doctrine? These questions will be explored in greater depth in the chapter on the theological evaluation of Johanns’ project. Irrespective of the potential weaknesses of the selection of Thomist terminology in exposition and the potential questions raised by *creatio ex nihilo* in a synthesis, it can be affirmed that Johanns the theologian engaged in a creative, profound interaction with Śaṅkara’s thought.

³⁷³ See Chapter Six for more lengthy discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of Johanns’ approach to Śaṅkara.

Chapter Four

Johanns on Rāmānuja

Introduction

The next major *Vedāntic* philosopher with whom Johanns engaged was the *Vaiṣṇava ācārya* Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja is concerned to establish a rigorous defense of the complete personhood of God through a careful study of the authoritative writings of the *Vedāntic* tradition. He is an antagonistic opponent of the view espoused by Śaṅkara, and he desires to give *Vaiṣṇava bhakti* an intellectual respectability and a cogent defense against the rival schools which question the validity of this form of devotionism. Johanns faced a much different task in attempting to interact with Rāmānuja than he did in his engagement with Śaṅkara. Rāmānuja's understanding of the character of God and the nature of the world appears to be more conducive to a rapprochement with Christian metaphysics than *advaitism*. For Rāmānuja, God is an omnipotent, omniscient person who has an intimate relation with the world. The world of souls and nature is a real and contingent entity. However, he also teaches that the world is an internal mode of God and forms an intrinsic part of God.

The traditional date that is given by the *Vaiṣṇava* community for Rāmānuja's birth is 1017 A.D. He was born in Perumbadur, near Madras; he died in 1137 A.D. in Śrīraṅgam. Rāmānuja became the third *ācārya* of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* community in Śrīraṅgam, following in the footsteps of the great Yāmuna.³⁷⁴ Rāmānuja supervised the great temple at Śrīraṅgam and promoted the utilization of a pure *Vaiṣṇava* liturgy. He wrote commentaries to propagate a distinctively theistic version of Scriptural interpretation.³⁷⁵ Rāmānuja travelled throughout South India to publicly dispute and debate philosophers of other persuasions and to advocate his own understanding of the *Vedānta*.³⁷⁶ Nine written works have been attributed to Rāmānuja. The *Śrībhāṣya*, the *Vedāntadīpa*, and the *Vedāntasāra* are all analyses of the *Vedāntasūtra*. The *Vedārthasaṅgraha* lays out his basic theological understanding.

³⁷⁴ Eric Lott, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Ramanuja*, Madras: Ramanuja Research Center, 1976, p.12.

³⁷⁵ John Carman, "Ramanuja," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 12, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1987, p. 21.

³⁷⁶ Lott, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Ramanuja*, p. 14.

The *Gītābhāṣya* is a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Nityagrantha* is a devotional manual, and the *Śaraṅāgatigadya*, the *Śrīraṅgagadya*, and the *Vaikunṭhagadya* are prosaic hymns.³⁷⁷

This chapter discusses the engagement of Johanns with the *viśiṣṭādvaita* of Rāmānuja. There are four subdivisions which comprise this chapter: Johanns' exposition of Rāmānuja's philosophy, his assessment of Rāmānuja's contributions to perennial philosophy, his critique of the *viśiṣṭādvaita* position, and a brief comparison of the primary features of Aquinas' and Rāmānuja's positions.

A. Johanns' Exposition of Rāmānuja's Philosophy

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. God

In the metaphysics of Rāmānuja, there are three entities that are considered real: God, conscious souls, and inanimate nature. Rāmānuja's system is designated *viśiṣṭādvaita*, for the one God is a substance qualified (*viśiṣṭa*) by intelligent souls (*cit*) and unconscious nature (*acit*). Johanns wrote, "The absolute is a unity, an *advaitam*, but one in which all is contained, as a *viśeṣa*, a quality, an attribute, a difference, is contained in its subject or substance. So it is qualified, *viśiṣṭam*."³⁷⁸ Rāmānuja employs these categories of substance and attribute in his philosophy as a means of elucidating God's identity. The divine substance has a host of qualities which inhere in Him. Johanns elucidated Rāmānuja's linguistic defense of his position in this way:

When I say "the lotus is blue", I *identify* to a substance, already qualified by the essential attribute of "lotusness" an attribute "blueness" which qualifies anew the self-same substance. *Lotusness and blueness are by themselves different attributes or qualities, but the judgment exhibits them as identified with the same substance.* The very form of knowledge thus invites us to conceive difference and unity not as ultimately composed, but as ultimately one, in the unity

³⁷⁷ Carman, "Ramanuja," p. 212.

³⁷⁸ *Light of the East*, 1 (September, 1923), p. 3. Johanns stated, "Il devint fameux comme docteur du monisme qualifié, théorie qu'il présenta et défendit dans ses trois oeuvres: Le *Vedārthasaṃgraha* où il cherche à établir que les *Upaniṣads* n'enseignent pas l'*advaitisme*, le *Śrībhāṣya*, retentissant exposé du monisme qualifié, et enfin le *Gītābhāṣya*, un commentaire de la *Gītā*." *Les Sectes et leurs Fondateurs*, p. 1.

of the substance. The ultimate reality will therefore be one and the same substance; the multiplicity and differences will be attributes or qualities ultimately one with it. The Absolute will be the ultimate substrate in which all the rest is one, as its mediate or immediate attribute or quality.³⁷⁹

Two other categories that assist in the understanding of Rāmānuja's position are that of mode-possessor and mode. A mode is an entity which has no ontological or epistemic significance apart from its relation to the mode-possessor. God possesses His own modes in the form of the world of souls and nature. There is nothing that enjoys reality exterior to God or that is independent from Him, since the world is a *divine* mode. God is the only reality. What makes Rāmānuja's spiritual vision unique is that the one God possesses real parts which qualify Him. Within the unity of God, distinctions exist. These distinctions are internal and they have always existed and always will exist. The distinctions are both conscious (*cit*) and unconscious (*acit*). God contains within Himself unconscious matter which becomes manifested as concrete objects. When the *acit* latent within God in a subtle form becomes differentiated into material items, it is called *prakṛti*. The subtle form of *cit* within God then becomes conjoined with materiality, and these individual, finite souls are known as *jīvas*.

God is qualified by the entities of souls and nature, but He is also qualified by specific attributes which characterize His Person. The primary attribute of God is *jñāna*; Rāmānuja's understanding of this attribute is indicative of his overall conception of God's character. Johanns described this most important defining quality of God: "Its function is to illumine objects, and thus to build up the divine consciousness. But in and through the mental states of *jñāna*, the divine subject also appears to itself; and thus on account of *jñāna*, is self-conscious... *Jñāna* is not only self-luminous light but also thought, emotion and volition. It is important to note this: for it implies that God is a substratum of desires and emotions, adapted, therefore, to human consciousness and thus a fit object of worship."³⁸⁰ Rāmānuja rejects the two-tiered understanding of God that Śāṅkara propounds of a higher unqualified God (*nirguṇa*) and a lower *māyā*-based deity of attributes and personal interactions (*saguṇa*). In trying to prevent the charge of limitation in the nature of God, Śāṅkara

³⁷⁹ *Light of the East*, 1 (September, 1923), p. 3. Emphasis by Johanns.

³⁸⁰ *Synopsis of To Christ through the Vedānta (TCV)*, Part II, p. 6.

denies that the Absolute has any sort of qualities or relations. Rāmānuja, in contrast, believes that the fact that God is unlimited, or infinite, means that He must possess an infinite number of perfected attributes; infinitude itself is a positive quality that can be affirmed of God. Thus, God is not so much an infinity of negations (*neti-neti*) as He is an infinity of full perfections. Rāmānuja strongly denies that God is *nirguṇa*; rather, He possesses auspicious qualities (*sadguṇa*) in infinite capacity. God is absolutely devoid of any negative attributes. Johanns articulated Rāmānuja’s vision of God: “According to him a form or an attribute is a correlative notion: it implies a substratum of which it is the form. *Sat, cit* and *ānanda*, which he also (after the *Upaniṣads*) admits as intrinsic attributes of God, presuppose therefore a divine substance in which they inhere. In other words, God is not, according to him, intelligence, being and independence, but He is a substance possessing these qualities.”³⁸¹

Since God can be appropriately described as possessing the qualities of self-consciousness and volition, it is legitimate to characterize God as a person. Consciousness and determination are features that are recognizable in that which is perceived to be a person. It is therefore possible for God as a person to enter into relations with souls and to commune with them and rule over them. Johanns wrote, “Unlike the *Brahman* of Śāṅkara, the *Bhagavat* of Rāmānuja is therefore no mere light-ether, mere untroubled objectless awareness: He has emotions, wishes and pleasures. And He has them as so many limitless attributes inhering in His substance. It is therefore no anthropomorphism, Rāmānuja would tell us, to conceive God as possessing even emotions, pity, wishes and especially love.”³⁸² The fact that all entities which comprise the world, whether souls or nature, qualify God necessarily entails the proposition that God is omniscient, for He “knows Himself in and through His modes and attributes. His *jñāna* illumines all His modes and attributes, and thus allows God to know everything in Himself. God knows things perfectly, from their inner side, in so far as they qualify Him.”³⁸³ God also has complete control over

³⁸¹ *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 5. “According to Śāṅkara God has no predicates: He *is* His real predicates; *Sat, cit*, and *ānanda* do not inhere in God; they are only the ultimate aspects of the pure identity which Śāṅkara calls self-luminosity. But Rāmānuja does not understand a pure self-subsistent form or what is meant by saying that God is self-subsistent consciousness. Such transcendent logic seems to him but a mesh of contradictions.” *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 5.

³⁸² *Light of the East*, 2 (December, 1923), p. 4.

³⁸³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 7.

nature, and souls are introduced into or released from the confines of nature by the will of God; God is therefore omnipotent over the world. God is able to manifest Himself in any number of ways in the world, depending upon His desires.

The body-soul analogy is a key component of Rāmānuja’s vision of divine reality. The world of souls and nature stands in relation to God as a body stands in relation to the soul that controls it. The world is the body of God, subject to His will. The body is subordinate to and controlled and supported by the soul; it is an accessory to the soul. Sentient and non-sentient entities constitute the divine body. The identity of the world as an embodiment of God allows the world to add to the glory of the divine. Johanns described this complex analogy:

The body is a substance (*dravyam*), since you qualify it as stout, as big, as small. And yet it qualifies the soul, since the soul is the self of which you predicate it. *What is qualified can therefore be qualified in its turn.* The world can be a qualification of *Brahman* and yet a substance qualified by its own attributes: limited consciousness, absence of consciousness, virtue or vice, etc. It stands to *Brahman* in precisely the same relation as body to soul. In what does the relation of body to soul consist? In this, that the soul possesses the body, directs the play of its unconscious faculties from within, and through *karma* is its providence, the moulder and shaper of its destinies. This is exactly the relation of the world (i.e. souls and matter) to *Brahman*, who controls and illumines it from within and directs it to its own ends.³⁸⁴

The notion of God as embodied is a vital feature of Rāmānuja’s thought, and he articulates several varieties of embodiments. The world of souls and nature constitutes the cosmical body of God, but God also possesses an individual body on a heavenly plane called *Vaikuṅṭha*. This individual body is not connected with the *guṇas* of *rajas* or *tamas*, nor is it associated with the physical elements. Johanns described this individual body: “It is a mere support of ideal sounds, colours and forms, and expressive of divine beauty, sweetness, youthfulness, etc... It is laid out forever in its ideal articulations. Its character is to be self-luminous, saturated as it is with the one *sattva-guṇa*.”³⁸⁵ *Vaikuṅṭha* is a heavenly city in which God dwells with all His servants and with all the souls that are free from the bonds of *saṃsāra*. It is portrayed in the most beatific terms in the *Vaiṣṇava* writings.

³⁸⁴ *Light of the East*, 1 (September, 1923), p. 3-4. Emphasis by Johanns.

³⁸⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 4.

The varieties of divine descent and immanence in the world are numerous. An interesting concept developed by Rāmānuja is the notion of God as the *antaryāmin*, or inner controller, of His body. He is present to nature and resides within souls as their inner witness. There is a personal presence of the divine that can be found throughout the world. God is all-pervasive, and although His individual, beatific body transcends the imperfections of the world, He is continually in the world as *antaryāmin* and is near to the soul. Another way that God becomes present to the world is through the *vyūha*-bodies. God, from the idealized heavenly matter *viśuddha sattva*, dons four bodies and appears on earth as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. He seeks to reveal to the *jīvas* His six beautiful attributes which are *jñāna* (knowledge), *bala* (power), *aiśvarya* (sovereignty), *vīrya* (heroism), *śakti* (might) and *tejas* (splendour). Vāsudeva manifests the whole assortment of attributes; Saṅkarṣaṇa displays *jñāna* and *bala*. Pradyumna exhibits *aiśvarya* and *vīrya*, whereas Aniruddha reveals *śakti* and *tejas*.

Along with *vyūha*-bodies, another series of divine embodiments are the descents of God from *Vaikunṭha* to the world as *avatāras*. As an *avatāra*, He takes a body of *viśuddha sattva* upon Himself of human or animal form. In the past, God has appeared in the world in the form of a fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, Paraśurāma, Sri-Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa. The only remaining *avatāra* of the future will be Kalki. God will usually assume an *avatāra*-body in order to save the world from imminent disaster, to lead faithful souls into liberation, and to destroy evil souls. The last type of divine embodiment can be found in the local temple, where God dwells in the *arcā*, or the stone sacred to Viṣṇu. Again, God resides in the *arcā*-stone with a body of *viśuddha sattva*, and thus the *arcā* body can be viewed as a kind of *avatāra*. The bodies are like garments in which he clothes Himself in order to be closer to His devotees.

b. The World

This discussion of divine immanence naturally leads on to the question of the nature of the world of souls and matter. God is both the efficient and the material cause of the world. He is the efficient, or operative, cause in the sense that He “leads the world from its subtle state to its coarse or evolved state; it is by His will that souls are introduced into nature.”³⁸⁶ In Rāmānuja’s conception of “creation,”

³⁸⁶ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 9.

nothing completely new arises and nothing ceases to be; rather, entities that eternally exist are led from one state into another state. God, who is completely in control of the universe, is the causal agent of the world because He is able to decide whether matter will exist in a causal or effected state. Since matter and souls are eternal, creation does not refer to the origination of entities but instead refers to the manifestation of items that were previously in subtle form in the causal state. In an effected state, nature assumes a new kind of transformation into gross matter, and souls are introduced into this realm of coarse materiality. Johanns explained:

Rāmānuja is a strong upholder of what modern philosophers call immanent causality. Admitting the first principle of all *Vedāntic* philosophy that “what is can never not be, and what is not can never be” (*Gītā*, ii, 16) he naturally infers that (1) no effect is produced *ex nihilo*, but it is evolved from the cause, and that (2) the cause, whilst producing, does not cease to be but remains in the effect. Causality is thus conceived as a mere transformation of the cause into the effect... By becoming an effect, the cause is really transformed, really changes: from an implicit stage it passes to an explicit stage really different from the first.³⁸⁷

God is also the material cause of the world, for souls and nature are His modes which inhere in Him. No entity exists external to His organic wholeness. Thus, God’s identity as a substance qualified by eternal modes is always unchanging; God becomes a material cause by initiating a transformation in His own body. As a part of His body, it can be claimed of modes that “qualitatively they are identical with God, although quantitatively they are different.”³⁸⁸

When the world undergoes cosmic dissolution and returns to its latent, unmanifested form, God exists in His causal state. These entities then re-emerge with the subsequent “creation” of the world by God, and God then exists in His effected state. Rāmānuja’s hermeneutic for dealing with the monistic sounding *Upaniṣadic* texts which appear to deny the multiplicity of distinct material and immaterial objects is to understand these texts as referring to the causal state where things exist in a latent condition only. The manifested, gross world is considered an effect of this latent condition because the concrete matter previously existed in a different state as subtle matter; the effect is only a transformed state of the causal

³⁸⁷ *Light of the East*, 2 (October, 1923), p. 4.

³⁸⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 9.

condition. The distinctions always existed in God, though sometimes in subtle form, and there never was a higher undifferentiated state of God's being in which *cit* and *acit* could not be distinguished. Johanns compared the causality envisioned by Rāmānuja to the relation of the clay and the jar:

The jar is but a state of the clay. All its reality is clay, and when the jar is broken, the potsherds again are but a different state of the clay. Nothing new is produced, and nothing old is lost: for reality remains the same in all its transformations. The same holds true with regard to the world-involution and evolution. They are but transitions from one state to another, the fundamental reality remaining all the time the same.³⁸⁹

And so God is able to undergo a multitude of transformations in His body, as He moves from subtle to manifested states, while his inner Being and His identity as a substance that is qualified by attributes and modes remains forever fixed. All modifications take place in the body of God and not in the essence of God. The body of God may contain impurities associated with phenomenal existence, but the inner being of God remains forever untainted. Johanns explained that according to Rāmānuja, "the Absolute remains unaffected in the depth of its substance and transforms only its surface accidents. Besides its eternal unchanging essence, the Absolute has an accidental coating, a body as it were, of potential souls and matter. This body, and not the unchanging essence, evolves into actual souls and matter."³⁹⁰

The world in Rāmānuja's system is comprised of souls and matter. The individual soul is itself a subject that possesses a host of attributes. In the same way that God's primary attribute is *jñāna*, the soul is characterized by knowledge and awareness. The soul is self-conscious and is a pure spirit. While it has its own identity as a substratum that is itself qualified, it is forever a mode of God. Its only reason for being is intimately associated with its relationship with God. Johanns asserts regarding the identity of the soul:

From all eternity God possesses these two modes, this twofold cosmic body: the souls which are minute (*aṇavas*) in size and distinct from one another, and matter. But no modification of the divine essence has preceded and caused the appearance of these modes: they are and always have been and always will be the static "accidents," the eternal predicates of God. Yet the souls depend on God intrinsically and

³⁸⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 10.

³⁹⁰ *Light of the East*, 2 (October, 1923), p. 5.

essentially. For, being only modes, they can not claim perseity: they are not by themselves, they are only by God, their ontological background and the foundation of their possibility.³⁹¹

The soul (*jīva*) of an individual is distinct from *prakṛti*, because as *cit* it possesses intelligence and consciousness. This inner self is infinitesimally small and lacks any appendages. It eternally remains the same, though in the condition of *saṃsāric* bondage the essential nature of the self becomes obscured. The true nature that the self always possesses shines through in an unrestricted fashion in the liberated state. While *jīvas* share the same basic constitution, there are multitudes of independent *jīvas* that have separate identities. By nature they are blissful and self-aware, but because of ignorance and *karma* they are subject to the bondage of *saṃsāra*. There are three types of souls: those who are embodied and are currently trapped in *saṃsāra*, those who have been liberated from *saṃsāra*, and those who have never been bound in the cycle of transmigration. The *saṃsāric* soul controls and sustains a physical body, and the body exists for the sake of the soul. Thus, the body is a mode of the individual *jīva*.

The soul does not naturally come into contact with the world of gross matter. In its perfected state, the soul's consciousness is focused directly upon God and the heavenly world of ideal matter. It is only in an unnatural state that the soul gazes upon gross materiality. It acquires the faculties for sense perception and world consciousness through associations with *prakṛti*. The attribute of *jñāna* is abnormally restricted when the soul is introduced into a world of coarse matter. It should be undistracted in its gaze upon the ideal world of God's glory, but when the consciousness is compressed by the faculties, the soul begins to become entranced by nature. The association of the soul with *prakṛti* is a direct result of the soul's opposition to God's ownership over it. According to Johanns, "the soul wanted to be its own god, chose to become its own principle, its own end and its own providence, by *karma*."³⁹² Rejecting its union with God, it opposed itself to the divine purposes and exercised its free will in rebellion against Him.³⁹³ The selfishness of the soul brought it into contact with a physical body. The soul made a definite choice to

³⁹¹ *Light of the East*, 2 (January, 1924), p. 4.

³⁹² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 12.

³⁹³ Johanns commented: "For since it is only the conversion of the heart that can bring the soul back to God, its falling away from God must have been due to the heart's aversion from Him." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 14.

ignore its true identity as a mode of God, as His cosmical body, and this led to alienation from God and from others. God allowed the soul to experience the results of this perilous decision. It could no longer look upon the beauty of God. Johannis described the unnatural union of soul with coarse matter that God sanctioned:

Before the eyes of the soul He displayed unconscious Nature... *Rajas* arose, the *guṇa* that fills the soul with rebellious instincts and passions, and invites it to seek the vain pleasures of the world. *Tamas* followed suit which paralyses all its ideal endeavors. The soul, no longer able to repose on God, reclined on Nature. But there is no rest in Nature. So, Nature carried the soul away into the whirlpool of transmigration.³⁹⁴

In Rāmānuja's system, *avidyā* is essentially the compression of a consciousness that is bound to the material world. The soul begins to conceive of itself as completely independent from God and identifies itself with its body and faculties. It loses its God-consciousness and lives as if it were absolute. Johannis stated, "*Vidyā*, in Rāmānuja, means the intuition that the soul is a mode of God and that God is its fundamental self. In opposition to this *vidyā*, *avidyā* cannot be anything else than the contradictory view that God is not the fundamental self and that the soul is not a mode of God, a view created by the illusion that nature affords to the soul its real self and that, consequently, the soul is but a mode of nature identical with the body."³⁹⁵ The manifested, created world is not an illusion in the metaphysics of Rāmānuja; it is only an unnatural state of affairs that the soul has chosen.

God's nature toward souls in bondage is that of complete mercy and justice. He allows souls to enter the state of *saṃsāra* when they "turn away from Him and thus from their true self and their true world. But He only allows this fall in order to reveal His mercy, by gratuitously delivering souls from a state of misery which they have brought upon themselves."³⁹⁶ Nature, while intrinsically a mode of God, becomes a kind of mode-possessor of the soul when the soul becomes preoccupied with the material world. But this reversal is entirely unnatural and cannot provide ultimate satisfaction for the soul. The transitory pleasures and the sharp pains that the soul feels in its course of living in the world are meant to slowly create a sense of disillusionment. It cannot find true contentment until it recognizes its true identity

³⁹⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 14.

³⁹⁵ *Light of the East*, 2 (July, 1924), p. 4.

³⁹⁶ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 8.

and its rightful relation with God. Johanns commented, “Nature’s purpose is to reward and to punish the spirit, and to make visible its inner guilt. It holds a mirror before the eyes of the guilty soul, and shows it what it means to turn away from God and from itself. The soul uses Nature to realize its ideal of pleasure; God uses nature to drive selfishness to despair.”³⁹⁷ Thus, nature functions both as the punishment for the self-absorption of the soul and as the means by which God teaches the *jīva* that it cannot live without Him. For the soul that clings to God in complete devotion, God will disregard the *karmic* debt that has been accrued in the successive lives the *jīva* has led. The soul possesses the complete freedom to make its own moral choices. For the *jīva* that is desirous of doing good, God will enable it to achieve its ends; but for evil souls, God will harden them in their rebelliousness. God allows the *karmic*-order to provide retribution and reward for the free choices of individuals. Indeed, He fashions the world according to the *karmic*-accretions that have been built up by the souls. But God is never bound by the laws of *karma* and can intervene in grace to wipe out all debts whenever He so wills.

Thus, Johanns understood Rāmānuja’s theoretical philosophy as endorsing an understanding of God as a person replete with infinite perfections and with modes which qualify His substance. The world of nature and souls forms the body of God and is His internal mode, dependent upon Him and unintelligible apart from Him. God is both the efficient and material cause of the world. The divine presence is immanent within the world, and He takes upon Himself various bodies in order to carry out His redemptive purposes.

2. Practical Philosophy

a. Freedom from Selfishness

God intends the world to wean the soul away from its self-interest. Having become disillusioned with the pains and the fleeting joys that the world offers to the transmigrating soul in the *karma*-controlled realm of *saṃsāra*, the *jīva* begins to look outside itself for aid. It is now willing to listen to the Scriptures and to place faith in the God whom it had previously ignored. It recognizes that selfishness will never

³⁹⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 16.

provide lasting satisfaction and that the material world is not capable of enabling the soul to have true contentment. The *jīva* embarks upon a new way of living, upon the path of *karma-yoga* that is oriented to God. Johanns explained, “Now the soul has taken the great step. It has condemned selfishness, which is at the root of *saṃsāra*. The unselfish practice of moral and Scriptural duties, which it now performs, constitutes the *karma-yoga*. It is yoga, because it imposes on us the inhibition of selfishness; it is *karma*, because it is yet voluntary action.”³⁹⁸ This type of action is entirely pleasing to God, for the soul is not hoping to attain worldly benefits through its performance of good works; rather, the works are done simply because they have been commanded by God and will be acceptable to Him. It may be rightly noted that a spirit of *bhakti* is informing the true practice of *karma-yoga*. Johanns described: “But, in order to help to salvation, works must be disinterested. Any work, were it even but a sacrificial work imposed by the *Veda*, performed for the sake of earthly or paradisiacal (*svarga*) rewards keeps the performer within the meshes of *saṃsāra*, by encouraging egotism and promoting self-embodiment. We ought therefore to perform these works with the intention of revering and propitiating God.”³⁹⁹ The soul also cultivates a mentality that is endorsed by *jñāna-yoga*. Johanns contrasted the style of *jñāna-yoga* that Rāmānuja advocates to the one put forth by Śaṅkara:

The soul should not cohibit its worldly functions in order simply to withdraw within the light of its essential nature, but in order to withdraw within that light as within a mode of God. And again *bhakti* must be its aim. It should be resorted to with the express intention to render the soul fit for contemplative love of God. Hence, both *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, used as a means to reach *bhakti*, belong to the *via purgativa*.⁴⁰⁰

The paths of knowledge and works, when informed by an attitude of devotion to God, purge the soul of its previous self-absorption and selfishness.⁴⁰¹ The *jīva* begins to look increasingly upon God with greater intensity and interest. God sheds His grace upon it in a “release of the divine light” so that there is an “illumination of the intellect and an inspiration of the will, together with a rectification of the

³⁹⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 20.

³⁹⁹ *Light of the East*, 3 (October, 1924), p. 3-4.

⁴⁰⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 21.

⁴⁰¹ Johanns stated that “Rāmānuja accorde que nos oeuvres ont de fait une valeur purificatrice, mais en même temps, elles transfigurent et restaurent notre nature spirituelle, corrompue par le péché, originel et personnel à la fois, du *karma*.” *Le Caractère Chrétien et la Mystique Indienne*, p. 6.

heart.”⁴⁰² This form of purification of the inner attitudes and outlook enables the soul to refrain from activities which lead to the build-up of future *karmic* accretions. The way to purge the soul of the bondage of its past deeds is also through its willingness to “resort to means that will render possible its concentration on God and, in God, on itself as a mode of God. The means of steady remembrance (*bhakti*) are, we are told: abstention (*viveka*), freeness of mind (*vimoka*), repetition (*abhyāsa*), works (*kriyā*), virtuous conduct (*kalyāṇi*), freedom from dejection (*anavasāda*) and absence of exultation (*anuddharṣa*).”⁴⁰³

These prescribed methods will enable the *jīva* to focus its meditative attention upon God as a means of further preparing it for fellowship with Him. Johanns noted, “Asceticism is, of course, also required, for without it meditation is impossible and the transference of our love from our false self to our true Over-Self God unattainable.”⁴⁰⁴ The soul will abstain (*viveka*) from unclean foods and living conditions. Then it will free its mind (*vimoka*) from worldly concerns so that it may fix its gaze upon God. Repetition (*abhyāsa*) of the acts, qualities and images of God in the mind will enhance this concentration. Dutiful works (*kriyā*) and virtuous conduct (*kalyāṇi*) will create a positive inner state of being. Johanns wrote:

Virtuous conduct embraces truthfulness, honesty, kindness, liberality, gentleness, absence of covetousness. One immediately notices that these are the very virtues that favour contemplation. We call them passive virtues because they are meant to create a peaceful atmosphere, discarding all internal and external motives of agitation either with regard to ourselves or with regard to our neighbour.⁴⁰⁵

The soul must renounce negative thoughts and attitudes that lead to depression (*anavasāda*). Negativity is not conducive to a *bhakti*-oriented lifestyle. However, a certain sense of dispassion (*anuddharṣa*) toward the joys and achievements garnered in the world must also be developed in order to keep the *jīva* from developing attachments to temporal things. All of these methods that are advised by Rāmānuja are meant to free up the soul internally and externally to concentrate upon eternal things and to direct its gaze upon the loveliness of God. These methods and acts of

⁴⁰² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 22.

⁴⁰³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 22. The term *viveka* literally means “discrimination,” but it has the secondary meaning of “abstention.”

⁴⁰⁴ *Light of the East*, 3 (October, 1924), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 23.

purgation and attentiveness to God are preparatory means that lead to the liberative end of affective knowledge.

b. The Path of *Bhakti*

Purgation does not complete the process of knowing *Brahman*; rather the one seeking God must achieve a contemplativeness which will result in a direct experiential perception of God. Because this meditative, mystical experience of God is so immediate, the devotee acquires true liberating knowledge “based on the conviction that God is the Over-Self...The effect of meditation is, with the grace of God, to render this intellectual conviction more vivid and concrete.”⁴⁰⁶ The *bhakta* finds that his object of adoration becomes an object of intuited perception. God does not remain simply the object to be loved, but He reveals Himself as a lover to the soul, and the soul feels the joy of intimate union with God. The immediate, existential awareness of the deity goes beyond detached, intellectual knowledge. Love is further enhanced by this personal experience of God’s presence, which is eminently blissful. The devotee now desires to serve God with a previously unknown abandon and vigor. Thus, the highest form of *bhakti* includes self-surrender, fervent action, knowledge, and adoration.⁴⁰⁷

Affective knowledge will bring about a transition from the previous attitude of rebellion that had initially distanced the soul from God. The state of the heart must be radically altered if the estrangement from God is to cease. The individual must become cognizant of its proper status before God. Johanns detailed this salvific type of knowledge that achieves release:

It is true that at first we only know God through our ideas of Him.
But by our concentration we must transform these representations or remembrances, into a presentation, an intuition. And this intuition

⁴⁰⁶ *Light of the East*, 3 (October, 1924), p. 4. The greatest expression of *bhakti* is the utter surrender of the soul to God. The various details of the practical philosophy of Rāmānuja are meant to inculcate this attitude of complete submission. Johanns described this attitude: “*Prapatti* is entire surrender of the soul to God, by which the devotee lives the truth that God is his Self, the Soul of his soul, and consequently abandons himself entirely to the Providence of the Inner Ruler that directs him from within. Then there is no longer self-love or self-seeking, since God has taken the place of the self; the soul has no longer any purpose of its own, but it allows itself to be swayed by the divine Beloved.” *Light of the East*, 3 (October, 1924), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Johanns asserted that “Rāmānuja, pour prouver sa fidélité aux *Upaniṣads*, déclare que, de fait, c’est la connaissance qui délivre. Mais il définit la connaissance libératrice comme une connaissance méditative, contemplative et affective, qui se prouve par les oeuvres.” *Le Caractère Chrétien et la Mystique Indienne*, p. 5.

must not be a momentary flash; it must become an habitual outlook, working as spontaneously as if it were an innate disposition. We should thus become aware of the presence of God and His presence only, being aware of ourselves only as we are in God, and of our world as it is in God.⁴⁰⁸

This sort of experiential, affective knowledge of God's presence initiates the return of the soul back to its true Source. It was not that the soul was in actuality separated from God, but rather it refused to acknowledge its dependence upon Him and became increasingly forgetful of its true relation to God. The cultivation of affective knowledge enables the *jīva* to intensify its awareness of the Beloved and to make this meditative perception a habitual, natural part of its living. Meditation and *bhakti* are so closely intertwined in the thought of Rāmānuja that they are virtually identical. Rāmānuja defines *bhakti* in his writings as loving reflection on God and constant remembrance of Him. As a *bhakta* meditates, he becomes completely entranced with the person of God. Johanns detailed this sort of meditation:

The object of meditation must become so vivid that it does no longer bear any trace of abstraction; it must become concrete, an object of direct vision almost, a living experience. This object is God, considered at least under all His essential attributes, and as the Self of the meditating soul. For the aim of the meditation is to re-establish the proper relation between God and the soul: the relation of Substance to mode, of Self to attribute.⁴⁰⁹

The purpose of this experiential knowledge is that of "incorporating us again within the organization of the eternal and divine values. The *bhakti* which Rāmānuja preaches is, therefore, intellectual appreciation rather than mere sense-affection."⁴¹⁰ This meditation allows the soul to recognize that it has value only in relation to the Highest Value of God. It is utterly dependent upon Him. The sort of *bhakti* that is enhanced by meditation and fixation upon God leads to the ultimate release of *mokṣa*.

In the state of *mokṣa*, the individuality of the self is not abolished or subsumed into the metaphysical Absolute. The self enjoys fellowship with God and achieves fullness of being in this sweet communion. *Mokṣa* is complete release from the fetters that keep the self in bondage and ignorance. An utterly free, perfected self will always have God to adore and love. In this condition, "all our desires realize

⁴⁰⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 24.

⁴⁰⁹ *Light of the East*, 3 (October, 1924), p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 25.

themselves, and all sorrows caused by the world cease. It is indeed evident that the realization of the truth and the vision of God fix for ever our souls in goodness.”⁴¹¹ Thus, *bhakti* is eternal. The liberated individual has no need of anything and basks in the eternal presence of God. The limiting effects of *saṃsāra* are forever gone, and the self realizes the abundant knowledge and bliss that were its natural qualities but that were obscured by *karma* and *avidyā*. Thus, the self does not take on a new nature, but simply manifests its essential nature that was blocked by its entrapment in *saṃsāra*. In Rāmānuja’s conception of salvation, *mokṣa* is primarily the unimpeded vision of God that the soul is graciously granted. This beatific vision is the unambiguous ultimate goal of *mokṣa*. After death, the liberated soul lives in a direct state of existential intimacy with God. Johanns concluded: “Because in proper relation with God, in harmony with the Supreme Reality, the soul thus finds itself in harmony with itself, with the other souls and with nature. The consciousness of its being one with God, who in His turn is one with all, has created that other consciousness of universal harmony in which the soul now reposes, an all-satisfying peace, and eternal and permanent happiness.”⁴¹²

And so Johanns viewed the practical philosophy of Rāmānuja as trying to cultivate internal attachment to God which leads to a direct experiential encounter with Him, as well as an appreciation of the abiding divine presence. The soul should view itself as utterly dependent upon God and as a mode participating in His reality. Loving surrender and devotion is the path that is most conducive to re-orienting the soul to a realization of its true identity.

B. Contributions of Rāmānuja to the Synthesis

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. Definition of God

Johanns resumed his discussion on the legitimacy of attributing qualities to God by describing the epistemological approach taken by Rāmānuja. He noted:

Let us remember that Rāmānuja in opposition to Śāṅkara is a most naïve realist. Things are to him as they are known to us, to our logical

⁴¹¹ *Light of the East*, 3 (November, 1924), p. 4.

⁴¹² *Light of the East*, 3 (November, 1924), p. 4.

function of judgment, that unifies subject and predicate (*this* is good); there must therefore according to him correspond in the reality attributes or modes one with their substratum by the relation of inherence. God, being a ‘predicable,’ an object of judgment, is therefore in the eyes of Rāmānuja essentially a substratum in which qualities inhere, a subject endowed with attributes.⁴¹³

Johanns asserted that Rāmānuja’s approach to God is through *via affirmationis*, whereby the ordinary process of human judgment described above is able to posit true statements regarding the divine nature. For Rāmānuja, knowledge is always obtained of any given object by ascertaining the properties of the substance. Denial of the common function of distinguishing attributes and substance would lead to a view where God would not be able to be defined. Such a denial would entail an epistemology of judgment without affirmation, but this would not be comprehensible to the human mind.

Rāmānuja senses the need to posit divine characteristics through the *via affirmationis* to add content to our knowledge of God. Rāmānuja is more than willing to ascribe a host of attributes to God’s nature. When Rāmānuja employs a description of God as a substance owning an innumerable variety of spiritual qualities, his description of God “makes it possible for us to give a positive content to the notion of the Absolute Simplicity” of the divine.⁴¹⁴ Without such an ability to attribute a positive content to God’s nature, God would be an empty void, for all intents and purposes, to the human mind. Rāmānuja rightly denies this notion of the divine; in his opinion, such a position amounts to crypto-Buddhism. Rāmānuja feels that Śāṅkara comes close to advocating this sort of stance, and Rāmānuja is rightly hesitant to fully comply with the *advaitic* view on this issue. Rāmānuja asserts that God not only possesses a panoply of qualities but also that His attributes are only of an auspicious sort. He denies all finitude or imperfection in these attributes, in a type of *via negationis*, to guard from putting forth an improper view of the divine by unnuanced comparisons with human nature. And thus he seeks to purify God’s qualities from any association with limitation; God’s attributes are only similar to human attributes in an analogous fashion. Johanns finds all of these attitudes of Rāmānuja very beneficial in constructing a proper view of divine attribution. Without the elements of affirmation and negation of limitation espoused by

⁴¹³ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 3.

⁴¹⁴ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 68.

Rāmānuja, God would be cut off from human knowledge, and nothing at all could be said about Him. In Rāmānuja's system, assertions can be made about a real entity, such as God, "for a real is a predicable, the object of a possible judgment, and therefore a subject that has predicates."⁴¹⁵

Having established the validity of the process of attribution, Johanns described Rāmānuja's positive explication of God approvingly:

Rāmānuja begins his exposition of the nature of God with a nominal, or rather etymological, description. The *Veda* gives to the Supreme the name *Brahman*. *Brahman* is derived from *br̥h*, to swell, to grow. The first attribute that this name invites us to give to God is therefore that of "*br̥hattva*," unconditioned growth or greatness. *Brahman* is thus the substance qualified by unconditional greatness. God is therefore infinite substance, and endowed with attributes infinite in the line of quantity (endowed with an infinite number of attributes) and in the line of quality (each one of the attributes is unlimited in its perfections.)⁴¹⁶

God, the divine substance in whom a multitude of perfected attributes inhere, is thus a person with a particular personality. Johanns noted that among the *Vedāntins*, Rāmānuja is the most vigorous defender of the personhood of God. God is a "knowing subject." The notion of divine knowledge presupposes an ego, an I, to which knowledge is presented. The divine subject must be a knower, and not just content-less knowledge. God is not simply undifferentiated consciousness, for such a concept is elusive, rather He is completely self-cognizant. Johanns reiterated Rāmānuja's position that "God cannot be mere self-subsistent Light. If He has to be more than an abstraction, he must be a knowing subject, a person."⁴¹⁷ His knowledge includes self-knowledge; as a perceiving subject He is capable of self-perception. He knows all of His attributes and modes, and He knows Himself as a substance possessing attributes and modes. Johanns asserted, "These attributes,

⁴¹⁵ *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 5. Johanns described Rāmānuja's hermeneutical techniques that are meant to guard the manifold qualities of God when dealing with the Scriptures: "He gives his preference to the texts which describe *Brahman* as possessing attributes. The texts that deny to God any attribute he interprets as meaning only that God has no attribute that would contradict His perfections, e.g., attributes that derive from *karma* or from union with unconscious nature. Rāmānuja's conception of substantiality thus enables him to solve in his own way the problem of the reconciliation of apparently contradictory texts of the *Upaniṣads*." *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 5.

⁴¹⁶ *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 6.

⁴¹⁷ "Hinduism," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 22.

being pervaded by knowledge, the most fundamental attribute, are luminous and luminous to the knowing subject, the divine I. This being so, God not only has divine ideas, divine emotions, wishes and volitions, but He knows these attributes, His infinite love and mercy, His infinite ideas and powers, His infinite conceptions and volitions.”⁴¹⁸

Jnāna is illuminative and allows the divine consciousness to become aware of external objects, as well as internal thoughts, emotions, and inclinations. Self-consciousness and self-determination, the essential aspects that characterize personality, are exhibited by the divine substance. God is personal within Himself, for He is completely self-aware, and God is personal within the world which is His body, for He is intimate with and present to souls. Part of God’s self-awareness entails His complete knowledge of the world-mode, which is so totally dependent upon Him that God can rightly be identified as the mode-possessor of the world. In one sense, God is completely transcendent over the world, and He is able to exercise His will over the world as He so desires. God has attributes which are indicative of his transcendent relation to the world: “lordly and miraculous power, glory and splendor, unrestricted knowledge and self-sufficiency.”⁴¹⁹ His omnipotence is absolute, for He is able to deliver souls from bondage or to keep them entrapped in *samsāra*. He has utter control over His body. In another sense, God is completely immanent, for His *antaryāmin* pervades the world. His character includes both mercy and justice, in a fascinating polarity. God justly allows souls to experience the misery that their rebellion has procured, but He is ever near to souls that submit to Him and place complete trust in His grace. Johanns indicated the greatness of God’s mercy: “if a soul wants to do good, God helps it to reach its goal... As soon as a soul loves Him, God no longer claims the payment of the infinite debt that the soul has contracted, but cancels it all.”⁴²⁰

Rāmānuja is thus the preeminent theologian of God’s complete personhood. All of the attributes that the divine person exhibits may be regarded as “perfections,” for they are intrinsically infinite and resplendent. While souls, in some of the

⁴¹⁸ *Light of the East*, 2 (December, 1923), p. 3-4.

⁴¹⁹ *Light of the East*, 13 (February, 1935), p. 55.

⁴²⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 8.

qualities they display, may mirror the divine character, the attributes of the souls are of a different order than God's characteristics:

Even the perfections which the souls has, are therefore "participated." Perfections to a mode, they would not be, if the mode itself were not supported by *Brahman*, the ultimate substance. On the contrary, the perfections of God are fully independent of any other substance or entity. They stand therefore on a different level: they are primary, independent and typical, and we cannot ascend to the knowledge of them through those of the soul, without transcending the latter... He is distinct by the transcendence of His qualities which are in Him not borrowed, and thus of necessity secondary and imitated, but depending on His essence alone, and thus primary and typical.⁴²¹

And so Rāmānuja is comfortable confessing that God has qualities, emotions, and plans that are His own and that excessive love and mercy overflow from Him. But these characteristics of God do not imply that He is weak or needy, for Rāmānuja is ever insistent that the divine features are free from the restrictions and imbalances that are recognizable in human aims and qualities. Johanns concluded that "Rāmānuja thus gives us the God of our heart, the God who answers our religious needs,... a God whom we can have always present to our mind, treasure in our heart, with whom we can live in close familiarity and friendship."⁴²²

b. God and the World

Rāmānuja, to the same extent as Śāṅkara, wrestles with the issues related to the way in which the world is in God. The great assertion that Rāmānuja brings forth about the identity of the world is that it is a mode of God. Johanns noted that "there is some truth in Rāmānuja's affirmation that the world is a mode of God. For the world cannot possess any reality by itself, for itself and in itself. It only can participate in Reality, the reality of God. It is essentially related to God."⁴²³ As a mode "participating" in the reality of God, the world can be described as real, albeit a reality which is contingent, dependent upon God; it is completely real due to its relation to God. Rāmānuja, like Śāṅkara, dismisses the possibility of an independent world, which can account for its existence apart from God. He teaches that "all is therefore supported by the absolute substance, which, whilst supporting itself,

⁴²¹ *Light of the East*, 2 (November, 1923), p. 6.

⁴²² *Light of the East*, 2 (December, 1923), p. 4.

⁴²³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 26.

supports also its immediate modes and all the other modes that successively place themselves one upon the other on these immediate modes...God is the unsupported support of all the real.”⁴²⁴ The world can thus be viewed as the “body” of God, for it is controlled and supported by God, and it is meant to serve His ends and bring glory to Him. The world is always subservient to the exercise of the divine will. Part of the strength of Rāmānuja’s system is that he highlights sharply the fact that the world is so closely connected to and dependent upon God as its ultimate support that it is completely unintelligible apart from Him. The world has an identity that is forever bound up with its relation to God. As the body of God, it is an “extension” of Him in the sense that it reflects His splendor; it can be said to “qualify” Him by adding to His super-eminent beauty its own limited beauty which derives from and reflects Him.

The world of souls and matter images God, for the fundamental qualities that Rāmānuja wished to predicate of God are also to be found in the finite world, although in a limited manner. Johanns explained that even the most basic characteristics found in the world, being and awareness, are an expression of God, the unified *saccidānanda*. The world does not replicate the complete perfection of God, and yet it illustrates on a restricted level the divine nature analogically. It is a significant notion that God is the cause of the world-effect, for one can infer certain features of the cause by observing the fundamental qualities of the effect. The effect naturally expresses something of the cause in its essential nature. With regard to the limitations of the world, Rāmānuja teaches that God is independent from the world, and thus God’s essence is not tainted by the imperfections present in the world. And so Johanns thought that to the perennial philosophy, Rāmānuja’s contribution of a world of relative reality, dependent upon God, is essential. Johanns explained: “We admit with Rāmānuja that the world must be real and really related to God. Again, in that case the world cannot be anything else than an image. For an image is precisely that which has no meaning except by its relation to an original. Take away the relation, and the image becomes mere wood or stone.”⁴²⁵

Johanns also appreciated Rāmānuja’s development of the concept of an ideal, perfected world that is not within the realm of *saṃsāra*. In the liberated state,

⁴²⁴ *Light of the East*, 2 (April, 1924), p. 4.

⁴²⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 28.

“unaffected by error and with the beauty of the *Bhagavat* before its spiritual eyes, no soul could desire anything out of harmony with the will of God, or with the laws by which He rules His divine play in the universe...The soul finds itself in harmony with all other souls and with nature itself.”⁴²⁶ This ideal world is not in conflict with the divine purposes. In the same way that the manifested world is an “ectype” of the ideal, perfected world, the ideal world is the “ectype” of the divine attributes. And thus the ideal world mirrors the divine more closely than the *saṃsāric* world.⁴²⁷ There is no selfishness or fractured existence to be found in this world; the ideal world is the liberated condition that souls bound in *saṃsāra* strive to reach. Johanns accepted Rāmānuja’s teaching that there is an ideal world as well as a divine world-plan. The ideal world-plan of a perfected condition was always present in the mind of God, even prior to the actuation of the manifested world. He explained that “as God works by intelligence, the world is needs present to Him in an anticipation of its reality, for an ordered world can only be understood by its plan. We are thus justified in speaking of the ideal God has of the world.”⁴²⁸ The ideal world-plan is the goal of universal harmony toward which it is proper to strive. The ideal world is fully realized in the state of *mokṣa* when the souls attain release. Johanns developed his discussion of the return to the ideal world in the liberated state in his treatment of Rāmānuja’s practical philosophy.

Perhaps the most marvelous insight that Rāmānuja develops in his theology, according to Johanns, is the notion that God is immanent within and accessible to the world. Johanns explained: “Rāmānuja admits that God is immanent in the world. How? As a soul is immanent in its body. God, therefore, is within the world by His knowledge. As all things are modes of God and as God underlies these modes, He knows them from within.”⁴²⁹ Johanns lauded the basic thrust of Rāmānuja’s concern with divine immanence; he is captivated by the spirit of Rāmānuja’s doctrine of divine presence in the world. While he sought to correct some of the specifics of the concepts, such as *avatāra*, he was nevertheless appreciative of the theological import of the concepts. It is not the particularities of the various forms of divine descent but the overall spirit that intrigued Johanns. The idea put forth by Rāmānuja that God is

⁴²⁶ *Light of the East*, 3 (November, 1924), p. 4.

⁴²⁷ *Light of the East*, 3 (February, 1925), p. 4.

⁴²⁸ *Light of the East*, 5 (January, 1927), p. 5.

⁴²⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 29.

an *antaryāmin* in the world is a beautiful depiction of the presence of God. Johanns stated that as the *antaryāmin*, “God is also within us as a person trying to enter into fellowship with our own person.”⁴³⁰ God is present within the soul, sustaining and guiding it; there is the potential for an active fellowship between the willing soul and the indwelling God. God’s desire to identify Himself with the souls in the world by way of various types of divine condescension is also a profound intuition that Rāmānuja emphasizes, according to Johanns. The absolute God has come to earth as *avatāra* to provide aid for humanity. His identity as God does not preclude him from drawing near to those in need. For the soul that will surrender to His grace, there is a complete sense of familiarity and intimacy between God and the devotee. Johanns wrote, “The motive why God descends on earth is perhaps the best feature of the Hindu theory of *avatāra*: to deliver man from some moral cataclysm, to bring to nought the work of the devils, to teach the theory of love.”⁴³¹ The various forms of divine descent and presence are for the benefit of humanity and the moral uplift of the world. God seeks to draw souls into blissful fellowship with Him. For, “to a soul that surrenders entirely to God there is no condescension and no familiarity which God will not grant, provided however it remains consonant with divine and human dignity.”⁴³²

Johanns also found Rāmānuja’s observations regarding the nature of the soul appealing. Rāmānuja considers the soul as a “self-luminous substance” replete with “properties of intelligence, volition, and emotion.”⁴³³ Johanns found such a definition of the soul very valuable. The reality of the individual soul is never questioned by Rāmānuja or explained away; even in the state of release, the soul will not lose its identity. He also agreed with Rāmānuja’s observation that the soul is a spiritual subject that is able to look upon an object and cognize it. The soul is identified with God in a certain sense, since it images God and qualifies Him.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 30.

⁴³¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 32.

⁴³² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 34.

⁴³³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 34.

⁴³⁴ Johanns developed how the identification theory of Rāmānuja works itself out in practical terms: “The practical philosophy of Rāmānuja is based on the identification of man with God and of God with man. Rāmānuja admits a certain identity of God and the soul, since the soul is a mode of God or a “body” of God. Although, then, the soul subsists in itself in so far as it has its own attributes, it subsists at the same time in God since it qualifies Him. Rāmānuja develops his practical philosophy in this way. Since we are somehow identical with God, as modes are identical with the substance they

Johanns described how the soul images God: “being based on God it naturally reproduces His attributes in its own finite way... As all the attributes of God are ultimately derived as consequences from His essential being, knowing and enjoying (*saccidānanda*), so the soul has also for its first and essential attributes, from which the others flow, *saccidānanda*.”⁴³⁵

Thus, Johanns felt that Rāmānuja’s metaphysical conceptions are helpful in establishing the validity of making attributions of the divine and for safeguarding the complete personality of God. God is self-conscious and is interactive with the world. Rāmānuja also espouses the reality of the world, which is dependent upon God, imaging His qualities and adding to His glory. God graciously condescends to become present in the world through pervading immanence and divine descent.

2. Practical Philosophy

a. The Way of Purgation, Illumination, and Unity

It is especially in the area of practical philosophy leading to liberative union with God that Johanns was appreciative of Rāmānuja. In Rāmānuja’s theology, the unnatural attachment of the soul to the material entities of this world and to the passing desires of the body must be purged in order for proper God-consciousness to arise. Johanns noted, “As however in the spiritual life the *via purgativa*, or the way that removes obstacles, is for us men the most important step, the spirituality of Rāmānuja covers a great part of our own spirituality.”⁴³⁶ Purgation involves severing improper attachments and exposing misidentifications the soul makes with the phenomenal world. Johanns lauded the basic philosophy that lies behind the way of purgation that Rāmānuja advises:

We agree with Rāmānuja that nothing in the world... can be an end for the soul and therefore a goal of identification for it. All in this world is indifferent and therefore but a *means* for the soul. The material objects, the body, the senses, all our world-functions have no

qualify, we must admit that God treats us as something of Himself. He is for us what the foundation is for its form, and, since we are selves, He is for us as our fundamental or Over-self. We must therefore live by God and for God and in God, identify ourselves with God who must needs identify Himself with us since we are something of Himself.” *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 68.

⁴³⁵ *Light of the East*, 2 (February, 1924), p. 4.

⁴³⁶ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 70.

value in themselves. They are mere means for our identification with God. They are given us to enable us to praise, revere, and serve God or, better still to love God as He loves Himself, for His own sake, and ourselves and the world for the sake of God.⁴³⁷

Johanns concurred with Rāmānuja that a false valuation of the intrinsic significance of the world leads to unhappiness and an unhealthy attitude. With this sort of attitude, “our only goal will be independence, pride of life, desire of material things, concupiscence of the eyes, and repose in material satisfaction as the sanction of our self-possession in this world.”⁴³⁸

The beauty of Rāmānuja’s position is that God Himself takes an active role in helping the soul to become detached from the lures of the world. God in His mercy will allow the soul to experience pain and suffering so that it is deprived of its false securities. Even the functioning of the dreaded laws of *karma* is but a device that God uses to instruct the soul of the insanity of its misguided identifications and temporal pursuits. Pain is the greatest gift that God is able to give to wandering souls entranced by the world. In a splendid reversal, the full dispensing of justice becomes a source of mercy to individuals. The experience of *saṃsāra* will drive the soul in the end to surrender to God, who has always had the best interests of the soul in mind. Although *saṃsāra* was never the original intention in the ideal plan of God, His power is so great that He is able to work redemptively within the very suffering that the soul had created by its own rebellion. Johanns explained that “did *saṃsāra* not bring out all the implications of selfishness through the vision of an agonizing world, we would cling to that selfishness forever. Since we cannot tear ourselves away from our self-centration, God has allotted to a world upset to its foundation the task of bringing us to a true view of things.”⁴³⁹ Once the soul is disillusioned with the lures of the world and is contrite over its self-absorption, it is prepared to develop the attitude of *bhakti* that is so necessary.

Johanns found great value in Rāmānuja’s assertion that the present fractured condition of the world is an outcome of the soul’s decision to break free from God. For Johanns, Rāmānuja is correct in concluding that God did not plan the disjointed state of the world; He allowed the world to come to its current condition so that the

⁴³⁷ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 70. Emphasis by Johanns.

⁴³⁸ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 71.

⁴³⁹ *Light of the East*, 5 (November, 1926), p. 4.

soul would return to Him. Selfishness is the culprit behind the miseries of the world, both on an individual and corporate level. Selfishness is nothing less than rebellion against the designs of God. Johanns wrote, “It is also true that there is a tendency in man to live outside God and, therefore, outside his true self. Selfishness is deep-rooted in the soul. The Hindus have rightly sensed the world-wide disorder implicit in that selfishness, and have rightly considered it as the root of all moral and physical evil.”⁴⁴⁰ Selfishness is a disease which plagues the soul, introducing a whole host of evils into the inner disposition of the person. If the problem of selfishness is dealt with sufficiently, the other ills of the soul will be resolved naturally.

For Rāmānuja, union with God in a state of universal harmony is the desired ideal. Johanns drew out the implications of this notion: “the whole question of the ideal centres round the little word ‘for.’ The ideal is realized if we are for God and God is for us, -and if in God, we are for nature and nature is for us, we are for society and society is for us, we are for our selves and our selves are for us. Ideality is universal ‘forness,’ a strange word, but which illustrates the matter to a nicety.”⁴⁴¹ Selfishness creates tensions for humans between each other and between God. It obscures the harmony of the ideal world by creating unnecessary oppositions. Only by adjusting the inner disposition to God and by displacing self-centeredness can humanity hope to return to the ideal state:

Universal harmony and perfection will be brought about when the souls are adapted to their environment, to nature, and when nature consequently is adapted to the souls. Rāmānuja holds that his adaptation cannot be brought about without ascending higher. The souls must at first be adapted, or better, readapted to God and God must be readapted to the souls, and from this adaptation to God, the adaptation of souls to nature and of nature to the souls follows as a necessary consequence. This doctrine moves in the right direction. We are opposed to a certain extent to our world, to ourselves, to our fellowmen. But this opposition cannot be got rid of, if we do not at first do away with our opposition to God.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 37.

⁴⁴¹ *Light of the East*, 4 (July, 1926), p. 7. Emphasis by Johanns.

⁴⁴² *Light of the East*, 4 (May, 1926), p. 5. Johanns further comments: “Mais son idéal de vérité est encore un idéal de bonté. C’est la bonté divine qui se fait justice à l’égard des âmes coupables; c’est elle qui s’épanouit en miséricorde à l’égard de ces mêmes âmes dès qu’elles reviennent à l’idéal de Dieu par la foi ou, comme dit Rāmānuja, par un effort vers le bien; alors, la bonté triomphe de la justice. Dieu est encore beauté, principe de l’harmonie universelle. Selon cette norme esthétique, il adapte les âmes à lui-même, il les rend présentes à son esprit comme à sa corporéité *sattvique*; et c’est

Once the oppositions are removed and the tendencies for self-centeredness are restrained, the world is free to exhibit its true identity as the body of God. Johanns asserted, “Here is the true meaning we may attach to “the divine body” of which Rāmānuja speaks: the universe organized according to the standard of truth, beauty and goodness, where all are for each and each is for one.”⁴⁴³

b. *Bhaktimārga*

Bhakti is the soul’s most appropriate and adequate response to the grace of God. God entralls the soul’s attention and affections. The soul finds its concentration riveted upon God, so much so that the concerns and lures of worldly existence slip out of the mind. *Bhakti* “induces us to fix our mind on God until we become de-centralized from our own self-consciousness opening on a world-consciousness and begin to think like God, to will like God and to enjoy like God. We again become God-centered and look with the divine eyes at God and ourselves and love and enjoy ourselves and the world with the heart of God.”⁴⁴⁴ All outward actions and internal dispositions become focused upon pleasing and adoring Him; apprehending God becomes the primary concern of the individual. By orienting all of its actions toward God, the soul learns to live within the abiding divine presence; its only joy lies in seeking His pleasure. The mind becomes absorbed with the realization that its identity is always connected with God. The dependence upon God exhibited by the soul is recognized, and the soul surrenders to Him, admitting that it is not its own master.⁴⁴⁵

For Johanns, “the crown of Rāmānuja’s system is its theory of *bhakti*, its contention that the love of God is both the end and the means of our self-realization. In this system, one can truly say, love is the way and love is the goal. All our moral and religious endeavor is actuated by the bliss that accompanies divine

ainsi qu’il les adapte et les rend présentes les unes aux autres. Enfin, dans le divin idéal d’amour, les âmes doivent posséder Dieu comme il se possède lui-même.” *La Mystique Indienne et Chrétienne*, p. 20.

⁴⁴³ *Light of the East*, 4 (July, 1926), p. 8.

⁴⁴⁴ *Light of the East*, 13 (April, 1935), p. 80.

⁴⁴⁵ Johanns concurs that we are “unable to be our own principle, our own providence and our own end. We should, therefore, always remember God, and use all the means that help us to keep our mind fixed on Him. Hence, we should discard all the joys and sorrows that emanate from worldly things, and practice those virtues which maintain us in an atmosphere of peace and calm. Sincerity with ourselves, and justice and charity with regard to others, are absolutely necessary to keep our mind fixed in the contemplation of God.” *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 38.

contemplation and it ends in that same divine contemplation, the consummation of love.”⁴⁴⁶ Love for God involves giving up one’s own plans and completely identifying oneself with His ideals on the level of intellect, will, and emotion. The soul becomes cognizant of its status before God, and it desires God to become ever present to the mind. Rāmānuja uses a famous metaphor that our remembrance of God should be like an ongoing flow of oil.⁴⁴⁷ Johanns endorsed Rāmānuja’s prescription for meditation upon God and cognizance of His presence:

Our remembrance of God should be continual. We should feel closer to God than to ourselves; nay we should feel at home in God alone, and in Him recover our true world and our true self. If we carry on this meditation, it will become so spontaneous that it will be like a vision; and then we can truly say ‘I no longer live but God lives in me.’ It is the love of God that must prompt this meditation. It is our heart that must gather all its rays of light and warmth and direct them on God. To live in God, we must be convinced that He is the highest Value and that all other things borrow their value from Him. We admire this contemplative love taught by Rāmānuja.⁴⁴⁸

With contemplative love, the soul intuits the pervasive presence of God in the world, and it becomes enraptured with the loveliness of God in the mental representation that is formed through meditation. Johanns asserted, “We have not to become present to God for we have ever been; we have only to become aware of that eternal presence. *Bhakti*, contemplation, is thus the mere restoration of our consciousness: an effort as long as it anticipates, a repose as soon as the anticipation is realized to have been a presupposition.”⁴⁴⁹ The Beatific Vision of God is the end goal of this intense orienting of the consciousness to the divine. God is desirous that every soul enjoys a direct vision of Him as well as a participation in His inner life. When the body finally dies, the soul is free to eternally bask in the splendor of God. The nightmare of *samsāra* is over and the soul is able to repose in divine harmony. The

⁴⁴⁶ *Light of the East*, 4 (September, 1926), p. 4-5. Johanns writes, “Mais l’amour des *Vaiṣṇavites* n’est pas uniquement source d’émotion; il jette encore des éclairs, lumière qui appelle la connaissance. Le *bhakta* tend vers Dieu par toute son émotion, il tâche de la posséder, mais toujours selon sa connaissance et dans la vérité. Nous avons donc affaire à un amour intellectuel. De plus, cet amour intellectuel veut réaliser l’idéal qui l’éclaire: il est donc volitif et affectif à la fois.” *La Mystique Indienne et Chrétienne*, p. 24.

⁴⁴⁷ There is a pun in Sanskrit that Rāmānuja may be invoking in his metaphor of oil. The root *snih* denotes anointing or rubbing with oil; the noun *sneha* means affection.

⁴⁴⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁹ *Light of the East*, 5 (December, 1926), p. 5.

Beatific Vision is the final consummation of a life of joyous abiding in the presence of God.

Johanns concluded his assessment of Rāmānuja’s practical theology in this way: “On the whole then, the *via purgativa* which consists in dis-identification from the world of selfish interpretation and the *via illuminativa* and *via unitiva* consisting in a gradual identification with God and in God with our own self and our own world has been well realized by Rāmānuja.”⁴⁵⁰ Johanns felt that Rāmānuja’s practical philosophy is helpful in describing the fractured existence that comes about as the result of selfishness and in prescribing the means of weaning the soul away from egoism through *bhakti* to God. He articulates clearly the truth that contemplative love for God is the highest pursuit and that God’s love actively seeks the redemption of the soul in bondage. A total fixation upon and surrender to God will lead to a Beatific Vision of God.

C. Critique of Rāmānuja’s Position

1. Use of Śaṅkara to Correct Rāmānuja

Despite Johanns’ appreciation of Rāmānuja’s contributions to perennial philosophy, he found certain aspects of the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* position unacceptable and in need of nuancing. Johanns subjected Rāmānuja’s thought to criticism using Śaṅkara’s lofty views. He noted the points where the two philosophers differ, and he attempted to harmonize Rāmānuja with Śaṅkara to bring about a balanced perspective. For example, although Johanns acknowledged the dangerous implications of the complete removal of God from the sphere of human knowledge or judgment, he also admitted that this realistic epistemology of Rāmānuja complicates the absolute Unity of God, for the multiple distinctions between the attributes themselves and between the qualities and the substance in which they inhere compromise the divine simplicity. Johanns suggested, “We must, therefore, if we are to attain somehow the Divine Reality, which is perfect Oneness, transcend Rāmānuja’s conception of God as the substratum in which inhere infinite attributes and, following the lead of Śaṅkara, see that God is perfect identity with His attributes,

⁴⁵⁰ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 71.

is the attributes and *has* them *not*.”⁴⁵¹ Śaṅkara’s epistemology does indeed recognize the need to transcend the normal mode of human judgment. For even in the common act of making a statement about an object, the mind is striving to bring unity between two separate terms by joining them in an identity statement (*this is good*). The mind is positing an identity between the substance and attribute when it links the subject with the predicate. The finite object is not a complete unity in the same sense as an infinite object such as God, and yet the mind seems to recognize that an ideal state of being is the perfect unity between subject and attribute. Johanns explained how Śaṅkara’s view is an improvement upon Rāmānuja’s position:

We may say that Rāmānuja has well realized what our judgments are, but has forgotten to consider the absolute judgment which everyone of them presupposes and which makes each one of them possible... All our individual judgments presuppose, anticipate the affirmation that Being as such is Thought as such, that God, the ideal of our mind is identically Thinking and Being self-subsistent. Not a substratum with attributes but identically *saccidānanda*.⁴⁵²

To Johanns’ mind, Śaṅkara’s position is a necessary complement to Rāmānuja’s on the issue of attributing qualities to the divine. For him, Śaṅkara’s *nirguṇa Brahman* must be synthesized with Rāmānuja’s *saguṇa Brahman*. Rāmānuja elucidates a doctrine whereby God possesses a plenitude of qualities which are analogous to human qualities; this is a necessary element in any view which would allow humans to speak positively about God’s character. But Śaṅkara provides the necessary corrective element, asserting that the manner in which God is a unity of substance and attributes is unparalleled. There is nothing with which to compare Him. Perfect knowledge of God will therefore always exceed human grasp. Johanns explained that “our highest knowledge consists in the realization that God transcends all that we can know about Him, hence Śaṅkara likes to repeat that God is neither this nor that (*neti, neti*), but that God is absolute Silence if we try to attain to the Knowledge which He has of Himself. But Śaṅkara was wrong when he denied the validity of our analogous knowledge and hence we must synthesize him with Rāmānuja.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4. Emphasis by Johanns.

⁴⁵² *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4.

⁴⁵³ “Hinduism”, *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938, p. 29.

Śaṅkara, therefore, adds the necessary *via transcendentiae* to the synthesis by his “transcendent logic” which recognizes that “the attributes are identical with the divine essence.”⁴⁵⁴ For the human mind must transcend its normal process of judgment and recognize that God does not *really* possess a quality such as goodness; He is Goodness. Śaṅkara contributes a corrective to an analogical conception of God, not just purifying the attributes of imperfection, but forcing humans to re-conceive the uniqueness of the divine unity and simplicity. Johanns asserted:

The view of Śaṅkara completes therefore, without destroying it, the view of Rāmānuja. To the *via affirmationis*: to the affirmation that God is good, holy, etc.,- without which our knowledge of God would be a blank- and to the *via negationis*- to the negation of all finitude in the qualities we attribute to God, without which our knowledge of God would be anthropomorphic- it adds the necessary *via transcendentiae*- the affirmation that to know God as He is, we have to transcend the form of judgment which is natural to us and confess that God is not only good, nor only good infinitely and without admixture of imperfection, but that God, although we conceive Him as possessing goodness, etc., is really Goodness itself, identically and inseparably.⁴⁵⁵

A more measured, sophisticated view of divine attribution would learn from Rāmānuja that affirmation of positive qualities devoid of limitation is proper, as long as one remembers Śaṅkara’s doctrine that such qualities are not literally separate attributes inhering in God but instead are the divine essence itself, “identically the Pure infinite Light of Spirituality.”⁴⁵⁶

As to the issue of the relation of the world to God, Śaṅkara has a valuable voice in the discussion. For Śaṅkara, the world is in God in a transcendent way. Johanns thought that Śaṅkara is profound in his assertion that the world’s “independent” reality is absorbed into God’s infinite way of being. From the highest perspective, everything that the world falsely claims as its own is reduced to the reality of God. The *advaitic* position is that God does not have any modes, such as the finite world, which inhere within Him. God’s way of Being must be the unity of

⁴⁵⁴ *Light of the East*, 5 (January, 1927), p. 5.

⁴⁵⁵ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4.

⁴⁵⁶ *Light of the East*, 3 (December, 1924), p. 4. For “although the absolute Light is simplicity itself, it is a legitimate procedure to describe this Light as we apprehend it through the prism of our mind. For, if the attributes we thus ascribe to Him are not *formally* in God, they are in Him *fundamentally*. For God is not deprived of the reality and perfection that is in these attributes; He is only free from their relations which constitute their limits.” *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p 26. Emphasis by Johanns.

identity. This ideal of perfect unity within God would necessitate a perfect identity between the substance and any supposed modes. If God possessed attributes, He would be internally composite; if He possessed modes, He would be externally composite. The materiality of *prakṛti* and the finitude of souls therefore cannot inhere in God in their own way, as Rāmānuja declares. Once again, Rāmānuja must be complemented with Śāṅkara. Johanns drew out the implications of Rāmānuja's system: "Matter is in God as pure *sattva* and souls are in Him as immaterialized spiritual singularities. Taken together they constitute a divine outward organism, as the attributes constitute a divine inward structure. This conception represents God as we may conceive Him in our own, yet uncritical, way. It does not represent Him as we ought to conceive Him according to the ideal of our absolute judgment, the norm of our mind."⁴⁵⁷ Śāṅkara supplies the needed corrective to this idea of the mode inhering internally within God. Śāṅkara recognizes that the world of finiteness, on its own terms, cannot exist within the essence of God. To speak of a limited mode inhering inside of the divine completeness is illogical to Śāṅkara's mind. And so Śāṅkara relegates the world of finitude to a realm, so to speak, outside of God, to the category of unreality. But Johanns went on to correct Śāṅkara with Rāmānuja; while incorporating Śāṅkara's pristine view of God, his negative view of the phenomenal world's unreality needs to be harmonized with Rāmānuja's positive assertion of the world's relative reality. As an analogous image of God's qualities of being, consciousness, and bliss, the world should not be dismissed as unreal. Rather, it is contingent and dependent upon the Absolute reality of God. Johanns suggested that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* would be needed to correlate Śāṅkara with Rāmānuja:

Since God in Himself is the absolute self-subsistent Vision and therefore the absolute Act, as Śāṅkara has it, a further actuation or qualification of God becomes impossible. Hence the world cannot be an inner qualification of God or an immanent form of God. It must be an outer form that subsists within itself although it exists in itself only by God and for God. Now such a world is an image of God and an image is the form of the Original but in another substratum. Hence we differ from Rāmānuja in so far as we admit that, although the

⁴⁵⁷ *Light of the East*, 3 (January, 1925), p. 5. Johanns added: "God, as we have shown in previous articles, is absolute actuality, His own existence, and thus leaves no room within the sphere of His reality for any pre-existent or existent finitude or materiality however ideal and ethereal we may conceive them. We must accept Rāmānuja's view that the world pre-exists ideally, but we must correct his view that this ideal is already particularized and materialised by the doctrine of Śāṅkara that the world neither in its possibility nor in its existence can inhere in God and constitute an inner determination of God." *Light of the East*, 3 (February, 1925), p. 4.

world is by God and for God, it is not in God as His inner form but outside God or inside itself as the image of God.⁴⁵⁸

2. Use of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* to Correct Rāmānuja

Having used the metaphysics of Śāṅkara to correct Rāmānuja, Johanns attempted to show how the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* solves some of the difficulties in Rāmānuja's theology, while protecting the personal theism that he most cherished. Johanns envisioned the world as an external mode of God which participates in the Reality of God; it is completely contingent and dependent upon God. Rāmānuja has difficulty explaining why the evils and imperfections of the world do not affect God, since the world is an internal mode of God in *viśiṣṭādvaita*. Surely the miseries of the world would affect God in some way, since He is conscious of all of His internal modes. Johanns much preferred to characterize the world as an external mode, for "if the world originates from God's active possibility and is received within its own passive possibility, then all its imperfections or partial privations belong to the world alone: on account of its being outside God, in total privation."⁴⁵⁹ The world is better described as a form of the original, God, existing in a different substratum. The world images God's Being and Awareness, and yet its substratum is external to God, in complete privation. The substratum and the image are different from God, but the image expresses God. The image is real and is related to God, finding its meaning and purpose in the original. The world does not possess reality in itself; it only shares the reality imparted to it by God. As to the issue of God's immanence, Johanns tried to explain why conceiving of the world as an external mode of God in fact enables God's presence to be much more profound than if the world were an internal divine mode:

⁴⁵⁸ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 68. Johanns wrote: "If we were internal modes of God, we would after all be something of ourselves and not only something of God. This illusion must disappear, this modal absoluteness must be burned out in the flames of the unrelated absoluteness. After this holocaust we can meditate on God as our Original which we should try to reproduce within us. For, once we consider ourselves as but an image of God, we easily realize that we are only by God, in God and for God." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 38.

⁴⁵⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 28. "Since the mode cannot be an internal mode of God and that yet it must be a mode in order to be at all, it follows that it must be an external mode of participating in the reality of God. Therefore, both Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja must be supplemented by the theory of *creatio ex nihilo*. For it is only this theory that can justify a reality that is completely related to God and exists nevertheless in a sphere of its own, in the sphere of privation. We thus make the theories of the *nirguṇa* and the *saguṇa Brahman* our own, and maintain that the world is indeed a mode of participating in God but a mode external to God." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 27.

On this theory, God is really present to the world by making the world present to itself. For, arising from total privation, the world subsists in a sphere of its own and is thus nothing of God and everything of itself. And yet God is completely present to the world. For the power by which God draws the world from nothingness is not different from His pure actuality. So, if God is present where He acts, He must be present to the world by His absolute Actuality. Thus God is in the world and yet not away from Himself. He is present by giving the world to itself, and that at every instant- for the preservation of creation is but a continual creation. God lives the life of the world by giving it life, whereas we live that life only by receiving it. It is impossible to conceive an immanence of God to the world deeper than this.⁴⁶⁰

Johanns commented that Rāmānuja’s notion that the soul is naturally adapted to God and to a direct vision of God is the result of a dubious understanding of the soul as an entity that “becomes one with God *svena rūpena*, by the very manifestation of the soul’s essential nature.”⁴⁶¹ Thus, for Rāmānuja, there is a clear identity between God and the soul on a level that transcends that of mere image reflecting the original, for the soul is an internal distinction within God and is “qualitatively identical” with Him. The ideal world of souls and matter exists in a state of universal divine harmony prior to a fall away from perfection, and thus liberation is a return to a natural, ready-made condition. This ideal harmony “is not a world to be worked for or evolved, but a world that is accomplished from top to bottom. We have only to become aware of it... Rāmānuja’s spirituality is thus a sort of quietism.”⁴⁶² For Rāmānuja, the grace of God will need to help clear away the obstructions brought about by world-consciousness, but it will not need to transfigure the inner consciousness of the soul, which naturally and spontaneously is fitted to fellowship with God. The souls cannot be perfected in their essential nature; they can only be freed from improper entanglement with the world. Johanns preferred to envision God as actively transfiguring the individual’s consciousness and making it fit for fellowship with Him. Grace becomes all the more profound because the soul is not naturally adapted to intimacy with the divine. He wrote, “We say that God must draw *from nothing* this divine transfiguration which allows Him to make us identifiable with Him. We ascribe therefore the great gift of the Beatific Vision to

⁴⁶⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 29.

⁴⁶¹ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 69.

⁴⁶² *Light of the East*, 5 (December, 1926), p. 5.

His mere benevolence, and not to some intrinsic claim of our essential nature. In this way we vindicate the absolute gratuitousness of the self-communicating Love of God and its absolute disinterestedness.”⁴⁶³

It is also noted by Johanns that the concept of divine condescension is skewed by the lack of complete identification of God with humanity on the level of humanity. The *avatāras* possess bodies that are made of *viśuddha sattva*, whereas the bodies of ordinary humans are composed of *prakṛti*. In this sense, Kṛṣṇa⁴⁶⁴ cannot be regarded as fully human. Johanns asserted, “Kṛṣṇa does not fit well within the system of *bhakti*. There is in him no wholesale surrender to humanity: for He is not a real man. All his human sorrows are but a play. There is no earnestness about Him. For we know beforehand that he cannot be touched by any evil.”⁴⁶⁵ The reason why Kṛṣṇa is regarded as taking upon Himself a body of *viśuddha sattva* is that, according to Johanns, there is a latent tendency in Rāmānuja’s system to denigrate the material world of *prakṛti* as well as the bodily faculties that enable engagement with matter. But surely the body and the world should be perfectible and should be used as a means to come into contact with God. For, “if we must identify ourselves with God and love Him for His own sake, it follows that we must also love our world-soul and our world also, as God loves these and for the sake of God. There is therefore no question of doing away, as Rāmānuja would have us do, with the world and our body.”⁴⁶⁶ Matter and physicality should be viewed as pliable entities that can be used for good or ill, depending upon the way the soul engages with them. By creating a dichotomy between materiality and spirituality, Rāmānuja blunts the full force of universal harmony, which should include all the differing components of the created order. Johanns asserted:

In other words, Rāmānuja, so eager to come in touch with God, has considered sanctification as but an adjustment to God. He has not considered sufficiently that this adjustment entails at the same time a

⁴⁶³ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 69. Emphasis mine. Johanns proposed a different notion of an ideal world, which pre-exists as a plan that awaits the cooperation of divine and human agency for its realization: “As ideal, it is but a plan of the world; the plan according to which the real world is to be produced from nothingness. The ideal world thus becomes what it should be: a world that is to be realized by God and man at the same time.” *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁴ It is interesting that Johanns always uses the example of Kṛṣṇa when explaining Rāmānuja’s position on *avatāras*, since Kṛṣṇa is not prominent in the writings of Rāmānuja.

⁴⁶⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 33.

⁴⁶⁶ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 70.

better adjustment to our worldly environment. Yet we cannot leave this world behind when we set out for the divine plane. Each one of us then must do his best to lift this world also to the divine plane although we must expect from God the final urge that will transfigure the earthly matter of which our body is made. Heaven is union with God and in God, with perfect society and perfect Nature. Hence, by affirming Nature, and society, by trying to transfigure them according to the ideal of divine beauty, we work on the lines of what God wishes to bring about in the end.⁴⁶⁷

The identity of souls and matter as eternal, internal modes has other implications. Creation is reduced to a type of causation in Rāmānuja's system that "is not the production of what is not, but the organization of what is already and was and eternally will be."⁴⁶⁸ This organization does not give rise to the ideal harmony, but rather the introduction of souls into the bondage of materiality. Creation is negative in *viśiṣṭādvaita* metaphysics; the created world is a world of *saṃsāra* based upon *karma* and is not as God would have intended things to be. The manifestation of *prakṛti* leads to a host of problems for the soul. In Rāmānuja's ideal world, souls are of the same type and are uniform in constitution, and *acit* is in a state of equipoise. It is only in the actual phenomenal world that differences and specifications arise. Thus, it is through contact with contaminating matter that variety and individual characteristics exist. For Johanns, however, the created order is positive, and matter is pure plasticity which can reflect the design and goodness that the Creator intends for His effect. The material world has an intelligible order and a stunning beauty in its intricacies and particularities. He thought that Rāmānuja's world "is too much external to matter and too much internal to God to be a real organic world."⁴⁶⁹ Johanns made a final observation of the role that souls play in the process of creation:

⁴⁶⁷ *Light of the East*, 13 (March, 1935), p. 70.

⁴⁶⁸ *Light of the East*, 4 (May, 1926), p. 4. Johanns stated: "Tandis que nous croyons à la 'création,' les *Vaiṣṇavites*, eux, croient à l'émanation. Cette erreur cause l'ombre qui ne leur permît pas de distinguer l'amplitude de l'amour dû à Dieu. En effet, en vertu de l'émanation, on doit conclure logiquement que les âmes préexistent en Dieu et forment sa structure interne. Elles sont donc spirituelles et mêmes divines en vertu de leur propre essence. Mais alors Dieu ne les crée pas, il ne donne pas à elles-mêmes ces âmes qui s'appartiennent à cause de leur nécessaire préexistence. Le caractère de bienveillance divine ne peut plus intervenir puisqu'il n'y a pas de création. Il interviendra seulement à l'égard des âmes que Dieu aura introduites, à cause de leur *karma*, dans la nature inconsciente." *Etude Comparative de la Religion des Indes et de la Religion Chrétienne*, p. 41.

⁴⁶⁹ *Light of the East*, 4 (August, 1926), p. 5.

But creation does not depend on God alone: it depends to a great extent on souls. Souls operate with God to bring forth our world. Nay, we may say that they operate in advance of God, in this work. For it is owing to the deeds of souls that creation, from a mere possibility, becomes a reality, and that this reality assumes this form rather than that of its possible forms or developments. Souls not only provoke God to create, they define the manner in which He must do it. God creates, and creates this rather than that, on account of the *karma* of souls. God's creative act is therefore neither independent nor absolute.⁴⁷⁰

Johanns, as in the case of Śāṅkara, found the general contours of Rāmānuja's thought persuasive and instructive. By harmonizing him with Śāṅkara and then by correcting both with *creatio ex nihilo*, a holistic viewpoint can be constructed that gives God His proper place as Absolute reality and allows a world of dependent reality to adore Him in a personal relationship. Thus, Johanns used the *advaitic* philosophy to nuance Rāmānuja's conception of God as a substance in which attributes and modes inhere. God cannot be a composite Being, whether internally or externally, and still be independent and simple. Johanns also questioned whether souls are naturally adapted to a direct vision of God, since he rejects their identity as internal modes. He saw Rāmānuja's apparent denigration of the material world as problematic, as well as the view that the variety and particularity of the world reflect an unnatural state of affairs.

D. Rāmānuja and Aquinas

Rāmānuja advocates knowing God through the *via affirmationis*, where true statements can be asserted regarding the divine person, and through the *via negationis*, which strips away all imperfection from the attributes. Aquinas also affirms the usefulness of analogical knowledge regarding God's personal qualities. Since the creature is an effect of the divine cause, the creation replicates the attributes of God in a restricted sense. Thus, it is possible to make assertions about

⁴⁷⁰ *Light of the East*, 2 (June, 1924), p. 4. Johanns further nuanced this: "Objection: It is said that God shapes the world according to the *karma* of the soul. If that be so, then the soul takes the lead in creation and conditions divine omnipotence. Answer: It is the decree of God to let the soul have a free hand in the shaping of its destinies. God has freely allowed the world-order of *karma* to pursue its course. The fact that by His grace He can destroy the infinite debt of *karma* shows that *karma* does not absolutely bind Him." *Synopsis of TCV*, Part II, p. 8.

God with regard to His perfections under the proviso that all such declarations are understood to be free from any connotation of limitation associated with finite, tangible creatures.⁴⁷¹ It is perfectly legitimate to ascribe to God the positive attribution that He is wise, while at the same time admitting that the way in which God is wise is beyond human comprehension. Thus, *what* God is as the thing signified is an entirely different matter than the issue of *how* God is what He is. Perfection terms are able to adequately express what God is. But how God is what He is can only be inadequately expressed, for every term is defective in its manner of signifying.⁴⁷² What this semantic distinction allows for is the possibility of using certain attributions of the divine which “imperfectly signify” God, while admitting that there is a sense in which the terms cannot adequately characterize their referent. The terms function as metaphors which indicate a perfection without defect. Aquinas’ theory of predication pivots around the idea that humanity does not know God as He is in Himself in His aseity. However, when a person understands that predicative statements can only imperfectly signify God in an analogical fashion, it is legitimate to ascribe a perfection to the “what-ness” of the divine.⁴⁷³

Rāmānuja is a proponent of the view that the world is a dependent entity which enjoys a relative reality with respect to the Absolute reality of God. Aquinas understands the world to be a contingent reality that participates in the reality of the Absolute. Every moment of a creature’s existence is due to the direct influence of

⁴⁷¹ “We speak of God as we know Him, and since we know Him from creatures we can only speak of Him as they represent Him. Any creature, in so far as it possesses any perfection, represents God and is like to Him, for He, being simply and universally perfect, has pre-existing in Himself the perfections of all His creatures. But a creature is not like to God as it is like to another member of its species or genus, but resembles Him as an effect may in some way resemble a transcendent cause although failing to reproduce perfectly the form of the cause.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.13, a. 2, translated by H. McCabe, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 3, London: Blackfriars, 1967, p. 55.

⁴⁷² “I say, however, that some of these terms denote perfection without defect in regard to *what* the term is used to signify, but every term is defective as to its *manner* of signifying... and this imperfection is unsuitable to God, although *what* is signified is appropriate to God in a superexcellent way.” Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 30, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 137. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁷³ “In this way some words are used neither univocally nor purely equivocally of God and creatures, but analogically, for we cannot speak of God at all except in the language we use of creatures, and so whatever is said both of God and creatures is said in virtue of the order that creatures have to God as to their source and cause in which all the perfections of things pre-exist transcendently.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.13,a.5, translated by H. McCabe, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 3, London: Blackfriars, 1967, p. 65.

God.⁴⁷⁴ Since God is the pure act whose essence is “to-be,” a creature whose essence is not its existence must participate in the act of being which is granted to it. The world is in a state of continual relation to God, for it is complete receptivity to the divine influence which bestows existence.⁴⁷⁵ Aquinas summarizes his understanding of the world’s relation to God:

Esse (to-be) itself is the ultimate act in which everything can participate while it participates in nothing. Whence we say: if there be anything which is subsistent *esse* itself- as we say God is- then that one participates in nothing at all. Other subsistent forms, however, must participate in *esse* as potency to act, so given that they are to this extent in potency, they can participate in something else.⁴⁷⁶

While Rāmānuja does not put forth an understanding of God as *esse* or emphasize an existence/essence distinction, he does think that the world is a dependent entity which is ontologically and epistemically inseparable from the Absolute. Johanns highlighted this teaching because it accords well with Thomism and with Rāmānuja’s thought.

Conclusion

Rāmānuja’s philosophy is much more straightforward than Śāṅkara’s and is similar in many ways to Christian conceptions, and so Johanns did not hesitate to exposit, appreciate, and critique this branch of the *Vedānta* in the same fashion that he did with *advaita*. Johanns has endeavored to show that Rāmānuja develops a highly personal conception of God. Far from accepting the *nirguṇa Brahman* of Śāṅkara, Johanns argued that Rāmānuja views God as an infinite substance containing a host of attributes which are perfect and devoid of limitation. Johanns asserted that Rāmānuja’s God has a body which is comprised of the world of souls

⁴⁷⁴ “All creatures need God to keep them in existence. For the *esse* of all creaturely beings so depends upon God that they could not continue to exist even for a moment, but would fall away into nothingness unless they were sustained in existence by His power.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.104, a.1, translated by T. O’Brien, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 14, London: Blackfriars, 1967, p. 39.

⁴⁷⁵ “Therefore, in the creature, creation consists in a certain relation to Creator as to the principle of its being; just as in reception, which implies change, a relation to the principle of this change is implied.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.45,a.3, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 129.

⁴⁷⁶ Aquinas, *De Anima*, I, 6, 2, quoted in David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas*, Notre Dame: University Press, 1986, p. 31.

and nature and which is supported and controlled by Him. This body is subordinate to Him and serves as an accessory to His person. God indwells the world as a soul indwells a body, and He periodically descends to the world in various forms.

Johanns further argued that Rāmānuja attempts to draw the soul back into a correct understanding of itself as a mode of God which is completely dependent upon Him. The pursuit of *bhakti* which includes self-surrender and adoration will lead to a liberative direct perception of God. Johanns taught that for *viśiṣṭādvaita*, affective knowledge reverses the estrangement of the soul from God. He viewed Rāmānuja as promoting the worship of a personal God who is desirous of intimacy with His *bhaktas*.

Johanns lauded Rāmānuja's concern to protect the reality of the world and the personal and inter-personal aspects of God's character. He accepted Rāmānuja's contention that God must be a subject about whom predications can be made, and he relished the grandiose descriptions provided of God's greatness, power, and knowledge. God is truly an array of perfections in the line of quality and quantity. Rāmānuja also articulated an understanding of the world as a contingent reality ever dependent upon God for its status. The world is not an absolute world, and everything that it possesses is due to its relation to God. Johanns appreciated the theoretical and practical aspects of Rāmānuja's thought that draw attention to this absolute dependence of the world upon God. The soul must submit and surrender itself to God in loving devotion. When the souls acknowledge their true relation to God, then they are free to be His body, imaging Him and bringing glory to Him. Thus, Johanns drew upon Rāmānuja's understanding of *saguṇa* Brahman to exult in God's personhood and His ability to interact with the world. He also developed Rāmānuja's doctrine of the relation of the world to God to show that the world enjoys contingent reality and that it is not an illusion or a series of false superimpositions as Śāṅkara has claimed. However, Johanns had difficulty accepting the notion that the world is an internal mode of God which forms an inner component of His divine identity. He attempted to synthesize the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* position with Śāṅkara's assertion that God cannot have any internal or external division within Himself. Neither attributes nor modes can inhere within God as internal qualifications of Him. Śāṅkara points to the transcendent way in which the simple Being of God contains the attributes and modes in complete identity. God is not a material cause of the world, and thus the soul cannot claim to form a portion of God. The material world is not an unnatural condition which needs to be left behind

as the soul seeks union with God in universal harmony. Therefore, Johanns, influenced by the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine, sought to promote an understanding of the world as an external mode participating in the contingent reality it receives from a transcendent God. God's simplicity and independence, which Śaṅkara values, need not be compromised by this sort of model. And the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* notions of God's interactive personhood and the world's relative reality will be protected as well.

Johanns' exposition and engagement with *viśiṣṭādvaita* can be critiqued in a preliminary fashion according to the research questions outlined in the introduction of the thesis. Johanns was clearly skilled in depicting theoretical philosophy, no doubt as a result of his long academic training which honed these skills. Whereas the use of Thomist terminology was problematic when exposing the monism of Śaṅkara, since *Brahman* becomes subtly personalized beyond what an *advaitin* would affirm, the Thomist vocabulary is less intrusive when exposing the eminently personalist system of Rāmānuja. Johanns emphasized the metaphysical truths which can be gleaned from Rāmānuja's thought; this accentuation is not necessarily problematic, since there is a certain level of metaphysical discussion in *viśiṣṭādvaita*. There are many practical aspects which were important to Rāmānuja, however, of which Johanns provided only a cursory treatment. Johanns tended to highlight the philosophical dimensions of *viśiṣṭādvaita* and downplayed elements that are derived from *Vaiṣṇava* mythology or cultic practices. This may be understandable, given Johanns' objectives, but there is an artificial separation of religion and philosophy that subtly takes place in Johanns' discussion. Nevertheless, Johanns has provided an excellent overview of the philosophical dimensions of Rāmānuja, as well as the practical aspects which are an outworking of these great truths.⁴⁷⁷

There can be little doubt that one of Rāmānuja's central concerns was to establish the highly personal, interactive nature of God, while at the same time to legitimate the contingent reality of a world which may respond in an attitude of *bhakti* to the divine. Part of the task of Rāmānuja's philosophy is to provide an alternative interpretation to Śaṅkara's monism, which ultimately dispenses with a *saguna* God and a real world. Johanns, in bringing Rāmānuja's thought to bear upon *advaita*, sought to create a synthesis which could retain these important emphases of

⁴⁷⁷ See Chapter Six for more discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of Johanns' treatment of Rāmānuja.

viśiṣṭādvaitic philosophy. His commitment to remain true to the basic thrust of both systems made him seek a means of bringing the *advaitic* notion of an utterly independent, unaffected deity into harmony with the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* concept of a world which is a mode participating in this Absolute reality. Johanns argued in a compelling manner that both viewpoints are valid and must be held in tension. And he made an informed claim, from his Thomist perspective, that a *pariṇāma/vivarta* causality does not enable a philosophical system to retain both of these necessary elements. Rather, the causative doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* alone can guard each of these metaphysical emphases that are identified and separately accentuated by the “natural” philosophies of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. In this model, God remains completely independent from the world, which is privation in and of itself; yet the cosmos retains its status as a contingent reality. According to him, the supernatural doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* has the capacity to bring the *nirguṇa/saguṇa* polarity to holistic completion and fulfillment. Johanns’ claims may not be ultimately persuasive to a committed *Vedāntin*, since *creatio ex nihilo* is clearly not derived from *Vedāntic* sources, but the analysis of the philosophical implications of various doctrines of originative causation that Johanns provided is certainly penetrating and searching. His synthesis of the *Vedāntic* positions, which functions as a natural foundation brought to completion by supernatural truths, is based upon extensive research and erudition. Further discussion on the critical issues that emerge from Johanns’ interaction with Rāmānuja will be resumed in the chapter on the theological evaluation of his project.

Chapter Five

Johanns on Vallabha

Introduction

The final *Vedāntic* philosopher with whom Johanns engaged is Vallabha, the proponent of *śuddhādvaita* “pure non-dualism.” Vallabha, a *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa, is concerned to show that Kṛṣṇa is the only reality. Thus, he attempts to advocate a type of *advaita* which can accommodate and legitimate devotional observances and worship. Johanns’ challenge was to make clear the unique *śuddhādvaita* vision of reality which includes the polarities of non-dualism and personal interaction with a Supreme Deity. Vallabha’s theoretical philosophy tries to articulate a non-dualism that is more rigorous than Śaṅkara’s and to describe a sort of *bhakti* that is more emotive than Rāmānuja’s. Vallabha portrays God as engaging in a series of distinct manifestations that are an outcome of divine self-analysis. Johanns’ task was to articulate how Vallabha’s description of this process of analysis is a helpful contribution to the *Vedānta*; he also reflected upon how Vallabha’s understanding of God and His world interfaces with a Christian conception of metaphysics. Johanns made his most significant contribution to Indology in his explication and analysis of Vallabha, because the *śuddhādvaita* was not well known as a *Vedāntic* system when Johanns began to write articles on Vallabha’s thought.

Vallabha was born in 1479 in Campāraṇya in modern day Madhya Pradesh. He was raised in Benares and became steeped in Hindu learning. He travelled to numerous holy places in India, teaching his interpretation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the significance of Kṛṣṇa. He debated *advaitins* and sought to defend the importance of *bhakti*. According to tradition, Vallabha enjoyed a vision in which Kṛṣṇa related to him a special *mantra*, and he then discovered a stone image of Kṛṣṇa on Govardhan Hill. Both the auspicious *mantra* and the image are sacred to his sect, the Vallabh Sampradāy. The *Subodhinī*, a commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, is the most important work of Vallabha. He also composed a treatise expressing his philosophical views entitled *Tattvārthadīpanibandha*. The *Aṅubhāṣya* is Vallabha’s commentary on the *Vedāntasūtra*. Vallabha’s exposition of the style of *bhakti* that he espouses is contained in the *Ṣoḍaśagranthāḥ*. He died in 1531.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ R.K. Barz, “Vallabha,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 15, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1987, p. 183-184.

In this chapter, Johanns' exposition of Vallabha's philosophy is addressed. Then, the contributions that Johanns believed that Vallabha makes to the synthesis are discussed. The major critiques that Johanns directed to the *śuddhādvaita* viewpoint are provided. And a comparison between Aquinas' and Vallabha's doctrines of divine self-analysis is included.

A. Johanns' Exposition of Vallabha's Philosophy

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. God

Johanns asserted that Vallabha has a doctrine of God in which there are three distinct divine manifestations: "God has first a transcendent form of His own. Then He has a form that corresponds to what we may call His participability and on account of which He is the absolute indeterminate ground that supports and becomes everything. Lastly, God has a world-form."⁴⁷⁹ Despite the fact that the divine appears in three forms, reality is ever non-dual, for this distinction in manifestation does not imply that there is an "otherness" within reality. There is only one reality being displayed in different forms. The first manifestation, the supreme form of God, is none other than Kṛṣṇa who dwells in a celestial abode that replicates the atmosphere of *Vṛndāvana*, where Kṛṣṇa once frolicked on earth with the *gopīs*. The glorified description of Him given in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is wholly accepted by Vallabha. Kṛṣṇa possesses a corporeal form made of pure *ānanda* which is "a body superior and through which God intends to manifest Himself to His devotees in order to carry on with them the play of unending love."⁴⁸⁰ This joy-body is lovely and delightful to the senses. In His beatific form, Kṛṣṇa dallies with the *gopīs*, dances, and brings merriment to the hearts of all who encounter Him. This idyllic context is meant to inspire the imagination of the *bhaktas* of Kṛṣṇa. Vallabha believed that this wonderful atmosphere is the perfect depiction of the superabundant bliss found in the character of God. Johanns offered a helpful clarification: "Vallabha does not mean to transfer into the plane of the Absolute the poor joyings of this world entirely unchanged. His expressions are very human, but his meaning is *alaukika*; the

⁴⁷⁹ *Light of the East*, 5 (July, 1927), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁰ *Light of the East*, 5 (July, 1927), p. 5.

expressions are a human way of putting things superhuman, the only way, Vallabha believes, to make man realize the ineffable joy that constitutes the bond of universal harmony.”⁴⁸¹

All of the *Upaniṣadic* statements which denote the Absolute character of *Brahman* are in fact references to Kṛṣṇa. He is being, consciousness, and bliss; Vallabha lays special emphasis on the *ānanda* of God, for it is the joyous inner life of God in which the devotees are summoned to participate that has the highest value. Johanns wrote:

In Kṛṣṇa the divine *ānanda* is its own being and its own consciousness. Kṛṣṇa knows of things in terms of Bliss, His Being is realized as the foundation of Bliss, His consciousness as the Light of Bliss, and the joy that accompanies this experience is God in His absolute self-possession. Hence God is *Rasa*, ...realization or joy-experience in terms of deliciousness.⁴⁸²

God as Kṛṣṇa is absolute personality, for God knows Himself and possesses Himself with complete Joy, and his followers strive to enjoy His blissful Being and personality. Johanns commented regarding Vallabha that “*ānanda* is undoubtedly for him the actualization of *sat* and *cit*, the absolute identity and selfness.”⁴⁸³

The second manifestation of God is in the form of the *akṣara*. The *akṣara* is the impersonal ground from which all determinations arise. It is itself attribute-less, and yet it contains within its reality everything that will be explicated; it is the substratum of all finite forms. From the *akṣara* issue forth the souls, *avatāras*, gods, and materiality which comprise the world. All these particularities pre-exist in absorption in the *akṣara* before becoming concretized. It is an intermediate form that lacks both the plenitude of Kṛṣṇa and the particularity of the world. As the ground and support of all the finite forms of the world, its pervading existence makes the manifestation of the world a possibility. The appearance of the *akṣara* can be viewed as the result of a process whereby the *ānanda* of Kṛṣṇa spilled forth from its own plenitude, and He “hankered after the joy to give to others from the abundance and overflow of His own Joy. God desired the joy of the world, not because there was a need or a want in Himself, but rather because there was an excess.”⁴⁸⁴ This

⁴⁸¹ *Light of the East*, 5 (July, 1927), p. 5.

⁴⁸² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 23.

⁴⁸³ *Light of the East*, 5 (August, 1927), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁴ *Light of the East*, 5 (September, 1927), p. 3.

impersonal manifestation of the *akṣara* is not the highest form of God, for the divine *ānanda* has been communicated truly, but in a limited manner. Johanns explained:

When God wanted to be many, His *ānanda* became partially hidden...in the *akṣara*. Hence its *ānanda* is *gaṇita*, measurable, finite. Again the *akṣara* exhibits a derived form of *saccidānanda*. At bottom the *akṣara* is *saccidānanda* as the immanent participability of God by which God is necessarily all-pervading... It is *saccidānanda* in its aspect of communicability.⁴⁸⁵

God, in His third form of manifestation, engages in a process of self-analysis. In judging Himself, God as the infinite Subject focuses upon a specific attribute in His infinite panoply of predicates. The *akṣara* is the background upon which this act takes place. Johanns remarked, "God then, inasmuch as He stretches out towards self-analysis, posits Himself as indeterminate, as *akṣara*, as the ground on which the divine synthesis appears in an analytical way."⁴⁸⁶ God analyses His predicate of Being without reference to His other attributes, and His central qualities of Consciousness and Bliss are hidden. Without joy and self-perception, the abstracted Being is impersonal; it becomes inanimate nature in the world-form of God. This procedure of self-analysis that produces the world (*jagat*) does not add anything to God, since the *jagat* is merely one aspect of God with the remaining features concealed. God then analyzes His Consciousness, excluding the feature of Bliss; the *ānanda*-deprived souls (*jīvas*) appear. Johanns elaborated the implications of this conception of divine self-judgment: "Let us now compare the divine Subject as Consciousness with the divine Subject as Being. The one has got what the other has not, they appear as opposed. Thus we have two planes of reality: one carrying the inanimate objects, the other the animate and conscious subjects. We have thus got a nature-sphere and a soul-sphere."⁴⁸⁷

Thus, Kṛṣṇa is the transcendent, synthetic reality, the *akṣara* is the impersonal substratum upon which the divine analysis takes place, and the *jagat* and *jīvas* are the projections of the *saccidānanda* both hidden and manifested. God appears in both *avirbhāva* and *tirobhāva* aspects; there is a playfulness in the alternating rhythms of concealment and explication. Johanns stated that "*avirbhāva*

⁴⁸⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 22.

⁴⁸⁶ *Light of the East*, 6 (October, 1927), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁷ *Light of the East*, 6 (October, 1927), p. 5.

is defined as *anubhāva-anuyogyatā* or as the aptitude to be experienced and *tirobhāva* as the opposite aptitude not to be experienced.”⁴⁸⁸ God is omnipotent, because the self-analysis takes place as a result of the exercise of His will alone. He is omniscient, for the world-producing self-analysis which is a form of self-knowledge allows Him to know everything. God is also immanent and pervades the world. He is completely simple and unrelated, both without and within, since there is an ultimate ontological identity between the visible and invisible aspects; those particularities of the *jagat* which appear to be distinct are simply diverse divine manifestations in various states of visibility. The fact that multiplicity is experienced does not mean that real distinctions arise. The claim that God is experienced in diverse ways and in various states of visibility is different from the claim that multiple entities exist. Johanns asserted: “All multiplicity and all difference is for the sake of experience. But all experience leaves its object unimpaired. The fact that I can take different views of a mountain does not make it multiple and different.”⁴⁸⁹

This conception of three distinct manifestations of God explains how Vallabha could hold the surprising view that God possesses contradictory attributes. For He is infinite and finite, plenitude and want, conscious and inanimate, depending upon which manifestation is being considered. By revealing Himself in various forms, God’s identity becomes multi-faceted and complex, and yet, paradoxically, Reality ever remains non-dual. Johanns remarked, “Could I apprehend Reality as God apprehends it, I would notice that one and the same Reality adapts itself to varying experience by hiding one aspect and by revealing the other... God is therefore that Reality which, without any contradiction in His Reality, can appear as the substratum of all contradictions.”⁴⁹⁰ Vallabha handles the Scriptural statements which deny the capacity for divine attribution by asserting that these statements refer to the impersonal, indeterminate aspect of God as *akṣara*. At the same time, those portions of the *śruti* which portray God as replete with a host of qualities are referring to the plenitude of Kṛṣṇa. When Vallabha states that God has

⁴⁸⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 17. “Qui sait contempler le ciel, la terre et les enfers du point de vue divin ne découvre nulle part la moindre opposition d’être et de non-être pas plus qu’il ne perçoit de ces déchirantes mutations qu’on nomme altérations substantielles; mais il admire simplement la divine *çakti* jouant avec ses propres manifestations dans un rythme alterné d’expression et d’occultation.” *Les Sectes et leurs Fondateurs*, p. 10.

⁴⁹⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 18.

contradictory attributes, he is referring to the experiential level only. The contradictions only appear from the vantage point of the *jīva*, who seems to be experiencing various divine polarities. There are no formal contradictions in God’s reality, only the simple *saccidānanda* revealing itself in diverse forms. Vallabha’s position differs from that of Śaṅkara by the insistence that God is self-explication and self-veiling. Śaṅkara’s *advaita* forbids even this potential explanation of the experience of diversity. Vallabha has an altogether different notion of God’s nature. For him, “Reality has meaning in so far only as it allows itself to become an object of experience to Himself and to souls. This self-manifestation requires the difference of visibility and invisibility and requires only that.”⁴⁹¹ By admitting the possibility of divine concealment and explication, the experience of diversity can be explained without tainting the unity of God’s essence and the truth of *advaita*, and without having to introduce the category of “unreality” into the system. Vallabha’s doctrine of the contradictions of the divine also points to the limited capacity of human reasoning to penetrate the mystery of God. Scripture alone can assure the devotee of the attributes of God and can indicate His character. These polarities within God’s nature are a wonderful ornament and serve to display His glory. They highlight the divine transcendence which no human mind can fathom. Only faith and mystical realization can bring one into contact with God.

b. The World

In Vallabha’s system, there is absolutely no change that takes place within the essence of Kṛṣṇa. Change would imply a movement from non-being to being or a deterioration of being to non-being. Neither one of these scenarios takes place in Vallabha’s conception of causality, for non-being does not exist as a category in *śuddhādvaita*. Divine causality does not imply that there are distinctions between cause and effect. Reality is only *saccidānanda* in various states of visibility or concealment. Johanns stated, “God and the world are one. Before its origin the world is implicit in God; after its origin it is explicit in God; after its destruction it is again implicit in God. Hence the relation of the world and God is that of *abheda* or *advaita*. God contains the world *modo implicito* or *modo invisibili*.”⁴⁹² There is therefore no otherness within reality that is distinct from God’s self-manifestations.

⁴⁹¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 19.

⁴⁹² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 5.

Nature and souls may appear to progress through various stages of growth and decay, and yet there is no transformation within God. Vallabha understands the world to be an analysis of the divine which is distinguishable in aspect but ultimately non-separate from God's inner essence. Using language which resembles that of Rāmānuja, Vallabha would consider the world a mode of God. Johanns explained:

The sun is by essence *tejas*, heat; at the same time it is luminous and its light spreads out, as if it subsisted apart from its substance. The light however is an essential property of the sun, and who would maintain that the sun is distinct from the light it emits? Thus also the world is the analytical phosphorescence of *saccidānanda*, appearing on the synthetical *saccidānanda*. But the latter although distinguishable from the former, is by no means distinct. The correlation of *dharma* and *dharmin* (quality and qualified) is therefore self-transcending. It is identity, although this identity has got its synthetical and analytical aspect.⁴⁹³

And so God does not transform Himself into something other than Himself; rather, there is an explicit transition into something that He implicitly is already. The movement is from one form of being to another form of being. While there is a transformation, a *pariṇāma*, there is no real change in the form of *vikāra*. An example of the process of *vikāra* would include milk that has changed into curds, since there cannot be a return to the original state once the liquid has solidified. A transition from gold to a golden ring is merely a *pariṇāma*, however, because the ring can be reduced to its basic form as a lump of gold once the ring has been melted. Causation in Vallabha's system is a matter of *pariṇāma* and not *vikāra* within God. Johanns provided a reminder of the motivation behind causation: "Now if we remember that God creates in order to communicate His joy, multiplicity must arise within the divine unity... God remains hidden within this multiplicity as the underlying unity; but it is His purpose to reveal His unity and thus to return within the souls to Himself and to themselves."⁴⁹⁴ This original conception of causality within *śuddhādvaita* leads on to the related notions of *māyā* and *avidyā*, since it is the misperception of the souls which makes them believe that change and distinction exist within reality.

⁴⁹³ *Light of the East*, 6 (December, 1927), p. 5.

⁴⁹⁴ *Light of the East*, 6 (December, 1927), p. 6.

Vallabha rejects the interpretation that Śaṅkara gave to *māyā* as the phenomenon of an unreal world. There is no illusory world; rather, there is only an incorrect view of a real world. A false view of the world is located in a mind which has failed to perceive that all things are non-distinct from Kṛṣṇa. Johanns described this error:

The human mind (viz., the *buddhi*) has not understood the divine play of self-manifestation. Moreover, the human mind considers Nature as something distinct from God. Why? Because it considers implicit being as non-being. God, it says, is not experienced in Nature as conscious and blissful; therefore Nature has nothing to do with Him. Then the *buddhi* reads into Nature all the differences of its own experiences and considers things as distinct from one another and from itself and God. It thus complicates the simplicity of Reality.⁴⁹⁵

From this misinterpretation arises the *māyā* of *saṃsāra*, which distorts the true identity of the *jagat*. The *jagat* is the world which has moved from one divine synthetic manifestation of being to a different analytical manifestation of being. *Saṃsāra* is the incorrect viewpoint which reads otherness and non-being into reality. The *ānanda*-deprived soul is apt to make a series of misinterpretations and misidentifications. For “although the soul is essentially a *cit*, or awareness, because joy does not in it constitute the *cit*’s complement, the soul does not possess *jñāna* or truth. It goes so far that it forgets its essential nature and mistakes itself in one way or other for its body.”⁴⁹⁶ Instead of finding its identity and repose as a mode of God, the soul seeks for *ānanda* in the material world, precisely where *ānanda* is vacant. The privation of *ānanda* in the soul is the source of all its disorientation and dissatisfaction. Ironically, this privation is due to the will of God, so that He may display His grace and reveal the full extent of His joyous inner life to the soul.

The senses of the individual perceive the *jagat*; although incomplete as presenting only *sat*, the *jagat* is truly God in one of His forms. The perception is not incorrect; rather it is merely limited. The senses have not deceived the *buddhi* in this process. The *buddhi* must now render a correct interpretation of this sensual perception, which it inevitably distorts. Vallabha therefore does not denigrate the existence of the *jagat* or the capacity of the individual to empirically experience a real world. He casts doubt only on the reliability of the *buddhi* to ascertain correctly what is presented to it by the senses.

⁴⁹⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 12.

⁴⁹⁶ *Light of the East*, 6 (January, 1928), p. 5.

Johanns summarized Vallabha's viewpoint:

There are differences in the Object, but what kind of differences? Are the differences affirmative and so many forms of one Object, so many self-affirmations of God- or are they negative differences, opposed to one another? If we say that the differences are negative, we shall contemplate before us a *samsāra*. If we say that they are affirmative, we shall apprehend a *jagat*, the many colored-form of God as *sat*. It is therefore the divine *māyā* which has worked when we say that the world subsists in itself, and that in it, there subsist many things of which the one is not the other.⁴⁹⁷

The senses perceive a change from one manifestation of being to another, but the *buddhi* may incorrectly interpret this process as a movement which introduces division and opposition within reality. Although God is the basis and substratum of all finite forms, the temptation is for the *buddhi* to see non-being as prevalent in the world, since the hidden aspects of God are imperceptible to it and are therefore declared not to exist. Johanns explained: "But let us discard the notion of non-being, for Reality can only change from itself to itself, from implication to explication, and the whole disorganizing transformation is done away with. All change becomes the mere play of God, who hides Himself in order to reveal Himself, and reveals Himself in order to hide Himself."⁴⁹⁸

In the world, there are three different types of souls, according to Vallabha; each has its own nature, works, and end. The *puṣṭi* souls issue from the heavenly *ānanda*, and even though they may fall into *saṃsāra*, they still retain a germ of divine love that will someday flourish in them. They simply need to rely on God's grace and to love Him for His own sake in order to be freed from bondage. Their final state is continual enjoyment of the blissfulness of Reality. Next, there are *maryādā* souls who originate from the divine Word (*vāc*). Johanns noted, "To achieve the purification of their mind, they will practice all the works that are set forth in Scripture as a means to reach indifference to all worldly values, in order to concentrate their mind on God alone."⁴⁹⁹ These souls may or may not fulfill the *Vedic* injunctions for the sake of the worldly benefits they can gain. But they all seek to fulfill the divine promulgation. *Maryādā* souls become absorbed into the *akṣara*

⁴⁹⁷ *Light of the East*, 6 (February, 1928), p. 5.

⁴⁹⁸ *Light of the East*, 6 (February, 1928), p. 5-6.

⁴⁹⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 31.

where there is complete peace. Lastly, there are *pravāhika* souls who come forth from the divine *manas*. They have no grace or lawfulness operating within them, and thus they seek their own desires. They reinforce the misconception of *saṃsāra* by living completely for themselves. Their final end is to be continually captivated by *māyā*, for “their awareness does not reach beyond illusion and its absorption into the principle of illusion. They are founded in God but do not reach this divine foundation through experience.”⁵⁰⁰

There are two ways to explain the fall of the souls into *saṃsāra*. First, the concealment of *ānanda* necessarily entailed that the *jīvas* would lose interest in God. The consciousness of the souls became restricted to the *jagat* and the misinterpretations of the *buddhi* naturally arose. Second, the *māyā* of God begins to function in an active sense. This form of *māyā* is different from passive misunderstanding. It is the “power of God to reveal Himself, no longer in partial but true forms, but in a total and perverted form...For *māyā* can work by stirring up the *guṇa tamas* and this *guṇa* is the principle of darkness and error.”⁵⁰¹ But why would God actively attempt to disorient the soul? Vallabha avers that the whole experience of the fall and restoration of the *jīva* is all part of the *līla*, the play of Kṛṣṇa. The experience of *saṃsāra* allows the soul to fully appreciate the blissful character of Kṛṣṇa by first allowing it to feel the pain and sorrow implicit in the absence of His *ānanda*. The whole drama is merely helping the *jīva* to better appreciate the joy of the divine *rasa*. Only by stumbling in error can the soul bask in the light when the truth is grasped. The soul learns to seek God, who has veiled Himself so that He may be earnestly pursued.

Thus, Johanns interpreted Vallabha’s theoretical philosophy as describing a God who manifests Himself in several different ways. God engages in self-analysis, abstracting certain qualities from the abundance of His attributes; God produces the world of souls and nature through this process of divine concealment and explication. There is never any change within reality or production of something entirely new, for there is only the alternating visibility and concealment of divine attributes.

⁵⁰⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 32.

⁵⁰¹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 38.

2. Practical Theology

a. Stages of Spiritual Development

Vallabha's theoretical philosophy which details the nature of God and how the world is a divine self-analysis leads naturally into a method of liberative praxis. As an exponent of *Vedāntic* philosophy, Vallabha maintains that the *jīva* must see itself and the world in a proper light, in their correct relation to God. Improper beliefs must be left behind. Johanns commented, "*Tattvamasi* means that in this system, *I am that*, i.e. God, because God pervades me by His whole essence. *I am* God in all His length and breadth but manifested in this human form of mine."⁵⁰² Similarly, nature is the manifestation of God in an altogether different form. Vallabha's practical philosophy details the steps that must be taken to free the *buddhi* from its delusions. Only then can freedom from *saṃsāra* be achieved.

There are various stages through which the follower of Kṛṣṇa will progress in the ascent towards union with the divine. The path moves through *navavidhā bhakti* to *prema* to *āsakti* and on to *vyasana*. Johanns gave an introductory description of these degrees of advancement:

The first stage of love, the *navavidhā bhakti*, constitutes the preparatory stage. During this the seed of love begins to grow and to blossom ... *Bhakti* is still dependent on means of realisation, for it is only when *prema* is reached that the divine love begins to become spontaneous and dependent on the law of its own play. *Āsakti* brings about a total attachment to the object of love and begets always deeper desires to become one with it. *Vyasana* constitutes the last stage: the attachment has become so deep that the soul is unable to bear any longer the absence of the divine Beloved.⁵⁰³

Navavidhā bhakti is fueled and driven by the personal efforts of the devotee. *Pūjā* to the image of Kṛṣṇa is a vital feature of Vallabha's prescription of *bhakti*. God has desired to reveal Himself in the image in a way that is unique and beneficial to the worship-experience of the *bhakta*. The image is to be cared for with the utmost diligence, and the worshipper will feed, bathe, and clothe the image in order to show adoration to God. Also, burning incense, lighting lamps, and awakening the image from sleep are all aspects of the ritual associated with the performance of *pūjā*. Alongside of the formal ceremonies involving the image, there are other avenues of

⁵⁰² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 19.

⁵⁰³ *Light of the East*, 6 (May, 1928), p. 5.

expressing *bhakti*: “the praise of God comprises *śravaṇam* or the hearing of the glorious birth and deeds of Kṛṣṇa, *kīrtanam* or the recitation of them, and *smaraṇam* or the recollection of them.”⁵⁰⁴ For the practitioner of *bhakti*, these formal acts of devotion are meant to lead to the final offering of the self in an attitude of *ātmanivedanam*.

One must adopt the stance of a servant, a *dāsa*, and consecrate everything that one is and owns to God. The servant learns to be completely dependent upon the will of the master. One of the external ways of expressing servitude to Kṛṣṇa is by eating the *prasāda-anna*, or the food offered to the image. Thus the servant lives on what is left over by the master. The other attitude to be developed is that of *sakhya*, or companionship, which implies that the friend will serve and attend to the needs of his companion without waiting for a command to do so. The friend will know what is most pleasing to his associate and will lavish the desired things upon the beloved one. Since Kṛṣṇa is desirous of offerings and oblations to His image, the devotee as *dāsa* and *sakhya* will perform these external rituals to illustrate the inward attachment of the heart to God. Johanns noted that “the attitude which the servant takes at the feet of the idol reminds him, therefore, of his true relation to God. All belongs to God, and I myself belong to Him. I must, therefore, only live on His grace and condescension...Still, the best oblation is that of one’s own self, of all one has and of all one is.”⁵⁰⁵ The disposition that is to be cultivated is called *Brahma-sambandha*, whereby the *bhakta* chooses to live in such a way that an ongoing “relatedness” to God is acknowledged. Only by means of this disposition can the initial steps of release from ignorance and bondage be enacted. Johanns described:

We live in the wrong interpretation of our self and our world, as madmen who would fancy themselves to be kings of this world and act upon this conviction. They may act so but will only make themselves ridiculous. Reality does not change, whatever interpretation we may put on it. By our vain construction we simply cut ourselves off from reality and live within the vain fanciful constructions of our foolish selfishness. Now the consecration to God brings about an attitude which would be comparable to the sudden awakening of a mad beggar, who had fancied himself to be master of a house. He again would assume his real position.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ *Light of the East*, 6 (May, 1928), p. 5.

⁵⁰⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 46.

⁵⁰⁶ *Light of the East*, 6 (June, 1928), p. 5.

Ignorance leading to selfishness must be dispelled, and if this fundamental ignorance is eradicated, all other sins will naturally cease.⁵⁰⁷ Forgetfulness of God allows a soul to become preoccupied with the transitory concerns of worldly, material life. By becoming focused upon self-gratification, the soul moves further away from understanding its true nature as a self-analysis of God. Instead, the mind and senses must be redirected towards pleasing Kṛṣṇa in an ongoing consecration, where all activities are done in the name of God. One takes up the performance of *pūjā* in order to tangibly display the attitudes of consecration and *Brahma-sambandha* that constitute the reversal of the disorder of selfishness. Vallabha asks his follows to undertake a formal vow of complete consecration to Kṛṣṇa to reverse the entrenched egoism of the soul: “Therefore, in the text of the *gadya* (the text of the vow) the aspirant consecrates to God his own self, i.e. his spiritual soul and all his faculties, his *prāṇa* or vital principle, his senses (*indriyāṇi*), his mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*), his body (*deha*). Thus selfishness is cut off at the root, without destroying, however, what the self is and has.”⁵⁰⁸

Prema is the next stage of development, and this is characterized by the “love of God in so far as it excludes the love of any other object: it is therefore the destruction of *rāga*, of the craving for anything whatever which is not God.”⁵⁰⁹ *Rāga* is the passionate entrancement with the world and with the self, and *prema* is defined as *rāga-vināśa*, or the annihilation of *rāga*. The activities which the *bhakta* was faithful to perform are still carried out, but the motive for performance is the pure love of God for His own sake, without any admixture of selfish gain whatsoever. While *prema* may be recognized as the complete indifference to the lures of the world, the feeling of aversion to everything that does not pertain to the worship of God is deemed *āsakti*. The pursuits of ephemeral existence are viewed as a stumbling block in the soul’s movement towards God; worldly goals and activities are despised by the devotee who has reached the stage of *āsakti*. One indication that

⁵⁰⁷ Johanns detailed the regression that takes place in the soul that is deprived of divine joy: “The soul calls itself “*aham*,” ego, whereas God is the only *aham*, in identification with whom the soul should find its own participated *aham*. The soul goes further still and calls the objects *mama*, my own, whereas all that is, is God’s. *Ahamtā* and *mamatā*, the pride that induces the soul to think and act as if it possessed itself, and as if it possessed a world of its own- have driven the soul away from God and from itself. It lives outside God and outside itself, in a world that exists only in its own *abhimāna*.” *Light of the East*, 6 (January, 1928), p. 6.

⁵⁰⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 48.

⁵⁰⁹ *Light of the East*, 6 (August, 1928), p. 3.

the devotee is an *āsaktin* is the experience of *gr̥ha-aruci*, or perceiving family members as strangers because they do not renounce their worldly attachments and entanglements. The final outcome of *āsakti* is the culmination of *vyasana*. *Vyasana* occurs when “this desire to possess God and to be possessed by Him becomes so violent that the *bhakta* can no longer carry on his existence without God.... When this stage is reached, then he is *kṛtārtha* (the purpose has been reached).”⁵¹⁰ One feels that even an instant without the tangible presence of Kṛṣṇa would be unbearable. In the stage of *vyasana*, the soul has adopted the emotional disposition of *sarva-ātma-bhāva* (becoming the all-self), where all items in the *jagat* and all components of the *jīva* are seen to be *ānanda* departing from and returning to God. The devotee learns to see things from the divine perspective and to enjoy the world in a divine way. There is a thrill in ascertaining that reality is infinite Bliss at its core. The cosmos is properly viewed as the movement from unmanifested joy to manifested joy. Johanns provided an illustration:

God is the white ray of absolute Joy. In Him all the shades of joy are contained and manifest in the simplicity of whiteness. All things that are in the world, are contained in God, but they are absorbed in the whiteness of the absolute Joy. In the creative plays of God, the desire of God to become many breaks up the reflection of the white ray into so many hues and shades of one fundamental Joy: the smiles of a Deity intent on communicating its overflow of delight.⁵¹¹

b. The Puṣṭimārga

The previously mentioned effects of *bhakti*, *prema*, *āsakti*, *vyasana*, and *sarva-ātma-bhāva* are all the direct result of the grace of God, which is called *puṣṭi* (well-being) in Vallabha’s system. This grace imparts to the soul the seed of *nirupādhi prema*, which drives the soul toward God-possession. Johanns commented that “the best disposition to enslave God is to acknowledge that we have got no hold on Him, and that He can only give Himself to us out of pure mercy. But even the need we feel to possess Him is an effect of His grace, and the helplessness in which we are thrown on account of our incapacity is the best preparation.”⁵¹² There is no act or disposition which can merit the gracious favor of Kṛṣṇa. His

⁵¹⁰ *Light of the East*, 6 (August, 1928), p. 4.

⁵¹¹ *Light of the East*, 7 (December, 1928), p. 5.

⁵¹² *Light of the East*, 6 (September, 1928), p. 4.

choice is completely independent from any element of human interaction. When the soul is affected by *puṣṭi*, it no longer cares for worldly acquisition or spiritual merit, for it becomes enthralled with the person and deeds of Kṛṣṇa without regard for its own advancement. Everything that Kṛṣṇa has done is lovely to the *puṣṭi*-intoxicated soul, irrespective of the apparent inappropriateness of some of His deeds measured against the mores of *dharma*. Indeed, the soul sees the very person of Kṛṣṇa in all *bhaktas* who share the gift of *puṣṭi*, and it reacts with an undisturbed mind to those who live in opposition to the way of well-being.

Even when the presence of Kṛṣṇa cannot be directly sensed, “the *puṣṭi*-soul enjoys the highest peace the more its desolation grows. It is our very desolation which in a way measures the amplitude of the subsequent consolation.”⁵¹³ In fact, this sense of desolation becomes welcome to the devotee, for the absence always gives rise to a subsequent intense union. There is an expectancy that grows when the intuition of absence is strongest. God will hide and reveal Himself according to His desires, and the soul will experience both *avirbhāva* and *tirobhāva* in alternating cycles. The feeling of absence is a means of purgation, for the *jīva* that experiences the sense of separation from God discerns that the world is empty and holds no appeal without the divine presence. Johanns commented that “the pain it feels in being away from God is the fire that sets aflame the whole sphere of self and drives the soul away from itself and its world, be this the *saṃsāra* or the *jagat*, into God. It is supreme pain if we consider what the soul is away from, but it is supreme bliss when we consider what the soul is moving to.”⁵¹⁴ From the depths of desolation, the anticipation of the coming playful unveiling of Kṛṣṇa’s beauty rises in the soul and imparts a thrill that nothing else in the world can produce.

⁵¹³ *Light of the East*, 6 (September, 1928), p. 5. Whether the soul can feel the presence of Kṛṣṇa or not, He is always in the mind of the devotee, and the consciousness of a *puṣṭi*-soul is ever focused upon Him. Johanns gave a concise depiction of *puṣṭi*: “One word may summarize the condition of the *puṣṭi*-soul. It loves God and reaches out towards the possession of God alone. It wants to find in God all it is and all it has. Therefore it does not want to be anything and to have anything besides God. It is God-possessing, and therefore God is subjected to it; on the other hand, it is God-possessed, and therefore God by submitting Himself to it reveals but His dominion. God is ready to be even a slave, provided it is love that enslaves Him. Moreover, God is only entirely for the soul, because the soul is for Him. God belongs to the soul, because the soul does not want to belong to itself. Therefore the great characteristic of the *puṣṭi*-soul is the fact that it makes God depend on itself and thus gains an absolute liberty within God.” *Light of the East*, 7 (October, 1928), p. 5.

⁵¹⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 57.

This *rasa* of eager expectancy for union is altogether lovely and is an important aspect of drawing the soul closer to Kṛṣṇa in emotional intimacy. Thus, both in the *samyoga* of encounter and in the *vinīyoga* of separation, the possibility of aesthetic pleasure exists whereby the soul finds repose in Beauty, whether in anticipation or consummation. The *rasa* of joyous encounter is symbolized by the depiction of Kṛṣṇa dancing and frolicking with the *gopīs*.⁵¹⁵ In a similar manner to the milkmaids, the soul is driven to abandon all in order to experience the love-play of God. Kṛṣṇa consumes the thoughts and imaginings of the mind, and His beatific form delights the senses. The passion for God overwhelms the individual to such a degree that all restraint is abandoned. The body and mind are ablaze with the intensity of the experience. The proper interpretation of the erotic adventures of the *gopīs*, according to Vallabha, regards their *kāma* as a spiritual longing and attraction rather than some base lust. Johanns asserted that these adventures are theologically “symbolic. It is *we*, who look at it with *prakṛtic* eyes and mind, who find in it lowly features; and it is only when the highest grace of God (*kṛpā*) works in our souls and fills us with divine light and warmth, that we wake up to the divine meaning of the apparently amorous conduct of the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa.”⁵¹⁶ The lesson that is to be grasped is that the love of God is meant to captivate to such an extent that all focus and longing are directed to the Beauty of God; “the divine passion now penetrates within the heart and fills it completely. The soul only thinks of Kṛṣṇa and dreams of Kṛṣṇa.”⁵¹⁷ Since God is the object of intense emotions and is the ideal of beauty, Kṛṣṇa is the divine *rasa*, giving rise to a wonderful flavor for the senses. Vallabha uses a term that commonly denoted the aesthetic experiences which accompanied dramatic performances. Johanns asserted, “The Kṛṣṇa legend is indeed a drama, a play, and it is in keeping with the right logic to call the ideal love, which it arouses, *rasa*. But the drama of Kṛṣṇa is divine and the *līlā* of God is really the only thing that matters. Hence in comparison to the divine *rasa*, all earthly *rasa* can only

⁵¹⁵ “On sait l’importance, en mystique, du *rasa* et du goût. Le goût, en effet, est une connaissance intime et c’est sans doute grâce à cette intimité que l’on saisit la saveur des choses spirituelles et divines... Tous ces *rasas* enfin culminent et s’achèvent dans le sentiment d’abandon qui unit l’épouse à l’époux. Dieu est l’époux de notre âme. La suprême saveur consiste à s’abandonner totalement au bon plaisir de cet époux et à ne plus vivre que pour lui.” *Etude Comparative de la Religion des Indes et de la Religion Chrétienne*, p. 11-12.

⁵¹⁶ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 59. Emphasis by Johanns.

⁵¹⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 61.

be considered a shadow, a reflection.”⁵¹⁸ Kṛṣṇa always inspires delight and is exceedingly delicious to the taste of the *bhakta*; by contemplating Him and imagining His beautiful form, the soul is drawn into a wondrous aesthetic experience.

The sort of worship that Vallabha is trying to inculcate is called *sevā*, where the heart responds to the grace of Kṛṣṇa and the focus of the cultic activities shifts inward. *Sevā* has moved beyond the cultic form of *pūjā* replete with rules and ceremonial ritual and pursues an internal attachment to God. There are three liberative results of *sevā* that one can expect. First, the devotee acquires a supernatural fitness whereby he is adaptable to the inner *ānanda*-life of God and leaves behind the disease of selfishness. Johanns explained that through *sevā*, “we enter into the organism of universal harmony, and we cannot move but within the awareness of the joy that accompanies the life-play of universal health. To give to God is therefore to receive, and unselfishness is but the adaptation to the living influx of the outpour of the divine joy.”⁵¹⁹ Second, the status of association with God called *sāyujya* is achieved. The union with God that the devotee enjoys is not a strict absorption in the *advaitic* sense or an associative union in the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* sense but an organic union of “compenetration.” Johanns described Vallabha’s position: “we must not think that the soul is a reality besides the Reality of the Lord. It always remains an inner mode and determination, in which and through which God appears to Himself in the form of plurality.”⁵²⁰ Third, the soul acquires a spiritual body with spiritual senses where it can ascertain the supreme beauty and loveliness of Kṛṣṇa and His idealized celestial abode. Our bodies and sensory capabilities which are derived from *prakṛti* are unable to see Kṛṣṇa in the fullness of His glory; a complete transformation of our consciousness is needed. Johanns added:

To see Him as He is, we must therefore give up our subtle body which is constituted by the instruments of worldly experience, our mental eye and sense functions together with their organs which constitute the coarse body, and we must assume instead a *nirguṇa* body which means that to our God-set self-consciousness there must correspond a consciousness, which works within a mental frame, made all of

⁵¹⁸ *Light of the East*, 7 (November, 1928), p. 5.

⁵¹⁹ *Light of the East*, 7 (January, 1929), p. 5.

⁵²⁰ *Light of the East*, 7 (February, 1929), p. 6.

ānanda or of divine matter. But who can deliver our mind from its unconsciousness and bring the *guṇas* to a standstill? Only God.⁵²¹

The world itself which is primarily comprised of the abstracted *sat*-form is thus left behind in this transfiguration of consciousness. Reality on the highest plane is the eternal *ānanda*-organization, the perfection and culmination of awareness and being.

Vallabha makes clear that of the three traditional *mārgas* endorsed by the Scriptures, the path of devotion, and particularly the *puṣṭimārga*, is supreme in terms of practical value. He is keenly aware of the impediments to living a *dharma*-regulated lifestyle in the midst of the *Kaliyuga* and of the weaknesses of the human disposition. What is superior about the path that he advocates is that the *bhakta* learns to rely upon the grace of God instead of trusting in self-effort. *Karma* and *jñāna* implicitly condition the practitioners to look towards their own abilities to carry out demanding feats of merit-making, penance, and spiritual discrimination. But the devotee of Kṛṣṇa “knows that his last end depends on the choice of God, which is conditioned by the grace of God. Hence his sole attitude is that of surrender to God. Provided I trust in God, he says, He will lead me to the goal He has chosen for me. And if I have to use means, He also will give them to me and see to it that they bring about the result.”⁵²² As *bhakti* develops, it becomes spontaneous and joyous in anticipation of the blissful union with God, whereas Vallabha believes that *karma* and *jñāna* require strenuous effort in order to produce consistently the deeds and meditative concentration that are ultimately liberative. The loveliness of Kṛṣṇa inspires the heart of the devotee, who is lost in God-intoxication; the will and the intellect are more difficult to motivate without such a stirring of the emotions. A simple surrender of the soul to God is what is needed to embark upon this *mārga*. The end result of *bhakti*, the enjoyment of a glorified existence in the celestial atmosphere with Kṛṣṇa, ensures that the qualities developed by the other *mārgas* will be actualized for the soul. Johanns explained: “We give our self back to God, but to receive it, as it is on the divine plane, with all the transfiguration that omniscience, omnipotence and infinite devotion impart to it. Then, loving our self as it is God and our world as it is in God, we gain by redundancy all the virtues the other ways may impart to us.”⁵²³ The *mantra* that Vallabha desires his followers to repeat is

⁵²¹ *Light of the East*, 7 (March, 1929), p. 6.

⁵²² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 43.

⁵²³ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 44.

śrīkṛṣṇaḥ śaraṇam mama, which means “Krishna is my refuge.” This encapsulates the attitude of trust that informs the practical philosophy of the *puṣṭimārga*. The soul learns to rest in the divine grace and to repose in God as the means and the end of the path to salvation.

Johanns understood the practical philosophy of Vallabha as trying to move the soul toward greater attachment to God. The *bhakta* approaches God as servant, friend, and devoted lover, and the *rasa* of God’s presence is savored and enjoyed. The soul sees itself as an aspect of the *līlā* of God, whose very nature is abundantly joyful. Emotional intimacy with God is cultivated, and the alternating rhythms of the sense of separation from and union with Him heighten the sensitivity of the soul to God’s presence.

B. Contributions of Vallabha to Perennial Philosophy

1. Theoretical Philosophy

a. Definition of God

Vallabha has a similar conception as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja of Being, Consciousness, and Bliss as the best designations of the divine. What is particularly distinctive in his vision of the divine is his emphasis on the blissfulness of God. Johanns agreed with Vallabha that the most “expressive” attribute of God is His joy-character. If the attribute of God’s Being can be viewed as Him being “of Himself” and the quality of God’s Consciousness can be viewed as Him being “in Himself,” then His Joy is nothing less than Him being “for Himself.” Johanns explained the implications of God’s being for Himself:

Now a being reaches its end in being for itself. That is its ultimate consummation. Joy, therefore, is the real form of God, and Being and Consciousness are admitted as conditions of this Joy. For Joy obtains in an object in so far as it is brought within awareness. The infinite Joy of God is His self-possession in the awareness of absolute Being. We experience joy in reaching a purpose. But God is the realization of the absolute Meaning and Purpose and hence the absolute Joy of infinite self-approbation and appreciation, the absolute Peace.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 78.

The *ānanda* of God is expressive of His harmonious nature as the perfect identity of being and awareness in which no oppositions exist. Johanns described *ānanda* as the absolute copula in which being “is” awareness. For, “the absolute copula is simply the identity of the sphere of Being with the sphere of Awareness within awareness itself.”⁵²⁵ Vallabha thus has a proper starting point from which to theologize about the divine. The blissful quality of God indicates the absolute plenitude which is at the foundation of all reality. The character and works of God display this abundance of plenitude. The fact that God is Joy means that all His activities and pursuits originate from joy, participate in joy, and find their ultimate completeness in joy. All beings which are self-analyses of God have the potential to share in this most expressive characteristic of God. God desires to communicate the overflowing bliss that is latent within His nature.

The notion of the *akṣara* aspect of God is instructive, for it indicates the possibility of “divine participability.” Thus, God is both the ontological base which “contains everything, all that is possible, *modo eminenti*” as well as the ground of absorption from which all things issue forth when they are manifested.⁵²⁶ Vallabha is capturing the reductive insight of Śaṅkara along with the deductive truth of Rāmānuja. The *akṣara* is similar to Śaṅkara’s impersonal ground of being to which all finite reality can ultimately be reduced. The major distinction between the two concepts is that upon the backdrop of Vallabha’s *akṣara* all the particularities of the *jagat* emerge as divine analyses, whereas Śaṅkara’s conception of the ontological base does not allow other entities or analyses to participate in its being. Śaṅkara’s ontology is completely static, but Vallabha’s is dynamic. When the *jñānins* of the *advaita* return to the world-ground, they lose themselves and their world. In contrast, the *jagat* and *jīvas* of the *śuddhādvaita* undergo alternating rhythms of absorption and reemergence, and they are not illusions that are dispelled with the dawning of liberating knowledge. Vallabha’s doctrine of *akṣara* illustrates that the world is nothing of itself; yet, because of the fecundity of the divine participability it truly becomes manifest. Unlike Rāmānuja’s metaphysics, the world and the souls are not eternally existent alongside of God. The fact that they arise at all is due to the joyful

⁵²⁵ *Light of the East*, 7 (May, 1929), p. 4.

⁵²⁶ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 82.

will of God. They will merge back into the impersonal *akṣara* the moment that God desires such a state for them.

Vallabha's doctrine of divine analysis is a helpful means of explaining the concept of world-possibility which "exists eternally in the mind of God as the expression of His infinite fecundity."⁵²⁷ World-possibility is due to the self-reflection and intellection that takes place in the divine fullness. The idea of participability arises in the divine *cit*. Johanns asserted that "this idea contains (of course *modo eminenti*) all the ideas of things that are destined to participate in this participability. The divine intellect, being infinitely perfect, will be able to discern within His one idea all the ideas that are contained in it. We may, therefore, ascribe to the divine intellect the power of analyzing His one idea into all the ideas of things that are possible."⁵²⁸ God in some mysterious sense analyzes the participability of His Being and Consciousness, and the joy of His inner plenitude makes Him desire to share His blissful *sat* and *cit* and to extend this Beauty beyond Himself. Finiteness and world-possibility are but manifestations and explications of divine participability.

b. God and the World

Johanns placed great emphasis on Vallabha's role in helping to provide clarity on the relation of God to the world:

Vallabha completes and corrects Rāmānuja's system by defining more closely the real relation of the world to God, and of the divine attributes to the divine substance. He is indeed at one with Rāmānuja in his contention that the world is a predicate of God, the Absolute Subject. But by Rāmānuja the predicate was described as synthetical; it added a new reality to God; it expanded the Absolute. Vallabha discovered the inadequacy of such an assertion. The old doctrine of Śāṅkara, that the world was a super-imposition on God, had been retained by Rāmānuja, but the superimposition declared real and valid. Vallabha denies that the world can be outside God in this way. Whatever may be the relation of the world to God, one thing is certain, that *viz.*, the nature of the Absolute requires that it should neither be increased nor diminished by this relation. The Absolute cannot realize itself.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁷ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 3.

⁵²⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 74.

⁵²⁹ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 3.

Vallabha's understanding of the nature of the cause-effect relation of God to the world is an analytical one, as opposed to Rāmānuja's synthetical understanding of the relation. For Rāmānuja, the world is a substantial entity which adds to God's glorious identity. Vallabha, however, asserts that if Reality only manifests itself in differing aspects, alternately hiding and revealing features of its nature, then nothing is added to God and no passivity is introduced into reality. The world is then simply "a form of God, a white glamour on the background of Reality." For, "just as the analysis of a subject of predication neither increases nor decreases the reality of the subject, so too the divine causality- which analyses the world-effect from the divine substance, concentrates on one aspect of reality, brings into prominence and abstracts from the other aspects- neither increases the divine Reality nor decreases it."⁵³⁰

Johanns upheld Vallabha's model that the relation between God and the world can be appropriately characterized as divine analysis on the background of a synthetical Reality. By synthetical Reality, Johannis is referring to God's nature as a plenitude of being, consciousness, and bliss. By focusing upon the "contents" of the divine essence, and abstracting certain features from their background, qualities are isolated and subsequently "bent world-wards."⁵³¹ This process is described as analytical predication. To predicate is to direct the mind's attention upon one aspect of a subject. The world, whether viewed as an effect, form, or attribute of God, is always an analytical predicate of the Subject, who is the divine cause, whole, and substance.

Not only does Vallabha's system provide insights into the metaphysical relation of God to the world, but it also highlights the accessibility of God to the world. Johannis commented that "the *Vaiṣṇavites* want to bring down God to the level of human consciousness at its highest and at its lowest. God must not only be an object of mystical realization and of philosophical reconstruction, but also of ideal aesthetical contemplation and sense-perception. If we have to love God with all the energies of our soul, God must become the object of all these energies."⁵³² God should be able to capture the imagination of the worshipper, and Vallabha's conception of the divine is perfectly suited for this purpose, for He is ever adapting Himself to our human ways and condescending to them. He is a God-man who

⁵³⁰ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 3.

⁵³¹ *Light of the East*, 7 (May, 1929), p. 4.

⁵³² *Light of the East*, 7 (July, 1929), p. 5.

interacts with humanity and who enjoins His *bhaktas* to contemplate His wondrous form. According to Johannis, “what idealizing imagination contributes then is the aesthetical consciousness of God. It wants to bring out the infinite heart, animated by the ideal of beauty and reposing in the contemplation of infinite harmony. The ether in which divine consciousness is now at work, is thus joy, the ecstasy of emotion. Now the divine ground is posited as joy, as the impressibility which beauty shapes in ecstatic forms.”⁵³³ God penetrates and infuses the world with His own ideal of beauty, and he descends to the world in an attractive form. Johannis agrees that God must be accessible to the human mind, where the intellect and imagination can be captivated by the divine. Vallabha thinks that the form of God is completely spiritual and beatific, and yet it may assume a shape of human configuration. Johannis sees certain analogies with a doctrine of an incarnation which is a synthesis between human-ness and the divine. He commented, “Indeed, God has become man, *the man*, the highest man, the *Puruṣottama*; we agree that a man was God and entirely so.”⁵³⁴ Vallabha’s doctrine that God may be perceived in the shape of a man allows for the possibility of analogical knowledge of God. His version of *bhakti* takes into account the fact that most humans cannot become inspired by a purely transcendent God on whom detached, mystical minds meditate; rather, the human heart must be able to respond to a God who is analogous in some sense to human nature and constitution. God must mirror the highest ideals that reside within the heart of humanity; only a personal God who may assume a shape of human configuration will capture the imagination.

Vallabha’s philosophy is especially apt for describing the ideal world in which corruption is absent. This world is as it should be, reflecting the divine plans of a perfected state. The world as it currently exists finds itself in a condition of estrangement and opposition to God and within itself. The *guṇas* allow inertia and excitability to disrupt the harmony and equilibrium that can be found in the ideal world. Johannis wrote:

From the ideal world such activities are altogether banished. Since the divine ground is animated through and through by absolute joy, souls and other forms that are based on it can only be the receptacles of the unceasing flow of divine bliss, the life-blood of the ideal

⁵³³ *Light of the East*, 7 (July, 1929), p. 6.

⁵³⁴ *Light of the East*, 7 (June, 1929), p. 5.

organization. Hence in the ideal world, we are beyond pleasure and pain, the wages of selfish conduct, -we are even beyond the law of good and bad, beyond *dharma* and *adharma*, since the spontaneous play of the divine bliss in us is its own law... God is the natural repose of souls, the eternal unchanging fullness of bliss that steepes them in bliss unalterable. Since then the divine ground subsists beyond the sphere of change, time has vanished and eternity has arisen that knows of no growth and no decay, of no birth and death.⁵³⁵

In this beatific state, the souls are in a perfect relation to God, enjoying the play of His inner life and belonging completely to Him; He, in turn, is completely for them. Everything which comprises this ideal world finds perfect freedom in the divine blissfulness; the ideal world is aligned with the divine plan of harmony and is truly a liberated condition. This joyous backdrop allows for intimate contact between the souls and God, and there can be no closer union that can be imagined. All the faculties of consciousness “touch” God in a way which could not be fully realized in a world characterized by self-centration and alienation. Johanns wrote, “The divine atmosphere is all interiority, the divine joy moves like a breeze filling the soul with the delicious sense of divine presence, and this breeze not only moves around the soul, but penetrates with its peaceful thrill the very depth of its being. Thus the touchability remains on the divine plane and is enhanced to an all-enveloping contact with God and, in God, with everything.”⁵³⁶ The universal harmony which is displayed in the ideal world lends a thrill of deliciousness to the soul as it basks in the *rasa* of the impressions it receives from this aesthetically-pleasing realm of being. Johanns described this harmony as “total perfection of course. For it is a world built up according to the law of beauty, truth and goodness itself. It is but a self-manifestation of truth, beauty and goodness in infinite proportions. Vallabha was aware of this fact, and called the ideal world the house of God.”⁵³⁷

Vallabha’s doctrine of *māyā* is different than Śaṅkara’s and closer to Rāmānuja’s. *Māyā* refers to the illusion of living as though the world had no intimate relation with God. It involves living in a world understood by our own independent interpretation without reference to the divine harmony or ideal. Everything must be referred to God; trying to live outside of God involves a

⁵³⁵ *Light of the East*, 7 (August, 1929), p. 4.

⁵³⁶ *Light of the East*, 7 (August, 1929), p. 5.

⁵³⁷ *Light of the East*, 7 (September, 1929), p. 5.

delusional pattern of activity. Johanns wrote, “We are at one with Vallabha when he asserts that *māyā*, as illusion, consists in an unlawful appropriation. If we do not refer ourselves to God as His means and His properties, we cut ourselves adrift from the ideal world that is destined to be realized in this world. To act as if we belonged to ourselves and live in a world of our own is an illusion through and through.”⁵³⁸ The only cure for this deceptive viewpoint is to earnestly love God, submitting ourselves and our world-interpretation to Him, so that we may be re-incorporated within the harmonious joy-organization. Then the joy that God experiences in Himself will be participated in by the restored souls.

And so Johanns felt that Vallabha’s theoretical philosophy is helpful in identifying God as the ground of participability from which all things issue forth when they are manifested. His nature is the joyful union of being and consciousness. The world is an analytical reality, which neither adds to nor detracts from God’s perfect being. The ideal world in which universal harmony is enjoyed is depicted well by Vallabha, as well as the divine accessibility, which captures the imagination of the soul.

2. *Practical Philosophy*

a. *The Way of Purgation, Illumination, and Unity*

Within Vallabha’s practical theology, there is a notion of a fall from universal harmony, when the souls lose their transfixed focus upon God. When God conceals the divine joy from the souls, they become distracted. Johanns commented, “To say, therefore, that God had hidden His joy is to confess that God was no longer an object of interest for man. The soul neither loved God nor hated Him but was indifferent.”⁵³⁹ The soul instead took a supreme interest in itself and its own concerns. For Vallabha, this pride and independence instills a sense of “I” that is entirely unnatural. Pride can be considered a type of theft that attempts to rob from God what is by rights His own. Nature itself, which was meant to exhibit harmony, begins to function as an inappropriate foundation for the souls who caused rupture and disorder within the world. Not relying on God as the foundation, “man,

⁵³⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 77.

⁵³⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 85.

therefore, finds in himself now a will to passivity and passion, which is not his but which he makes his own by identifying himself with his body and unconscious faculties. In this way man experiences what it is to live outside God. He lives, so to say, in the manifestation of his own pride, and finds out that his assumed independence turns into wholesale slavery.”⁵⁴⁰ Vallabha tries to show that the withholding of joy from the souls by God is meant to benefit them by giving them a glimpse of the deprivation of joy; once they understand the misery that is attendant upon separation from God, they will be overcome by the mercy and grace of God when they are incorporated into the joy-organization. Johanns commented, “But why does God blind these souls which otherwise would be so happy from the beginning? God wants an order of things, in which the soul participates in the universal joy, by discovering it as a lost treasure. Thus the soul will not only possess the divine joy, it will have the thrill of conquest together with the delight of fulfilled expectation.”⁵⁴¹ The exercise of mercy allows for an even greater appreciation of the experience of divine bliss on the part of the souls. God foresaw the benefits that would be derived from the exercise of His grace as He planned to bring good from evil.

Johanns described the *śuddhādvaita* prescription for the way that leads to release:

If we want to bring Vallabha’s doctrine of salvation within our system, we must ask ourselves how he considers the three ways of purification, illumination, and union... Vallabha, however, does not recommend a gradual realization as if these three ways were consecutive. It is his originality to invite us to unite ourselves with God by love from the very start, and to imply that on this wholesale conversion, purification and illumination will follow naturally. He says in other words: that it is love itself that must purify us and illumine us.⁵⁴²

The soul is meant to aspire to union with God and loving intimacy with Him from the outset, rather than needing to undergo an arduous path of *karmayoga* leading on to *jñānayoga* before the soul can connect with the divine in a meaningful sense. True *bhakti* will lead to an inner transformation, for the soul will be bonding with the foundation of all harmony and joy, and purification and illumination will be the

⁵⁴⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 87.

⁵⁴¹ *Light of the East*, 8 (October, 1929), p. 4.

⁵⁴² *Light of the East*, 8 (December, 1929), p. 4-5.

natural consequences of such an intimacy. The devotee will try to please God with acts that are favorable to Him; similarly, the *bhakta* will aspire to greater knowledge of the divine and will seek mystical union. But these activities are driven and informed by a spirit of love, and so Vallabha attempts to affirm the traditional methods of liberation, *karma* and *jñāna*, while subsuming them under the pursuit of *bhakti* to God. It is difficult to avoid selfishness and tainted motives while performing auspicious actions unless the spirit is informed by the attitude of love. Human efforts to acquire merit and to concentrate on the ineffable are not innately fitting means to lift the soul to union with the supernatural. Johanns wrote, “We think with Vallabha that we cannot sacrifice ourselves except for the sake of someone, whom we love better than ourselves. There is too much impersonal sacrifice demanded by Indian philosophy, too much abnegation required for the sake of abstractions. What do all these sacrifices mean which aim at absorption, either within the impersonal light in us or within the impersonal light as it is in God?”⁵⁴³ *Bhakti* is the superior attitude in that it motivates actions and encourages a self-sacrificial lifestyle, orienting all pursuits toward God.

Vallabha believes that the only way to combat the destructive passions, known as *rāga*, which hold sway over the soul is to cultivate an emotional attachment to God as the object of the affections. He advocates emotive intensity as a proper way to express *bhakti*. This affective stimulation of the feelings is the only means of getting the attention of the self away from its own desires and selfish interests. Johanns agreed that “to get rid of our world-love, we should combat it by our love of God. Contraries can only be conquered by their contraries, says the old adage. The *premin* will then use the *navavidhā-bhakti* to give vent to his passion, but unmixed with any worldly considerations. He praises, reveres and serves God to follow the dictates of his God-enamored heart.”⁵⁴⁴ In order to encourage the development of emotional devotion to God, the *bhaktas* will gather in a group and take part in *satsaṅga*, where they recite the deeds of God and incite feelings of intoxicated delight in the acts of worship that they perform. This desire to meet with fellow devotees in order to stir up passion for the divine is an enriching component of Vallabha’s practical philosophy.

⁵⁴³ *Light of the East*, 8 (December, 1929), p. 5.

⁵⁴⁴ *Light of the East*, 8 (April, 1930), p. 6.

The use of iconic forms to lead the devotee into spiritual truth is handled appropriately by Vallabha, who does not seek to inculcate the notion that God is the stone of the *arcā*, but rather the *arcās* “help us concentrate our emotion on the form of God which it covers, and the higher *adhikārin* soon pierces the disguise and concentrates on the spiritual form of the Lord which he has in his mind. Mere *pūjā* does not lead far. The cult must be mental, however much it may be stimulated by the outward form.”⁵⁴⁵ The *bhakta* will respond to the *arcā* in different fashions, depending upon the level of spiritual advancement. Some will look upon the image and be directly attuned to the ideal world where God dwells in His beauty. Others will feel terrible emotions of separation from their beloved Lord. Some will sense the divine condescension which stoops to make His presence available to the devotee through the iconic representation. Irrespective of the level of spiritual discrimination, the *arcā* can be a means of grace for the one who gazes upon the image with trust and devotion. The liturgy and the performances of the cult are tangible means of responding to the divine presence, and are not intrinsically idolatrous.

b. *Divine Grace and Immanence*

Vallabha’s philosophy is clear that the soul cannot merit divine grace. God’s mercy toward the world is gratuitous and is based upon His essential nature. Grace infuses life within the soul. Johanns described the gracious action of God as filling the soul with a “seed of charity and it is this seed which transfigures the substance, the faculties and the acts of the soul in such a way, that the soul can know God as God knows Himself, will God as He wills Himself, and repose in God as He reposes in Himself.”⁵⁴⁶ As this seed matures and grows in the soul, the devotee draws closer to God; the soul yearns to possess God. The grace of God does not take into account the previous deeds of the soul, nor does the natural disposition (*svabhāva*) of the soul sway the choice of God to plant the seed of charity in the heart. The question arises how the soul knows that it has been chosen by God. Johanns described that “we feel that we are chosen when the ideal of love begins to please us (*ruci*); and if this complacency does not arise, then we do not care about our being chosen or not. By

⁵⁴⁵ *Light of the East*, 8 (April, 1930), p. 5.

⁵⁴⁶ *Light of the East*, 8 (January, 1930), p. 5.

the fact, then, that a soul wants to love God, it is sure of its vocation. This *ruci* is, of course, itself a grace.”⁵⁴⁷

Johanns pointed to a profound element in the philosophy of Vallabha: “It is part of the love of God to give Himself away and, therefore, to be possessed, owned, made use of, in one word, to be for the acceptor. It is on account of His infinite Goodness, which by definition is self-communicative, that God makes Himself the means of our ideal and wants to own us by being owned by us. By making ourselves for Him, He made Himself for us.”⁵⁴⁸ Such a profound viewpoint on divine condescension is one in which the greatest *Vaiṣṇava* and Christian theologians delight. The mystery of divine surrender towards humanity is wondrous. God places Himself at the disposal of the soul that abandons self-trust and falls upon the divine grace. The meaning of the *mantra* which states that God is the refuge of the devotee surely expresses the fact that God ultimately takes responsibility to sanctify the soul. Vallabha’s practical philosophy is not based upon self-exertion, rather it is learning to place oneself at the mercy of God, who will undertake the means necessary to release the soul from bondage and alienation. God is infinitely desirous of communicating His love to the helpless soul. He enables the soul to praise and serve Himself by the chosen methods and to assume the proper stance, whether it be servant, friend, or enraptured lover. All the progress that is made in the spiritual path can be traced back to God’s dynamic love. One’s feeble attempts at responding to God’s favor are already due to His mercy working within oneself. Johanns stated that “God loves Himself for His own sake and ourselves for His sake. If we substitute such a love to ours, we may say indeed that we no longer love and live but that God loves and lives within us.”⁵⁴⁹ There cannot be a surrender of the soul to God, no matter how great in extent, which has not already been matched and transcended by an even greater self-giving on the part of God to His beloved *bhakta*. He is able to draw the soul from a realm of deprivation of joy into the glorious joy-organization of universal harmony. God Himself sanctifies the soul so that it may naturally and profitably take part in the inner life of the divine bliss, experiencing the glory of the Beatific Vision. Far from being a system of arduous self-realization,

⁵⁴⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 92.

⁵⁴⁸ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 97.

⁵⁴⁹ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 94.

Vallabha proclaims a message of God-realization whereby God takes the active role. Johanns asserted:

Now He is God for us, the God who is destined to fill all our grace-transfigured needs of intellect, will and heart. We say that we praise, revere and serve God and surrender to Him. But what about God? Does He not praise, revere and serve us infinitely more than we praise, revere and serve Him? Does He not make us praiseworthy, worthy to be revered and served by Him, as if we were His equals and deserved a divine recognition? When endowed with grace, our holy actions deserve the possession of God. Is that not due to an infinite idealization, to an infinite esteem on the part of God?⁵⁵⁰

The very idea of developing sensitivity to the *rasa* that is produced when apprehending and longing for God is a marvelous religious sentiment. Johanns explained that “this deliciousness, this aesthetical thrill proper to the contemplation of the working of a deep and absorbing passion is, what the Hindus called, *rasa*. God is supposed to be infinitely enamored of the soul, and the infinite pathos of His love makes Him a source of aesthetical delight of the highest order... Under the pressure of this all-absorbing passion, it becomes the most delightful object of aesthetical contemplation.”⁵⁵¹ Vallabha’s style of *bhakti* advocates that the practitioner appreciate the emotional flavor of the different aspects of intimacy with God and be caught up with the sweep of the feelings of the heart. Self-consciously relishing the pleasures and facing the pains of various states of perception of the divine presence allows the soul to acquire a purified concentration directed upon God. Even the isolated loneliness that is experienced with the intuited divine absence (*viraha*) can produce a mysterious spiritual joy, when the separation is viewed as a means of drawing the heart closer to the Beloved One. Johanns concurred that “the complete surrender implied in love would not even recoil from an eternal hell, if only hell were to bring about a deeper love of God.”⁵⁵² Love is all that matters. Vallabha is entirely right in asserting that God is deserving of the spontaneous and self-conscious love which flames up in the human heart, making this central to his conception of true religion. And his advocating the necessity of *viraha bhakti* shows that Vallabha wants the devotee to cultivate a love of God for Himself and not just a love of the blissful feelings that are experienced during joyous union with God.

⁵⁵⁰ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 97.

⁵⁵¹ *Light of the East*, 8 (April, 1930), p. 6.

⁵⁵² *Light of the East*, 8 (May, 1930), p. 5.

When love is manifested in the soul, “consolation and desolation are but aspects, that neither increase nor diminish it, but only show what it is. It is repose, and utter desolation itself brings out the all-sufficiency of its peace, since the peace remains true to itself, even in what seems to be contrary to itself...Love unites pain and bliss, lifts them to its own higher synthesis, and uses them as expressions of itself.”⁵⁵³ The mysticism of love overcomes the opposites of agonies and ecstasies, means and ends, presence and absence.

Johanns felt that Vallabha’s practical philosophy is adept in showing how *bhakti* to God is the most adequate means of pursuing liberation. A complete surrender to God is met with the grace of the God who has already committed Himself to the uplift and perfection of the soul. Self-effort is not the focus of Vallabha’s system; rather, God takes it upon Himself to aid the soul that reclines upon His mercy. The desire to feel God’s presence and to sense His love is the sort of spirituality which Johanns advocated.

C. Critique of Vallabha’s Position

1. Use of Śaṅkara to Correct Vallabha

The strategy that Johanns adopted to situate Vallabha within the synthesis of the *Vedāntic* systems was to use Vallabha’s philosophy to correct the weaknesses of Rāmānuja’s metaphysics. Johanns asserted: “Rāmānuja considered this world an expansion of God. Vallabha does away with this inconsistency. The world is but a self-analysis of God which does not increase the Absolute but only shows what It is.”⁵⁵⁴ But it is Śaṅkara’s philosophy which provides the needed corrective to the more personalist theistic conceptions of Rāmānuja and Vallabha. And then the synthesized *Vedāntic* outlook must be recast by *creatio ex nihilo*.

Johanns affirmed the appropriateness of analogous knowledge of God throughout his critique of the *Vedāntic* masters. Both Rāmānuja and Vallabha put forth a concept of God which allows for the possibility of reconstructing the nature of God in the human mind in a logical fashion that draws upon the relationships and attributes found in the world. Vallabha relies upon the notion of self-analysis as well

⁵⁵³ *Light of the East*, 8 (May, 1930), p. 5.

⁵⁵⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 1.

as divine concealment and manifestation in order to indicate the mysterious relation between God and the world. This is an approach which calls for the use of analogous knowledge. But in his affirmation of analogy, Johanns was careful to explain the corrective value of the philosophy of Śaṅkara in this process:

Now, all this analytical and synthetical procedure is but a reconstruction of God. But there is in God no real synthesis and analysis. Hence Vallabha when ascribing to God the power of self-manifestation by the rhythm of synthetical implication and analytical explication has not gone beyond the analogous knowledge of God. For our analogous knowledge has its relative validity. Still it cannot be adequated to the divine knowledge, to the *cognitio Dei proprio modo*. This leads us back to Śaṅkara, from whom we may discover the ultimate foundation of our analogous knowledge which itself is no longer analogous, but, as we shall see, negative and corrective, transcendent.⁵⁵⁵

Johanns was quick to add that these analogous notions that our mind constructs regarding God are solidly based upon the divine Simplicity which is the foundation for all reality and for all the participability of the world's reality. But these ideas must not be uncritically accepted without the admission that human mental reconstructions are unable to capture the Simplicity by comparisons with creatures and the world order. This Simplicity of Śaṅkara guards against the misleading concept that God is truly a subject/substance which possesses predicates/attributes that inhere in Him. Such a construction makes the world and its components metaphysically univocal with the Subject and conceives of the world as having a comparable quality of reality as the divine Substance. This conception is pure error. Johanns explained this corrective of Śaṅkara:

For, although God has all the perfection which an infinite subject with all attributes implies, He is not a subject in the sense that there is in Him even the slightest distinction between subject and predicate, attribute and substance. God transcends the relation of subject and predicate, since He is the absolute predicate awareness, which is its own subject. Nay, God even transcends this construction and is thus the absolute Simplicity, which baffles any attempt to express it in a synthetical way. Thus God is known as He is in Himself but only negatively. We negate the negation that is implied in the division and composition of the judicial construction, but thus we negate the natural aptitude of our mind to know God as He knows Himself.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 4.

⁵⁵⁶ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 4.

Both Rāmānuja and Vallabha are guilty of neglecting to nuance their judicial form of knowing God; although Vallabha is helpful in focusing upon the joy-character of God, Śāṅkara's transcendent philosophy maintains a needed critical balance. But the sheer absoluteness that Śāṅkara advocates we fix our attention upon must still be correlated to our way of thinking if we are to respond in any meaningful way to this lofty conception. Our mind only performs acts of knowledge by relating that which is to be known into the structures that are innate within our mental and conscious faculties. God must be "constructed" in a way which does not necessarily mirror His exact essence. He must be known according to our way of knowing. But Śāṅkara's contribution is to point out that our way is "inadequate and subject to the correction involved in our consciousness that what we relate is itself unrelated, or, in other words, that *the content we put in the relation is in God but in a way that transcends our power of construction.*"⁵⁵⁷ Vallabha's position could benefit from a consideration of the doctrine of Absoluteness as pronounced by Śāṅkara, who reminds us that our analogous construction of God within our mental categories does not formally coincide with God as He is in Himself.

2. Use of Creatio Ex Nihilo to Correct Vallabha

By introducing the dynamic concept of self-analysis, Vallabha opens up the possibility of an ideal world. Johanns reflected upon the relation of the mind of God to the ideal world. Although it is an analogy, God can be seen as analyzing His essence and the essences that are in the divine intellect. The world-idea that is in the mind of God illustrates what Johanns has described as the world-possibility which is an aspect of divine participability. For God "possesses all reality of the world *modo eminenti* and by His intellect knows this reality *modo formali*. To God therefore the divine idea He has of His essence, is like a synthesis which spreads out into the analytical form of an infinite number of possible worlds."⁵⁵⁸ And yet the ideal world of essences is not created since it exists eternally in the mind of God. Creation implies the movement from the divine intellect to a plane where the idea subsists in itself and where it is actuated in its own sphere. Unless this transfer takes place as a consequence of the exercise of divine power, the essences are not entities that have

⁵⁵⁷ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 73. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁵⁸ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 3-4.

existence. There is only a world of essences instead of a world of existences. *Creatio ex nihilo* allows for a world of existences that are actuated outside of God; the world is not just an ideal world of essences participating in the divine Reality. Johanns explained:

Vallabha therefore has well explained the creative aspect of creation, but not its 'creatable' aspect. He has shown how the world is drawn from its own passive power. In other words, if the world of ideal essences is well explained by the principle of self-analysis, the world of actual essences is not. Whereas, if we introduce the conception of *creatio ex nihilo* and make the receptibility of the world correspond to the divine power of giving it, then it becomes true that all that is is only a manifestation of God, but a manifestation which does not merely remain in God as ideal but passes into a sphere of its own, into the sphere of total privation actualized by divine power.⁵⁵⁹

The ideal world can be viewed as an analytical manifestation on the background of divine plenitude, whereas the created world can be regarded as a manifestation of God's qualities against the backdrop of privation. Neither world adds to or detracts from God. In Vallabha's conception where God engages in self-analysis, matter, or world-subject, is *sat* abstracted from the other divine attributes against the background of His plenitude. The being of the world is passive and deprived of awareness. With the further abstraction of *cit* in divine self-analysis, the world-predicate, which is the awareness of conscious souls, enlightens the passive being of the world. The perfect union of subject with predicate is the *ānanda* which is the nature of God in Himself in the harmony of joy. Johanns wrote, "Vallabha has told us that God appears as matter-sphere, as soul-sphere, and as sphere enveloping both and illuminating and directing them, as ideal sphere. We are at one with him so far. But we detach these three spheres from their background of plenitude and rest them on the background of privation, thus getting a world that expresses God and yet is distinct from Him, a world also which really becomes."⁵⁶⁰

Vallabha's concept of change as a transition from implication to explication rather than as a movement from non-being to being is useful for seeing the world as a manifestation of God; since God contains all reality *modo eminenti*, it is a false notion to view the world as completely detached and separate from God

⁵⁵⁹ *Light of the East*, 7 (April, 1929), p. 4.

⁵⁶⁰ *Light of the East*, 7 (May, 1929), p. 4-5.

metaphysically. But Vallabha has not allowed for a transition to be effected from the realm of essences within God to a realm of existences exterior to God, where there can be a real world which is in one sense non-distinct and yet in another important sense separate from God as He is in Himself. By allowing being to be enlightened by awareness on the background of privation, a significant change has indeed taken place. Johanns commented:

By being explicated and analysed, the divine Essence neither increases nor decreases. The transition is but ideal, and Vallabha is right to reconstruct it as a divine self-analysis. But again, this is only the active creativity of God, and the effect on the latter must be received in creatability, in the sphere of receptibility and privation to the subsistant. And here the real change comes in. The sphere of existence is in itself absolute passivity, which needs an influence of the divine will to move towards activity. (We are of course speaking analogously)... We can accept the theory of Vallabha that the world is only an explication of the divine ideal. But we must add that this explication is effected in the sphere of existence, and thus remains distinct from God and expressive of God.⁵⁶¹

According to Johanns, Vallabha's metaphysical conceptions apply to the ideal world as it is in the divine intellect before it subsists in the ground of privation. What Vallabha views as a real world, Johanns viewed as an ideal world in the divine intellect. For Vallabha "considers the world as being real in so far as it embodies all the perfections which it borrows from its being viewed as a modality of the divine ground alone. Vallabha got stuck in the ideal world."⁵⁶² Johanns proposed instead that the idea of participability arises in the mind of God, and all the things which will share in this participability are implicit within this idea. These intelligible modes of His participability are abstracted manifestations of the qualities of *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. The "form," or analyzed attributes, of God are bent world-wards. They originate from the divine background, but they are received into a ground which is distinct, making them finite and localized.⁵⁶³ For Vallabha, the souls and nature in

⁵⁶¹ *Light of the East*, 7 (May, 1929), p. 5.

⁵⁶² *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 73.

⁵⁶³ "The light of divine reproductivity appears as the form of God away from its congenial substratum, self-subsistence, towards world-subsistence. Therefore it comes from God into the world; ...it is the world-constructing, the world-illuminating and the world-expressing principle, the realising illumining and gladdening ray, which is no longer God but the gift of ideality to the world. It is this light that becomes concrete in the substantial forms of the world." *Light of the East*, 4 (June, 1926), p. 5.

themselves are formal participations in God. Their natural condition is to be an immanent aspect of God. But from the standpoint of *creatio ex nihilo*, there are fundamental differences in Reality. While the ideas of participability are immanent within God, the actuated existences of souls and nature are not formal participations. Their natural condition and particular identity imply that God must lift them to a greater level of participation in Him through a supernatural act of grace. They do not have a right in themselves to participate in the divine. God must transfigure the soul and lift it to the plane of the divine life if the soul is to enjoy this union. Johans explained: “Nothing is gained by repose and quietism, for it is not a question of becoming aware of what we are already, but of becoming what we are not. Hence our system calls for energy transfigured to the infinite by grace as the only means to reach the goal.”⁵⁶⁴

While Johans thought that humans must be adapted to God through the action of God, he also believed that the material world must be adapted to the ideal of universal harmony. Humans have an active part to play in this process, as well. The material world and its capacities are not to be left behind and disparaged in the pursuit of some sort of pure spiritual sphere. Johans explained the implications of a philosophy based upon *creatio ex nihilo*, which does not denigrate concrete materiality:

It does not tell man to look away from this material world and from his matter-informing soul...(It) reveals to us but one thing: the divine invitation to strain our will with the help of grace towards the rebuilding of the world, of our society, and of ourselves, according to the divine standard of supernatural harmony...In our progressive ascent towards the eternal summits, we must take with us our continual effort to adapt this material world of ours and all our material energies to the plan of universal supernatural restoration. It may be said that we shall never bring about such a restoration. Of course, such a task depends ultimately on God for its full success. But of us it is required that we make ourselves worthy of it, and the only way to do it is to make it our ideal and to procure it as far as we can.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 73. “Divinisation must come from God. It must be given by Him through His free liberality which is infinitely greater than simple creation by which we are only human...By simple creation God gives the world to itself. By supernaturality or supercreation God gives Himself to the faithful souls to participate in His own beatitude as He lives and enjoys it.” *Vallabha*, p. 20.

⁵⁶⁵ *Synopsis of TCV*, Part 3, p. 81.

Prakṛti is passive and pliable to the ends toward which conscious beings direct it. Matter can be directed toward good aspirations and can be transfigured to serve the highest ideals of the spirit. Matter is meant to be a vital constituent of the final consummated harmony that true spirituality pursues.⁵⁶⁶

Johanns raised the question as to why the initial harmony in which the souls participated within God is not perceived, enjoyed, or remembered by the souls. If the souls were implicitly within the blissful life of God before they fell into selfishness, what sort of existence was this pre-existence within God that Vallabha maintains? Johanns thought that pre-existence which cannot recall the bliss of its ground is not genuine existence but is merely a sort of ideal existence. Vallabha affirms that the souls in the beginning became blind to this joy-existence and were distracted from God so that their existence became manifested as a debased life of selfishness; this implies that they once had genuine pre-existence in the divine harmony which was not merely ideal existence. Vallabha's concept of the genuine pre-existence of souls in the harmonious ground of God prior to their descent into *saṃsāra* presents difficulties. How real are these souls prior to their manifestation? At many points Vallabha's "actual" world is more ideal than real. Johanns believed that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* avoids metaphysical confusion, because it preserves the distinction between essences that are idealized in the divine intellect and existences that become fully realized during creation. He wrote, "Creation therefore means the arising of a world outside God, and it is this externality which hides the world of internality."⁵⁶⁷ The distraction of the souls is more adequately explained by *creatio ex nihilo* as well as their ignorance of the divine harmony, for souls did not *exist* prior to their manifestation in a ground of privation separate from the divine essence. This separateness allowed the attention of the soul to drift from God to itself and its world.

Vallabha claims that by implanting the seed which generates vitality, the soul is returned to a disposition that it once had when it was fully participating in the divine harmony. The soul is meant to return from bondage to a condition as when it

⁵⁶⁶ "In heaven nature will become pure expressibility. Man especially appreciates in nature its capacity of expression. Art under its various forms is a promise that nature will be for us harmoniously adapted to express the spirit and to cooperate with it...In heaven regenerated nature will express all the spirit wants it to express. The sounds, the colours, the movements will prolong the orchestration of the divine harmony in its full display." *Vallabha*, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁷ *Light of the East*, 8 (October, 1929), p. 5.

was pre-existing in the joy-organization before it fell into *saṁsāra*. The soul in the ideal realm is in a state of grace in its rightful position, whereas grace needs to be bestowed to the *saṁsāric* soul in order to enact a needed reversal to the ideal condition. Johanns asserted, “Vallabha would tell us that by grace the soul returns from its unnatural state to its natural state, from what it is not to what it is. But we say that the soul *is* in its natural state here in the world, and that grace is no return to what the soul is in its true essence but a progress, a self-transcendence, that consists in the ascent of the soul to the divine plane.”⁵⁶⁸ For Johanns, the notion of a pre-existing soul indicates *only* an ideal preconstruction in the intellect of God, not a real soul in a state of grace, as Vallabha asserts. And the souls which exist in a real world are not seeking to return to the state of an ideal condition which they have already experienced by virtue of their status. Grace is thus not restoring the soul to its rightful position and reestablishing its true divine identity. It is a process of completely transfiguring the soul, which is not naturally adapted to the Beatific Vision. The soul as limited and privative in itself must be raised by grace so that it can partake of the divine plenitude. Johanns described: “Since in their theory we are of the same nature as God, God has not given ourselves to us: we remain by our true nature something of God. In our theory, on the contrary, God has given to us not only our nature but our ‘deiform’ supernatural life. This life does not remain within God: it is also poured out over us, received, possessed, and enjoyed.”⁵⁶⁹

Vallabha’s philosophy attempts to hold in balance a notion of *advaitism* along with, on the practical level, a nuanced distinction of the soul from God. The release of the soul from bondage does not result in complete absorption and loss of identity; rather, the soul enjoys blissful awareness of Kṛṣṇa. Johanns found the polarity of pure non-dualism and the God-soul distinction unresolved in Vallabha’s philosophy. On the level of practical spirituality, the ontology of “pure non-dualism” is not consistently followed. Johanns sought to illustrate these practical distinctions that exist in reality: “for the soul to come to this realization that God is for it, it must have an awareness of its own, to which God must appear as God. But where can the soul receive such an awareness if it is not given by God? And if it be given, it is received. And, if it be received, the soul had nothing of it by itself.”⁵⁷⁰ Subject-

⁵⁶⁸ *Light of the East*, 8 (January, 1930), p. 5.

⁵⁶⁹ *Light of the East*, 8 (January, 1930), p. 6.

⁵⁷⁰ *Light of the East*, 8 (December, 1929), p. 7.

object interaction seems to exist despite the non-dual relation that is posited between the soul and God. For example, even though the soul is a manifestation of the divine from the start and comes from the joy of God, Vallabha maintains that God must implant a seed in the soul that will grow into *bhakti-dṛṣṭi* if the soul is to yearn after God. Admittedly, Vallabha's system is dynamic, and yet one may wonder if Śaṅkara is much more consistent in allowing his practical philosophy to reflect his strict *advaita* than was Vallabha.

Johanns drew upon Śaṅkara's transcendent philosophy to nuance the analogical depiction of the knowledge of God that Vallabha affirms. He critiqued Vallabha's metaphysic as a system which never moves beyond the realm of ideal essences, and so the world never becomes instantiated into a realm of existences. The identity of the soul as an aspect of God and as something which exists ideally before its fall must be corrected to an understanding that the soul was once a preconstruction in the intellect of God and that it has no right in itself to participate in universal harmony.

D. Vallabha and Aquinas

Vallabha's doctrine of the manifestation of the *jagat* revolves around the self-analysis of the divine essence which allows the world to be produced. Aquinas advocates the notion that there are ideas within the divine intellect after which the world is patterned. God's reflection upon this knowledge leads to the explication of the world into existence. He writes:

We must maintain that the divine mind has ideas. For *idea* in Greek is the equivalent of *forma* in Latin, i.e., form; and so by ideas we mean the forms of other things that are separated from the things themselves. Now, anything's form that is separate from that thing can have two uses: either to be the exemplar or type of that whose form it is said to be, or to be the principle whereby that thing is known, just as the forms of sensible things are said to be in the knower. For these two reasons we must argue that there are divine ideas. This is obvious when we realize that except for what occurs through chance the form must be the intended aim in all generation. Moreover, the likeness of the form must be in the agent if he is to act for the sake of the form... Now, because the world has not come about by chance but is created by God, who acts intellectually, there must

exist in the divine mind a form that the world is made like; and this is what we understand as an idea.⁵⁷¹

There is a world-plan that eternally exists in the intellect of God, and the created world is fashioned after its likeness. The form that is conceptualized is producible and can be made to exist in a sphere separate from the divine mind. As an artist has a set of ideas that act as an exemplar of what he hopes to actualize in the material world, God has preconceived ideas in His knowledge regarding the design that He intends for His world-creation. This self-knowledge of God gives rise to the manifested world.⁵⁷² God has perfect knowledge of the order which He desires the universe to display, and He has knowledge of each particular part that comprises the whole harmonious design. This divine self-knowledge is all-encompassing: “God perfectly knows His essence; He therefore knows it in every possible way. Now, the divine essence is knowable not only as it is in itself but as it can be participated in to some degree of likeness by creatures.”⁵⁷³ The self-analysis of the divine essence and the knowledge-plan which informs the desired explication of a manifested world are similarities in both Vallabha’s and Aquinas’ systems.

Conclusion

According to Johanns, Vallabha develops his *śuddhādvaita* in such a way as to allow for a non-dualism which retains elements of personal interaction between God and His devotees. Johanns taught that Vallabha portrays God as having three distinct manifestations: in His transcendent form as Kṛṣṇa, in His impersonal aspect as *akṣara*, and in His world-form as *jagat*. He hides His *ānanda* in order to manifest the conscious souls, and He conceals His *cit* in order to manifest the material world. Reality is ever the same in this process of self-analysis, for everything is God in

⁵⁷¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.15, a.1, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 153.

⁵⁷² See Aquinas, *On Truth*, q.3, a.3.

⁵⁷³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.15, a.2, translated by M. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, p 154. “And we must therefore assert that the exemplars or types of all things are in the divine wisdom, and these types we have called ideas, i.e., exemplar-forms existing in the divine mind. And although there are many such ideas because they are related to things, they are not really anything else than the divine essence as reflected in the various things diversely sharing a likeness to it. And so it is in this way that God Himself is the first exemplar of everything.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.44, a.3, translated by Clark, p. 128.

visible and invisible states. Johanns asserted that in the *śuddhādvaita*, the *līlā* of God causes the explication of souls, and God seeks to draw these souls into the joy-organization of His nature. The world of souls and inanimate nature is real, for it is none other than a divine self-analysis. The practical philosophy of Vallabha, in the view of Johanns, seeks to enable the souls to re-integrate within the universal harmony by removing false viewpoints and misinterpretations, so that God is adored and enjoyed.

Johanns appreciated Vallabha's notion that the explication of the world does not add to or detract from God, for the process is analytical rather than synthetic. For him, Vallabha's theoretical doctrine is more adequate than Rāmānuja's, for the world's reality does not affect God or increase His nature. The world is an expression of the divine participability and comes from the ground of *saccidānanda*. The ultimate end of the practical philosophy is to reintegrate the soul within the joy-harmony of reality. Johanns thought that Vallabha tries to protect the personhood of God and the reality of the world, while at the same time keeping God's independent, pristine nature from being tainted by the production of the world. The world does not possess its own reality, for everything that it has is ultimately due to the desire of God to communicate His joy. Vallabha, in the view of Johanns, illustrates a form of non-dualism that is different from Śāṅkara's reductive acosmism, and he provides a metaphysic which, like Rāmānuja's system, allows for a deduction of the world from God, but, unlike *viśiṣṭādvaita*, does not compromise God's complete independence by the presence of the finite world. Johanns drew upon this analytic causality of Vallabha in order to indicate how the world is the result of divine self-analysis. What Johanns found problematic with Vallabha's view is that the world never becomes actuated into the realm of existences. Vallabha's metaphysic is helpful in depicting the ideal essences that are present in the mind of God prior to the act of creation, but his system never moves beyond the world of ideal essences into instantiated existence.

Having provided a summation of Johanns' explication and treatment of Vallabha, a preliminary critique is now offered in relation to the research questions proposed in the introduction of the thesis. Johanns, in explicating the system of Vallabha, rendered a valuable contribution to the study of the *Vedānta*; the *śuddhādvaita* had not been adequately explored when Johanns was writing his articles addressing the thought of Vallabha. Johanns gave a lucid explanation of

Vallabha's theoretical philosophy, as one would expect, but he also dealt with the mythological and cultic elements of the *puṣṭimārga* in a greater level of depth than he did with the system of Rāmānuja. Thus, Johanns' treatment of the *śuddhādvaita* is more comprehensive than his discussion of the *viśiṣṭādvaita*. He even provided an assessment of the iconic and erotic dimensions of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* that is not condemnatory. Johanns broke new ground in his pioneering articles on Vallabha, both from an Indological and a Christian theological point of view. His achievements in this respect are impressive. J. Patmury has remarked that "some of his masterful expositions, such as, for example, that of Vallabha's system, are unparalleled to this day."⁵⁷⁴

With regard to a synthesis of the *Vedānta*, Johanns made much of Vallabha's conception of the world as an analytical mode; this is certainly one of the foundational doctrines of the *śuddhādvaita*. He articulated a series of compelling arguments which highlighted the importance of this concept. Johanns made a good case that an analytical mode does not present the danger of detracting from the independence of God as a synthetic mode, such as Rāmānuja's world, does. Having demonstrated that the world must be a mode in order to exist outside the divine essence, he argued that Vallabha's notion of causality is an improvement upon the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* model. He claimed that Rāmānuja's concept of the world as a synthetic mode which eternally exists alongside of God blunts the divine simplicity and independence. Johanns intelligently presented the claim that divine self-analysis does not compromise the self-sufficiency or the transcendence of the Absolute, since it is the divine qualities which are the objects of God's consideration, and not an entity exterior to His essence. He asserted in an articulate manner that Vallabha's doctrine of the world as a limited projection of isolated, abstracted divine qualities is a significant development in Hindu "natural" philosophy that must be incorporated into a rigorous synthesis of the *Vedānta*. Johanns' argument that the *śuddhādvaita* doctrine of causality can better hold together the polarities of divine independence and world-modality than the models that Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja develop is an intriguing one. His argument that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* allows the essences to be actuated into a sphere of existences, thereby completing and

⁵⁷⁴ J. Patmury, "Introduction", *To Christ through the Vedānta: The Writings of P. Johanns*, ed. Theo de Greeff, Bangalore: United Theological College, p.xii. See Chapter Six for more discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of Johanns' treatment of Vallabha.

perfecting the *śuddhādvaita* doctrine which only allows for an ideal world, is quite perceptive, showing a high level of philosophical subtlety. However, it is questionable whether a *Vedāntin* will be impressed with this observation, since the existence/essence distinction is not as central to *Vedāntic* philosophy as it is in Thomist theology. Nonetheless, Johanns' level of sophistication is displayed by such observations, confirming his erudition and his aptitude to construct the synthesis. These issues will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter on the theological evaluation of Johanns' project.

Part Three

Chapter Six

Theological Evaluation of Johanns

This final chapter evaluates Johanns by analyzing how successfully he did or did not carry out his defined objectives, based upon the key methodological components which framed his project of synthesizing the *Vedānta*. Johanns is best assessed by taking into consideration the ideals and the standards that he set for himself and also by evaluating him within his historical context. By situating him within his scholarly and theological milieu, one can avoid an unbalanced and potentially unfair criticism based solely upon current concerns and theological emphases. While modern theologians in India have become progressively more sensitive to issues of social and gender equality and have sought to stand against the hegemony of the privileged classes, these concerns were not as prominent in the time period of Upādhyāy and Johanns. For the sake of evaluating Johanns against what may be expected of him as a theologian of his generation, the analysis will concentrate upon the accuracy and the quality of the project of Johanns, rather than criticizing him for not addressing concerns that arose some time afterwards. These more modern concerns have already been documented and presented in an informed manner by other scholars.⁵⁷⁵ This chapter contains a number of separate discussions. First, the synthesis of Johanns is presented in as concise a manner as possible, in order to provide a helpful summation of the progressive argumentation of the previous three chapters. Second, the project of Johanns is assessed in terms of the accuracy of his exposition of the three *Vedāntins*, the quality and viability of his neo-Thomist synthesis, and the credibility of his fulfilment theology. Both the methodological strengths and potential weaknesses of Johanns in these matters are highlighted, so that a realistic evaluation may emerge. Thus, the assessment is structured in such a way that the various features of Johanns' project each receive attention and constructive criticism.

⁵⁷⁵ See, for example, *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, ed. A.P. Nirmal, Madras: Gurukul, 1992; *Indigenous People, Dalits: Dalit Issues in Today's Theological Debate*, ed. J. Massey, Delhi: ISPCK, 1998; *An Emerging Asian Theology, Tribal Theology*, ed. A. Wati Longchar, Jorhat: Tribal Study Center, 2000; *A Reader in Feminist Theology*, ed. P. Kumari, Madras: Gurukul, 1993.

A. Summary of the Synthesis

1. Synthesis of the Vedāntins

Johanns provided an extended treatment of the thought of the *Vedāntins*, attempting to portray their respective philosophies in a precise and informed manner. In this summary of the synthesis, it must be kept in mind that the exposition and the evaluation are *always* from the perspective of Johannis. In order not to make the discussion cluttered, the provisos “according to Johannis” and “in the view of Johannis” will not be reiterated in front of every assertion regarding the *Vedāntins* and their systems. Yet, the statements about Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Vallabha, and *creatio ex nihilo* in this summary are always “in the opinion of Johannis.” They are not definitive opinions accepted by all scholars. The reader must bear in mind while proceeding that the focus is constantly on Johannis’ perspective.

Śaṅkara advocates a particularly lofty understanding of God. God is absolute unity, and nothing can compromise this divine indivisibility. In Him, subjectivity and objectivity are identical and undifferentiated. Not even the attributes which are associated with God’s character may taint this internal simplicity. For Johannis, Śaṅkara “has understood that neither absolute Being nor absolute Awareness are able to qualify the inner life of God. They are aspects and, as aspects or attributes, they cannot be in God. God therefore is even beyond them, the Super-Being and the Super-Knowledge in absolute Simplicity and Unity.”⁵⁷⁶ God is thus self-subsistent, the perfect self-contained unity of being and knowledge. This precludes the possibility of God passing into the world in any fashion. It follows that, as attributes do not taint the inner perfection of God, modes cannot inhere in Him. The Simplicity of God will not allow for a world-form to be an inner modification of the divine. The identity of God as unrestricted Reality will not allow for the existence of a self-subsistent finite reality. These notions are false superimpositions upon Him and are metaphysical impossibilities; the conceptions of an absolute world or one which subsists internally in God are dismissed by *advaitins* as falsities. Śaṅkara brings forth the truth that “the world is God absorbed in His absoluteness but God is not the world, for in that case God would be divisible.”⁵⁷⁷ To all these

⁵⁷⁶ *Light of the East*, 14 (May, 1936), p. 93.

⁵⁷⁷ *Light of the East*, 14 (January, 1936), p. 45.

false forms which appear to have reality, God is the principle of infinite “absorbing away.”

The *advaitic* system inculcates the great reductive principle that God contains all finite reality which feigns absoluteness within His infinite Reality in a manner which overcomes all dualities. The world is not by, for, or of itself. In the final analysis, the world does not possess a being that it can claim as its own. Only God has this sort of Being. Therefore, on a practical level, the soul must return to God all that it assumes that it possesses in a religious surrender. A deep metaphysical humility must arise, where the soul recognizes that it is nothing of itself. The consciousness must be developed so that the soul can intuit that God’s Reality is the only being that has ontological value in and of itself; the mystic is able to rest in the repose of the divine Self, and becomes attuned to the correlation of its perceived being with God’s.

Rāmānuja has a conception of God as highly personal in His character. Whereas Śāṅkara placed restrictions upon what could be said about God, Rāmānuja opens wide the possibility of divine attribution. God is replete with a multitude of qualities in the line of quantity and quality. Furthermore, the divine attributes are free from imperfections or limitations. Johanns synthesized the two *Vedāntins* by noting that the contents of the perfected attributes are truly within the essence of God, but in a manner which transcends the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* understanding of qualities inhering in a substance. God does not possess attributes, for He is His qualities, and His simple essence is identical with the perceived personal traits. Statements may be truly asserted regarding God, as long as one remembers that the way in which God is identical with His attributes is unparalleled. Predications of the divine can only imperfectly indicate God’s inner nature. One may legitimately assert that God is good, not because He possesses the attribute of goodness but because His very essence is goodness.

Rāmānuja views the world and the individual souls as completely real due to their relation to God. Whereas Śāṅkara had promoted acosmism, Rāmānuja looks upon the world as a contingent reality that is ever dependent upon Him for purpose and intelligibility. By virtue of this intimate relationship, the world is an image of God that replicates His perfection in a sphere of finitude. The world is the body of God, for it is controlled and supported by Him and adds to His glory. Johanns synthesized the disparate views of the *Vedāntins* by noting that the world is neither

anything of itself nor anything of God. Śaṅkara's *advaitism* had appropriately ruled out either way of characterizing the world. It is not an internal divine mode, as Rāmānuja had suggested, and it cannot account for its own existence. But conceiving of the world as a contingent reality is not inherently problematic, according to Johanns, for it participates in the reality that it receives from its divine support. The world's reality does not impugn the Reality of God, for the world is all-receiving and utterly dependent upon God. Any relation or interaction that God has with the world is merely for the benefit of souls and nature, and does not indicate any deficiency or want within God. Thus, the ontological and epistemic link that conjoins a real world with God, which was severed by *advaita*, is re-established by Rāmānuja. God is completely personal in His interaction with souls, and He is immanent within the world in a variety of ways. His condescending accessibility to the world is a marvelous insight captured by Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja prescribes a path of *bhakti* that displaces love for the ephemeral and inculcates devotion to God. Thus, he revives a dimension of practical philosophy that had been denigrated by *advaita*, the wholehearted surrender to and adoration of a highly personal God. Rather than promoting total withdrawal into an abstract Absoluteness, *bhakti* upholds the model of salvific interaction between the divine personage and individual selves. Johanns noted that "Rāmānuja wanted a God that could be for us as we are for Him. He therefore denied the necessity of our disappearing into God... (He) could know us, judge us, and love us, and we as persons could do the same in return with regard to Him. There thus came in that special personal union with God, which we call fellowship."⁵⁷⁸ But Śaṅkara contributes the corrective that a proper view of God must portray Him as transcendent and self-contained, and must admit that no one is naturally adapted to seeing God in His own absolute light. Rāmānuja's understanding of the world as an internal mode of God, which in its normal state is facing the divine, partially obscures this essential *advaitic* truth. When the question arises of the identity of the soul *in itself*, the answer must always be that it is absorbed in the Absoluteness. Only when the inquiry is pushed further as to what the soul is *because of God* can the answer be proffered that it is a contingent reality that must acknowledge its utter dependence upon His support and grace.

⁵⁷⁸ *Light of the East*, 8 (June, 1930), p. 5.

Vallabha develops a concept of God as the infinite Reality who through a process of self-judgment gives rise to a finite reality. God's person is neither increased nor decreased by this process; the world's reality does not affect His essence, since it is but a manifestation and concealment of aspects and attributes of the divine. Vallabha thus portrays the world as a form or mode of God, but one that is neither internal to His essence nor supplementary to His person. Johanns commented: "This explanation shows well how the world is but a form of God and it shows also how the world subsists in an analytical shape whereas God subsists in synthetical shape. The world can therefore be distinguished from God. As an aspect of His it is distinguishable from God but not distinct from Him."⁵⁷⁹ The world is properly viewed as contingent, for it will merge back into the divine absorption as soon as God chooses to cease the process of self-analysis. Its finite being is due to the continual influence of God. Therefore, Vallabha corrects the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* understanding of the world-mode, preferring to characterize the *jagat* as an analytical mode instead of a substantial mode. For Rāmānuja, the world is a substantial entity which adds to God's identity. Vallabha, however, asserts that if Reality only manifests itself in differing aspects, alternately hiding and revealing features of its nature, then nothing is added to God and no passivity is introduced into reality. Vallabha's world is the result of the divine self-judgment and the abstraction of qualities against the background of the divine plentitude; it is not a reality which increases the divine Reality. However much Vallabha supplies helpful contributions to an understanding of the world's ontological status, Śaṅkara must be appealed to again to show that this description of God's self-knowledge through analysis and abstraction is only an imperfect analogy of what takes place in the causative process. The attributes are not separate entities that can be isolated, as Vallabha's position seems to infer. Descriptive language, which relies upon subject-predicate opposition, is unable to properly depict the way in which the simple unity of God's essence is analyzed by Him to initiate causation. The process is real, but the language which attempts to capture it is necessarily faulty.

Vallabha reinforces Rāmānuja's portrayal of a personal God who is intimately involved with the world. He articulates a distinctive vision of God as eminently joyful, and his particular version of devotionism teaches the soul to repose in the blissful *rasa* of the experiential intuition of God's presence. Vallabha

⁵⁷⁹ *Light of the East*, 14 (January, 1936), p. 46.

makes the observation that emotive love for God is a much better pursuit and means of religious motivation than trying to attain release through meditation on abstractions or through meticulous observation of behavioral and cultic requirements. God's grace is central to the *puṣṭimārga*, for He implants a seed of charity in the soul irrespective of the personal merit of the soul. Vallabha therefore "realized that the soul, however much it may come from God, is not of itself adapted to God...(for) to possess God in the glamour of His absolute light, and ourselves and our world in God, we must be regenerated by the light of grace, which gives us a new nature, that new nature by which we can see God as He sees Himself."⁵⁸⁰ While Rāmānuja had developed the belief in divine descent and condescension, Vallabha makes a specific descent of God in human form the highest aspect of deity and the prime object of worship. Johanns concluded that "it is this human God that Vallabha invites us to enter into fellowship with."⁵⁸¹

Therefore, the synthesis of Johanns combines the focus on God's complete independence and self-sufficiency, which is inculcated by Śāṅkara's acosmism, with Rāmānuja's teaching on the affirmed value of a contingent world that replicates God's qualities and interacts with Him in devotion and surrender. The synthesis then allows Vallabha's notion of the world as an analytical mode of a divine joyous plenitude to correct Rāmānuja's perspective that it is an entity which adds something to God's Reality. The cosmos is the result of God analyzing His qualities and projecting the isolated, abstracted attributes away from Himself.

2. *Synthesis with Creatio Ex Nihilo*

The contention of Johanns was that a causality which is based upon the presupposition of *pariṇāma*, which sees the world as a self-transformation of God, cannot do justice to all the truths that the *Vedānta* is keen to safeguard. Śāṅkara sacrifices the reality of the world, for he is repulsed by the implications of God passing into the world; Rāmānuja taints the simplicity of God's unified character, for the world of selves and nature is an internal mode in the divine; Vallabha depicts an ideal world that is never actualized into a realm of existence, for the divine self-analysis is never transferred into a distinct substratum. Johanns was of the opinion

⁵⁸⁰ *Light of the East*, 8 (June, 1930), p. 6.

⁵⁸¹ *Light of the East*, 8 (June, 1930), p. 6.

that a cosmology which adopts the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* can better hold together a comprehensive, holistic metaphysic. In this view, a perfectly transcendent God, who exists alone in His self-sufficiency, through a creative Act brings forth a realm, or a substratum, distinct from His essence. This realm of itself is privative and complete receptivity to the influence of God. God confers contingent being into this created vacuous realm; He analyses His divine essence and bestows a form of Himself upon this empty substratum. Johanns explained:

On the one side we have God containing all reality *modo eminenti*, on the other we have the total privation or the passive possibility, of the world. With these two terms, the existence of the world becomes deducible in an analogous way. There is a term from which reality may come, namely Reality itself that contains all reality in its own way. And there is also a term into which this reality is received. Moreover, since total privation is nothing of itself and for itself, the world that arises by creation is by God and for God. Being by God and for God, it is however in this relative way something in itself, since it is received into privation and according to privation and hence finite and therefore distinct from God who is essentially infinite.⁵⁸²

God gains absolutely nothing from the creative action; His nature is gracious plenitude which seeks to give everything to a world of souls and nature. The world is real, but it has a reality that is ontologically dependent upon the action of God. Indeed, it has a relative reality only because of its essential relation to God. If God would remove his sustaining Act of Being from the world, then everything would return to the state of affairs envisioned by the *advaitins*.

The world is a re-production in a finite sphere of the “qualities” that are implicitly the contents of the unified divine essence. The created, phenomenal world is an actuated reality that is based upon the ideal of participability that eternally exists in the divine intellect, for the creative aspect latent within God’s plenitude presupposes His ability to bring forth entities that can participate in His Being. Johanns stated that the world is metaphysically “as one with God as it may well be. Since it is a reproduction, it can only be itself and produce itself in the measure that God reproduces Himself in it, and it is only present to itself in the measure that God makes Himself represented in it.”⁵⁸³ Yet, the world does not expand God’s nature inwardly or outwardly, for it is not an additional production of Himself which further

⁵⁸² *Light of the East*, 13 (July, 1935), p. 116.

⁵⁸³ *Light of the East*, 5 (May, 1927), p. 5.

actualizes Him, but rather a mere *re*-production of certain attributes in a distinct, limited substratum.

In summary, Johanns contended that *creatio ex nihilo* preserves the uncompromised independence and utter transcendence of God that Śaṅkara was so keen to stress. In this model, God is the only necessary Being who is not implicitly related to any entity; He is not in a relationship of dependence upon anything. He is self-contained, and His essence never overflows or expands to become a world. This doctrine of causality also allows for the existence of a real, contingent world that is open to the divine immanence, similar to what Rāmānuja taught. The world is ontologically and epistemically inseparable from God. God is interactive with the world, but this engagement does not signify any need or want in the divine, since He gains nothing from creating or preserving the world's contingent reality. Vallabha's notion that the world is an analytical mode resulting from divine self-analysis is also espoused by proponents of *creatio ex nihilo*. The divine intellect analyses the divine essence, and limited qualities are abstracted and projected into a sphere of complete privation; in this way, a world of dependent, finite reality arises which is a re-production of divine attributes in a distinct substratum. This analysis does not expand the divine essence, since the world is not a further extension or production of God's quiddity. Thus, the key metaphysical insights of the *Vedāntins* and the practical philosophies that follow from these truths are safeguarded and brought into a holistic framework by bringing *creatio ex nihilo* to bear upon them.

B. Evaluation of Johanns' Exposition

1. Śaṅkara

A glance at the bibliography that Johanns provided in his article "Hinduism," in the Studies in Comparative Religion Series, will show that the scholars that he was consulting, such as Deussen, Müller, Thibaut, and indeed Dandoy, were proponents of a "majority" reading of Śaṅkara as an acosmic illusionist.⁵⁸⁴ This has historically been the standard interpretation of Śaṅkara in both academic and traditional Hindu

⁵⁸⁴ Johanns, "Hinduism," Studies in Comparative Religion, ed. E. Messenger, vol. 1, essay 5, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1938. See B. Malkovsky, The Role of Divine Grace in the Soteriology of Śaṅkarācārya, Leiden: Brill, 2001, for a full explanation of the majority versus the minority reading of Śaṅkara. The majority view reads Śaṅkara as advocating illusionism and acosmism with regard to the world's ontological status. The minority reading sees Śaṅkara as a realist who advocates a contingent reality for the world.

circles. Johanns has shown himself to be a skilled communicator of the mainstream monistic reading of Śaṅkara's thought. His articles show concision of exposition and an economy of language which intends to pierce to the heart of the monistic perspective without extraneous, overly-technical discussion. Johanns is to be commended for his clear, deft, and succinct description of Śaṅkara's *advaita*. The reader is left with a sharp impression of the acosmism and the unity of God's simple Being which are the central motifs of the majority interpretation of Śaṅkara. Thus, in terms of the overall portrait that Johanns sketched, his accomplishment was notable.

The final outlook on Śaṅkara's *advaita* that the reader attains through Johann's cogent exposition is certainly viable and consonant with the majority interpretation, and in this dimension, Johanns can hardly be faulted, for a scholar of his time period. However, the particular way that Johanns chose to express himself, and the terminology that he selected when seeking to orient his reader to *advaita*, may at times be questionable. For instance, his very choice of describing *Brahman* as "God" in his writings runs the risk of importing personalist notions into Śaṅkara's thought that traditional *advaitins* would be hesitant to affirm. The descriptive language of "loving God for His own sake" is clearly an example of Johanns imposing Christian practical spirituality onto Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara speaks in terms of redirection of consciousness to *Brahman* and reorientation of experience to non-duality rather than "love" for a deity. It is not a question of Johanns introducing false doctrines, for clearly, in *advaita*, *Brahman* is so significant that the removal of the obstructions to *Brahman*-consciousness should take primacy over everything else. What is potentially problematic is that the language that he employed subtly slants the doctrines so that they can be more easily incorporated into the synthesis which values an interactive God. Often the vocabulary and the methods of expression that are employed come from scholastic or modern continental philosophy rather than the technical terms of Śaṅkara: examples would include Act of Being, pure form, *modo eminenti*. Thus, while Johanns successfully communicated the abstract experience of monistic non-duality and the ontological reality of acosmism, certain aspects of the phraseology and the descriptive process that Johanns adopted are already preparing Śaṅkara's thought to be synthesized, even before it is accurately detailed according to its own internal integrity.

Another critique that can be asserted regarding Johanns' exposition of Śaṅkara is also applicable to the mainstream scholars that he was consulting. At the

beginning of the twentieth century, critical study of Śaṅkara was still emerging. Detailed philological work which sought to separate authentic texts composed by Śaṅkara from spurious ones falsely attributed to him was only at a nascent stage when Johanns was writing. As a consequence, sufficient attempts had not yet been made to demarcate the ways in which the later *advaitic* tradition diverged from, shifted, or supplemented the thought of Śaṅkara. In the *Light of the East* articles, Johanns rarely documented which specific *advaita* texts he was expounding; and so the modern reader cannot be precisely sure which works Johanns accepted as legitimate contributions to the Śaṅkara corpus, or the degree to which Johanns was influenced in his interpretation by the post-Śaṅkara *advaitic* tradition. Indological scholarship of the latter half of the twentieth century became more sensitive to the ways in which this post-Śaṅkara tradition has been read back into Śaṅkara's writings. For instance, Paul Hacker has documented how Śaṅkara relies much more heavily upon the terminology of *avidyā* instead of *māyā*; it was the post-Śaṅkara *advaitins* who accentuated the discussion of *māyā*. Similarly, Śaṅkara does not speak of *vivarta* causation or detail various grades of reality in his writings.⁵⁸⁵ These categories were developed in the later tradition. Johanns to some extent fell prey to the very common tendency amongst scholars of his generation to exposit Śaṅkara's thought using post-Śaṅkara terminology and emphases, which although *advaitic* in tradition, are nevertheless later philosophical accretions.

Furthermore, another development in modern scholarship is the increasing recognition that Śaṅkara is not trying to be a philosophical systematician to the degree that earlier scholars had supposed. Richard De Smet has demonstrated that Śaṅkara is preeminently an exegetical theologian rather than a pure philosopher.⁵⁸⁶ His primary task is to gather the *Upaniṣadic* teachings into a unified presentation so that the pupil through study could be led toward an experiential intuition. Directing seekers toward the way to liberation takes fundamental precedence in the writings of

⁵⁸⁵ See P. Hacker, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. L. Schmithausen, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978, and *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. W. Halbfass, Albany: SUNY, 1995. Hacker argued that in comparison with later *advaitins*, Śaṅkara is inexact in his terminology and resists precise definition and conceptual clarification. Hacker (1913-1979) was a respected German philologist who taught at the University of Munster.

⁵⁸⁶ See R. De Smet's Ph.D. thesis, *The Theological Method of Śaṅkara*, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1953. A copy can be found in Goethals Library, St. Xavier's College, University of Calcutta. De Smet (1916-1997) was a Belgian Jesuit who taught at Pune. He advocated a minority interpretation of Śaṅkara as a realist. See Bradley Malkovsky, *New Perspectives on advaita Vedānta: Essays in Commemoration of Professor Richard De Smet*, Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Śaṅkara. The construction of a flawless intellectual system is not his principal goal. Śaṅkara takes the authority of the *śruti* very seriously and considers revelation as predominant over reason. Many scholarly writings on Śaṅkara's thought have overlooked this fact and have interpreted him as if he is mainly the builder of a great philosophical system. But such an approach subtly distorts the central concerns of Śaṅkara. Johanns, who was trained as a student of metaphysics, was naturally drawn to the abstract intellectual content of *advaita*, and he accordingly emphasized the metaphysical doctrines of "God" and the world that he believed Śaṅkara adumbrated. But given the fact that Śaṅkara is not primarily seeking a neat metaphysical construction, it could be argued that Johanns was altering the aims of the *Vedāntin* by looking for raw materials in *advaita* for the development of a perennial philosophy. However, Johanns did include discussion of Śaṅkara's practical philosophy in his articles, making clear that intuitive realization of the Absolute was the final stage of religious experience. He correctly described how Śaṅkara, as a spiritual teacher, often engages in a process of provisional affirmation which would be subsequently retracted in his writings, in order to move the pupil along through successive stages of development and discernment. This shows that Johanns was at least partially aware that Śaṅkara as a *guru* and spiritual teacher uses whatever descriptive means necessary to point the spiritually-minded toward the ineffable existential truth, addressing the seeker at the level that is appropriate for them personally. But since Johanns was consciously looking for doctrines to synthesize, he was still treating Śaṅkara's *advaita* as an intellectual system and focusing upon the doctrinal dimension.

2. Rāmānuja

In the case of Śaṅkara, what was problematic was that Johanns would sometimes employ terminology which personalized the Absolute; since Rāmānuja is a personalist theologian, Johanns' presentation of the theoretical philosophy is more precise and less likely to subtly slant the description in order to accommodate the task of synthesis. Johanns was particularly skillful in expositing metaphysical relationships and in detailing the linguistic arguments that are marshaled to substantiate the views. Using a compressed, direct prose, Johanns brought out the various nuances of the complex body-soul analogy and sketched the unique understanding of causation that Rāmānuja articulates. Within a few short articles,

Johanns unveiled the contours of Rāmānuja’s metaphysics in a remarkably learned but accessible way. Modern commentators of *viśiṣṭādvaita*, such as Lipner and Carman, have noted that what is particularly impressive about Rāmānuja’s body of thought is that there are several theological polarities which are held together in his system; reading Johanns, one also gains an appreciation for how immanence and transcendence, mercy and justice, majesty and condescension are skillfully conjoined by this brilliant *Vaiṣṇava* theologian. This is a tribute to Johanns’ accomplishments as an early scholar of *viśiṣṭādvaita*.

There are certain defects in Johanns’ presentation, however. Julius Lipner has pointed out a deficiency in the evaluative treatment that Rāmānuja received from Johanns. This illustrates a general tendency in Johanns’ description of Rāmānuja’s thought. The specific example that Lipner chooses deals with Johanns’ comments regarding the appropriateness of conceiving of a supernal body which God possesses; this example is indicative of the general attitude of Johanns on a wider array of similar issues in *viśiṣṭādvaita*. Johanns asserted the following appraisal of Rāmānuja’s notion of God’s celestial individual body: “We shall not insist on this conception. Although it does not seem to contradict it, the existence of this body is not required by the (*viśiṣṭādvaitic*) System. It is only introduced to adapt the conception of God to traditional mythological aberrations... Its mention in the *Bhaṣya* only implies that Rāmānuja, unlike most non-Christian Philosophers, has not consented to divorce his philosophy from his religion.”⁵⁸⁷ Lipner shows how Johanns’ opinion that Rāmānuja’s espousal of a supernal form is an unwarranted anthropomorphism is injudicious, for Rāmānuja arrives at the doctrine through the religious scriptures and not through speculation based upon a “human model.” The divine accessibility is a primary feature of the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* outlook, and the idea of a supernal form of God is illustrative of the “human face” of God and “fits in well” within the parameters of Rāmānuja’s theology. According to Lipner, “When Johanns lays stress on Rāmānuja’s system as a philosophy, in respect of the supernal form, he is misguided.”⁵⁸⁸ By suggesting that Rāmānuja’s system would have been more adequate if he would have divorced philosophy from religion, Johanns had a potentially biased starting-point in his treatment of the *Vedāntin*.

⁵⁸⁷ *Light of the East*, 2 (December, 1923), p. 4.

⁵⁸⁸ J. Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986, p. 96-97.

Lipner's critique can be extended in a number of directions. In the presentation of Rāmānuja's thought, Johanns downplayed the importance of elements that he felt are derivative from the "traditional aberrations" of Hindu religion or that are based upon myths. But Rāmānuja, as a *Śrīvaiṣṇava*, is as influenced by such sources as he is by the "philosophical" *Vedāntic* datum. By accentuating one set of formative influences and dismissing or glossing over another equally important group, Johanns was not being fair to some of the concerns of Rāmānuja as a *Vaiṣṇava* theologian and was not adequately portraying his multi-dimensional identity. The importance of the cultic elements and the practicalities of temple worship, as well as the myths of Viṣṇu and the *avatāras*, are as vital to grasping the spirit of Rāmānuja as the more theoretical features. Johanns did deal with some of the practical elements highlighted by Rāmānuja, but these often tend to revolve around issues of personal piety and internal purification, rather than external features and activities which would be characteristically sectarian. It is, of course, natural that Johanns, having his own particular purposes in mind, would not have chosen to bring elements in Rāmānuja's thought that were more sectarian in nature to the foreground of his exposition. But this selectivity of presentation still needs to be noted.

There are other areas in Johann's description of Rāmānuja's practical philosophy that are problematic. By presenting the practical philosophy in terms of inward personal piety, Johanns at times used language which mirrors Christian spirituality in an unwarranted fashion. For example, when Johanns spoke about the alienation of the soul from God, he referred to the "rebellion" of the soul against God. The soul is said to have gone its own way, resisting and failing to cooperate with the divine purposes. Johanns even used the language of a "fall" of the soul from the original perfected state into a condition of "sin." Such language would not be found in Rāmānuja's writings and is derived more from Christian theology than the *viśiṣṭādvaitic* system. Sometimes Johanns' neo-Thomist evaluation of Rāmānuja, reflecting specifically Christian theological concerns, displayed a lack of appreciation for the internal theological dynamics within the *viśiṣṭādvaita* itself. For instance, portraying the "creation" of the world as a direct result of the soul's misguided deeds, and asserting that this compromises divine sovereignty, is not a completely fair depiction of Rāmānuja's position. Johanns thought that the soul, not God, is ultimately responsible for the way that the manifested world is structured. This may be another case of Johanns failing to look at Rāmānuja's system from a

perspective that takes into account the overall theological framework. For Rāmānuja, God allows souls to take an active part in shaping their destiny. This allowance is part of the justice and ultimate mercy of God rather than a defect on the part of His character. The fact that Johanns critiqued Rāmānuja’s doctrine of creation from a neo-Thomist viewpoint does not in itself present difficulties; rather, the fact that the critique seems to be based upon insufficient sensitivity to the ultimate concerns of *viśiṣṭādvaitic* theology is what raises methodological questions.

3. *Vallabha*

Perhaps the most important consideration when taking into account Johanns’ treatment of Vallabha is that he was truly a pioneer in explicating and interacting with the *śuddhādvaita*. Śāṅkara had received substantial attention and admiration by Western Indologists prior to the writings of Johanns, and Rāmānuja was also the object of scholarly inquiry. But Vallabha had not been adequately studied, and there was not a great body of literature available on his thought. In so far as Johanns is to be assessed in terms of advancing understanding of the *Vedānta*, his articles on Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja can be said to provide a concise, helpful exposition of material that had already been explicated in a much more complex and less accessible manner. In his articles on Vallabha, however, Johanns was breaking new ground in many respects and was bringing a much-neglected *Vedāntic* figure into the foreground. It is unlikely that many of his readers would have been familiar with the system of Vallabha. Johanns provided a singular contribution to the study of north Indian *bhakti* and devotional *Vedānta* by providing a detailed study of the writings of Vallabha. In terms of Christian engagement with the *Vedānta*, Johanns was the first theologian ever to conduct a full exploration of *śuddhādvaita* metaphysics and practical philosophy. Śāṅkara has loomed large over the history of Christian involvement with *Vedāntic* philosophy, with such able minds as Upādhyāy, Dandoy, and De Smet wrestling with *advaita*. Rāmānuja has received attention from Indian theologians like A.J. Appasamy and Christian scholars of Indian religion such as John Carman and Eric Lott. But Vallabha and his *puṣṭimarga* have been neglected in comparison with *advaita* and *viśiṣṭādvaita*. That Vallabha is a figure worthy of theological consideration would be later confirmed by the attention he received from

the important Indian Christian theologian Manilal Parekh.⁵⁸⁹ But it is to Johanns' credit that he was the first to initiate the inquiry into a more emotive style of *bhakti* that values the appreciation of *rasa* of the divine presence. This dimension of Hindu devotionalism is as important a source for Christian reflection as the more meditative style advocated by Rāmānuja. One Indian theologian has remarked that Johanns' writings on Vallabha "are unparalleled to this day."⁵⁹⁰

One particular aspect of Johanns' description of the theoretical philosophy of Vallabha is potentially problematic and is indicative of his desire to use the *śuddhādvaita* as an illustration of the ideal world in the intellect of God prior to the act of creation. He described the *akṣara* as the "immanent participability of God."⁵⁹¹ This depiction personalizes the *akṣara* in a way that Vallabha would not have intended. While it is true that the particularities of the concrete material world issue forth from the *akṣara* and return to absorption within its expanse once the analytic process has ceased, the use of the language of "divine participability" reflects the metaphysical position that Johanns was hoping to endorse rather than the terminology that Vallabha employs. Johanns was trying to show that Vallabha's *akṣara* performs the "reductive" aspect of Śaṅkara's system as well as the "deductive" aspect of Rāmānuja's. But "participability" suggests an active nuance which is not completely accurate. Finite entities are analyzed against the *akṣara*'s expanse, but it has no personality or creative plans in Vallabha's philosophy.

Johanns made much of the notion that Vallabha's manifested world is never actualized into a sphere of existences. According to him, in the *śuddhādvaita* the divine attributes that are analyzed remain only within the realm of essences and never become instantiated in a separate substratum of their own. This is a very subtle metaphysical distinction that Johanns perceived, and while it is a useful discrimination that can be shown to have important implications, it is questionable whether a *Vedāntin* would consider this to be a telling criticism of Vallabha's position. A Thomist, who is accustomed to separating the categories of existence and essence, will naturally be disturbed by Vallabha's lack of subtlety on these matters, but since this distinction is not as vital or prominent in *Vedāntic* metaphysics,

⁵⁸⁹ See Manilal C. Parekh, 1885-1964, Dhanjibai Fakirbhai, 1895-1967: a selection, ed. R. Boyd, Madras: CLS, 1974.

⁵⁹⁰ J. Patmury, "Preface," *To Christ through the Vedānta: The Writings of P. Johanns*, ed. Theo de Greeff, vol. 1, Bangalore: United Theological College, p. xii.

⁵⁹¹ *Light of the East*, 5 (July, 1927), p. 4.

Vallabha's failure to address the necessity of an actualized existence of the world is not as much of an ontological defect from the *Vedāntic* perspective as Johanns would have it. Similarly, Johanns' query as to why souls in *śuddhādvaita* cannot remember the ideal state from which they fell, if indeed they are real entities rather than ideal, fails to appreciate that, for Vallabha, questions of origin and time are not as important as issues related to present state and future developments. Johanns contended that Vallabha has not thought through the notion of pre-existence adequately. But the acceptance, in *Vedāntic* philosophy, of the cyclical nature of *saṃsāra*, which is essentially a beginningless series of cosmic dissolution and re-emergence, blunts the force of Johanns' critiques regarding time and origin. Once again, by concentrating on theoretical philosophy, Johanns distorted the fundamental concerns of the *Vedāntin* with whom he interacted. For Vallabha, religious practice is primary, and his philosophy is meant to undergird and justify the devotional activity.

Thus, Johanns typically provided an accurate, understandable account of the theoretical aspects of the *Vedāntic* systems. He is generally a reliable guide on these matters. Johanns had a predilection for abstract thought, and so he highlighted the theoretical and philosophical features, often passing over important practices or beliefs that are related to sectarian, mythological, or cultic facets of the systems. He sometimes preferred to interact with the *Vedāntins* as though they were speculative philosophers rather than religious leaders. At certain points his choice of terminology in describing the various positions subtly prepares their doctrines to be incorporated into his synthesis.

C. Evaluation of Johanns' Neo-Thomist Synthesis

There are two inter-related questions which can be explored in relation to the project conceived by Johanns. The first question deals with Johanns' theological identity as a neo-Thomist. Was his desire to search for a perennial philosophy based upon *Vedāntic* metaphysics an unnatural imposition upon or a natural outgrowth of the *Vedānta*. This question addresses the appropriateness of the project itself. The second question evaluates Johanns as a synthesist of the *Vedānta* and is concerned with the results of the project. Did he provide a convincing philosophical synthesis which does not damage or misconstrue the original emphases and thrust of each school- particularly among the *Vedāntins* but also with the basic Thomist framework?

1. *Perennial Philosophy*

With regard to the appropriateness of constructing a metaphysic which could be deemed a perennial philosophy, there is no doubt that in both classical Thomist and neo-Thomist theology, the rigorous pursuit of a precise philosophical description of God and the world which actively seeks inspiration and refinement through interaction with a variety of intellectual sources is an integral part of the self-understanding of this school of thought as to its primary task. It has been shown how Thomas Aquinas engaged with Islamic and Jewish philosophy in order to develop a *philosophia perennis* from the intellectual raw materials of the various works that he consulted. Aquinas also drew upon the writings of Greek philosophers and upon Eastern Orthodox theologians in his philosophical task. The neo-Thomists extended this inquiry to include modern philosophy and science. Continental philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, and Fichte were seen as making worthy contributions to a proper metaphysical understanding of reality which should be integrated into Thomas' basic system. The Louvain neo-Thomists, in particular, had a strong understanding of a unified stream of thought that was passed down from the Hellenistic to the medieval world and brought to cogent articulation by Thomas; they were active in bringing this perennial philosophical tradition into conversation with more recent developments in order to enhance the precision of the metaphysical description. Missionaries who were influenced by Thomist thought were often predisposed to treating Asian philosophies with respect, anticipating that they would find truths which would be beneficial and which could be integrated within a coherent natural theology.

While the notions of synthesis and perennial philosophy are distinctive features of Thomist thought, both in its classical and modern forms, it may be asked to what extent Indian thought has similar conceptions. There are several examples that may be provided which illustrate that Indian thinkers were indebted to and influenced by other philosophical schools in the construction of their own systems. The Hindu *ācāryas* were very aware of the positions of their rivals, and they articulate their vision of reality in response to the arguments and concerns of these divergent schools. For instance, within the *Vedānta*, Śaṅkara adopts the *Madhyamika* conception of two-levels of truth in order to expound his version of non-dualism. This differentiation between a lower perception of the empirical world and the experience of reality as it really is from a higher vantage point was originally

developed to facilitate Buddhist philosophy, but Śaṅkara ingeniously integrates this epistemological principle into his system to further his ends. He resituates the Buddhist two-levels of truth doctrine within a different depiction of reality which he believes will assist toward liberation. While the language of *philosophia perennis* is inadequate to describe what Śaṅkara is hoping to achieve through his teaching, it is nevertheless true that he promotes *advaita* because he feels that the system captures the ontological truths that were being expressed in the Scriptures better than other Buddhist or Hindu frameworks. Similarly, Vallabha adopts the concerns of Śaṅkara to protect a non-dualism of the Absolute with the world so that God's nature may not be tainted with improper associations. He is also influenced by *Vaiṣṇava* theism. He attempts to hold together a rigorous *advaita* which does not introduce the potential duality of *māyā* but which also enables a real interaction between God and the soul. There is a "synthesis" of sorts that is going on in the *śuddhādvaita*, although such terminology wouldn't be employed by Vallabha. Outside of the *Vedānta*, it has been demonstrated that the new school of Logic, or the *navya nyāya*, was self-consciously taking into consideration the cogent arguments of *advaitins* against its realistic metaphysic in order to refine and strengthen its own position.⁵⁹² Most famously, the *Jainas* developed an epistemology which acknowledged that "every standpoint reveals a facet of reality, and that, to get a full description of the world, what we need to do is synthesize the various standpoints."⁵⁹³ These examples are illustrative of the fact that Indian philosophy sought to arrive at an understanding of the universe which attempted to indicate the way that things really *are*. The *ācāryas* were willing to learn from other viewpoints, while also correcting deficiencies that they perceived in other systems. They integrated or re-situated certain doctrines and emphases from rival schools into their own positions. Thus, their motivations and activities were not altogether removed from those of Thomist philosophers.

From a (neo-) Thomist point of view, Johanns was simply extending the boundaries of inquiry and broadening the sources to be brought within a perennial philosophy; from a *Vedāntic* perspective, the precedent of interaction with rival schools was already firmly established, as well as the creative adoption of ideas that were developed outside of one's own system. Thus, within the perspective of the

⁵⁹² Stephen Phillips, Classical Hindu Metaphysics: Refutations of Realism and the Emergence of "New Logic," Chicago: Open Court, 1995.

⁵⁹³ Jonardon Ganeri, "Jaina Logic," *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 20 (2002), p. 13.

traditions that are to be synthesized, the notion of synthesis is not inherently problematic. It does not seem methodologically objectionable to allow the *Vedāntic* positions to cross-fertilize, for the doctrines were expounded within a cohesive cultural and linguistic matrix. The very desire to bring the ideas of differing *Vedāntic* schools into a harmonious reconciliation was later expressed by Prof. Radhakrishnan, the professor of philosophy at the Universities of Calcutta and Oxford.⁵⁹⁴ It is curious that a non-*Vedāntin* such as Johanns would attempt such an endeavor, but given his training and deep learning one cannot too easily dismiss him as a synthesist of the *Vedānta*. However, it was Johanns' application of this accepted methodology of synthesis and integration to two traditions culturally removed from one another that was particularly innovative and at the same time potentially questionable. Thomism and the *Vedānta* were cultivated in dissimilar cultural contexts and were given expression in different linguistic mediums. This fact can lead a modern critic to look at Johanns' project from a variety of angles. From a positive point of view, Johanns' project is very creative, exploratory, and intellectually demanding. Particularly at the time when *Light of the East* was written, there were not many scholars who could have moved so adeptly through Thomism and the *Vedānta* and their interrelation. From a more critical angle, however, this gulf between the cultural contexts will lead some to question the very validity of Johanns' project. Julius Lipner has asked, with relation to Brahmabāndhab's efforts, a key question: "Is there a legitimate method by which one may engage in religio-cultural discussion? Across cultural and religious divides is there a 'natural platform', to use Upādhyāy's expression, on the basis of which, first, cross-cultural religious understanding and then, the transaction of cognitive content, is possible? Some incommensurabilists say there is not, but others say there is a common ground."⁵⁹⁵ The way in which Johanns' project is to be received is dependant upon one's philosophical pre-commitments to commensurability or

⁵⁹⁴ See Thomas Kulangara, *Absolutism and Theism: A Study of S. Radhakrishnan's Attempt to Reconcile Śaṅkara's Absolutism and Rāmānuja's Theism*, Ph.D. thesis, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1994.

⁵⁹⁵ Lipner, *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 386. Lipner argues for commensurability due to the innate human capacity for empathetic understanding and also because of the way that cognitive structures undergo continual modification and adaptation. He suggests that "comparative philosophy (and comparative philosophy of religion) properly conducted would push forward the barriers of our understanding of the meaning and scope of rationality, truth, faith and evidence (to name but a few seminal concepts), not to mention our appreciation of human nature and its proximate and ultimate goals; it would provide fresh perspectives and salient correctives for life and thought." J. Lipner, "Philosophy and world religions," *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject*, ed. B. Davies, London: Cassell, p. 322-323.

incommensurability. The complex discussion that is involved in these matters cannot be adequately addressed here,⁵⁹⁶ but for those who adopt a less skeptical attitude toward the viability of finding common ground for cross-cultural intellectual exchange, Johanns and Brahmabāndhab may be commended as early pioneers in this process. It has already been shown that Thomists do not adopt a position of incommensurability with regard to intellectual interchange between different philosophical traditions, whether they originate from Greek, Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, or modern cultural-linguistic contexts. *Vedāntins* are also not rigid incommensurabilists, for they actively interact with Buddhist and *Jaina* traditions, although this engagement most often takes place in Sanskritic-Prakritic mediums. While noting the legitimate concerns of strict incommensurabilists, it seems appropriate to question whether a rigid post-modern and post-structuralist cynicism, which was developed outwith classical Thomistic or *Vedāntic* settings, should be the privileged framework that brings this Thomistic-*Vedāntic* engagement to a halt. To the extent that post-modern hermeneutical suspicions reflect the collapse of Enlightenment epistemology, one may question whether they should be the controlling paradigm restricting interaction of philosophical theologies brought to classical formulation in the medieval period and which evidence epistemological approaches distinct from Enlightenment rationalism.

2. *Quality of the Synthesis*

As to the question of the quality of the synthesis and the results of Johanns' project, a couple of points may be highlighted. Johanns identified the independence of God as the most important doctrine that Śāṅkara defends. He believed that Rāmānuja's philosophical theology is constructed to safeguard the reality of a contingent world which could be related to a personal God, whereas Vallabha is most concerned to show that the world is an analytical mode of a blissful divine plenitude. These emphases are certainly among the most pressing issues for these *ācāryas*. In terms of general theological contours, a sympathetic evaluation would concur that Johanns has outlined a synthesis of the *Vedāntins* which preserves these key emphases stressed by the respective thinkers. Johanns' synthesis brings together the polarities of *advaita* and *bhakti*, *nirguṇa* and *sagūṇa Brahman*, divine simplicity

⁵⁹⁶ See *Interpeting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, ed. G. Larson and E. Deutsch, Princeton: University Press, 1988.

and world-modality in an organic theological framework. He made an articulate case that Thomism attempts to hold each of these points in a holistic balance, not allowing one aspect to block up an equally important metaphysical point. This is an impressive intellectual accomplishment, especially considering the fact that Johanns was the first to attempt such an endeavor. One may quibble whether Thomism truly does safeguard all of these facets of reality, just as one may object philosophically whether or not *advaita* truly preserves a strict non-dualism with its language of *māyā* or if *viśiṣṭādvaita* allows God to be perfectly independent from the created order.⁵⁹⁷ But Johanns has shown that a synthesis of the *Vedānta* provides a broader conceptual structure and a more comprehensive outlook than is attained by any one of the individual systems alone. He has offered the intriguing suggestion that wrestling with other models of causality besides the *pariṇāma* doctrine may breathe creative life into *Vedāntic* philosophy. These are fascinating, if controversial, assertions that display originality and that are valuable contributions to *Vedāntic* philosophy as well as comparative philosophical theology.

The introduction into the synthesis of *creatio ex nihilo* as a model of causation will be questionable to many, since the conception is not found within the major *Vedāntic* commentaries or the Scriptures that the *Vedāntins* accept as authoritative. The doctrine is clearly a foreign importation into the *Vedāntic* frame of reference. Johanns argued that a *pariṇāma* scheme, or a *vivarta* which rejects it, cannot do justice to all the major theological truths that the individual *Vedāntins* wish to hold intact; a true synthesis, which is a philosophical necessity for preserving holism, cannot be fashioned with any of the existing causative schemes in the *Vedāntic* tradition. If this contention of Johanns is accurate, then a synthesis will have to proceed on a philosophical basis, partially unhinged from the theological moorings that the *Vedāntins* accept in the Scriptural witness. It has already been indicated that Johanns, in many portions of his explication and synthesis of the *Vedānta*, often treated the systems as more philosophical than theological in orientation. Such an approach would not regard the importation of *creatio ex nihilo* as necessarily destructive to the spirit of *Vedāntic* inquiry. But as recent scholars,

⁵⁹⁷ For instance, a critic may question whether Johanns' depiction of creation as the *re*-production of God's attributes in a distinct substratum fully distances itself from the emanationist viewpoint which conceives of creation as the further extension of the divine essence, thus blunting the distinction between creation and Creator. Also, a non-Thomist, especially one of an *advaitic* persuasion, may wonder whether Johanns convincingly argues that "privation" does not constitute a crypto-dualism which compromises the absoluteness of God.

such as De Smet, have shown, this approach is partially flawed and can skew the presentation of the *Vedānta*. A robust synthesis would ideally not need to introduce doctrines that are not attested in the tradition in order to hold together the various tension and polarities. Ironically, it is the theological orientation of Johanns, rather than his philosophical training, which would make him assume from the start that a conception from Judeo-Christian revelation would be needed to perfect Hindu “natural” philosophy. As a neo-Thomist, he would assume that grace is needed to bring the Hindu religious ideas to full completion. Perhaps his inclination to look upon Hinduism as a natural religion, in which reason was functioning to provide glimpses of the natural light, influenced him to treat the *Vedānta* at certain points as more philosophical in its framework. From a neo-Thomist perspective, grace and revelation are needed to bring the natural speculations of humanity to culmination. To Johanns, the Biblically-inspired *creatio ex nihilo* is required to bring the *Vedāntic* speculation to full fruition and holistic integration. Thus, Johanns’ theological commitments may cause him to engage with the *Vedānta* as a rational philosophy, downplaying the theological/exegetical dimensions which would preclude the importation of a *creatio ex nihilo* causality, which Johanns believed is vital to the project of synthesis.

Another useful question relates to the degree to which Johanns attempted to make the *Vedāntins* “crypto-Thomists?”⁵⁹⁸ Johanns, like Brahmabāndhab, used quite a bit of Thomist technical terminology when describing the systems of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Vallabha. Unlike Brahmabāndhab, he did not attempt to provide a major reinterpretation of the *Vedāntin* with whom he engaged. Brahmabāndhab’s interpretation of Śaṅkara’s doctrines of *māyā* and *nirguṇa Brahman* was questionable to many scholars. Johanns presented the major scholarly interpretations of each *Vedāntin*, but his use of Thomistic terminology in expositing their thought subtly prepares the doctrines to be collated in a synthesis which is akin to Thomism. Johanns did not present Śaṅkara, for example, as a crypto-Thomist in quite the same fashion as Brahmabāndhab, for he was careful to show how Śaṅkara espouses acosmism. But Johanns accentuated certain doctrines and described them with language which helps smooth over their incorporation into a synthesis informed by

⁵⁹⁸ Lipner has commented regard Upādhyāy: “Śaṅkara has not been interpreted as providing an indigenous context for receiving and moulding the Christian message in an unprecedented form, but as a crypto-Thomist, speaking in one-to-one Sanskrit conceptual correspondences...vis-à-vis Thomistic discourse.” Lipner, *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy*, p. 270.

Thomism. This comes as no surprise, since a neo-Thomist such as Johanns considered the basic metaphysical framework espoused by Thomas as the most accurate, holistic depiction of reality available. His neo-Thomist tendencies do not intrude as explicitly in his exposition of the *Vedānta* as in his efforts to synthesize. But the language that he employed in exposition is often implicitly informed by neo-Thomism. Thus, Śaṅkara is not a crypto-Thomist for Johanns, but the depiction of *advaita* by Johanns allows Śaṅkara to be more easily incorporated into a Thomistically-based perennial philosophy than would be the case if strictly *advaitic* terminology were used.

In summary, from the perspective of Thomism and the *Vedānta*, the task of synthesis and creative interaction with the views of various traditions is not inherently problematic. Johanns self-consciously identified what he believed are the central truths that each *Vedāntic* school attempts to safeguard, and he made an effort to preserve these emphases in his synthesis. He also attempted to articulate why *creatio ex nihilo* is an attractive model of causality, which can hold all of these emphases together in a balance perspective.

D. Evaluation of Johanns' Fulfilment Theology

One other aspect that may be evaluated regarding Johanns' project has to do with his success as a contributor of a fulfilment theology in India. How intricate or superficial was his particular version of fulfilment theology? The question is not whether the modern theological climate will look upon fulfilment theology as an adequate understanding of the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. Fulfilment theology in its classical form is by and large now viewed as a dated model. However, historically, this model was progressive in Catholic circles at the time that Johanns was writing. Johanns is therefore best evaluated against the other models which were developed within his general time period. The fulfilment theologies of Upādhyāy and Farquhar are representative of Catholic and Protestant models developed in the Indian context in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and these theologians will be selected for comparison with Johanns.

1. *Upādhyāy*

The bifurcation between nature and grace pervades Upādhyāy's theology of fulfilment, giving it a distinctively Thomist flavor. The distinction between natural and revealed truths informs this first model of fulfilment theology. For Upādhyāy, nothing of value needs to be left behind in Hindu theology. Natural truths contained in Hindu thought are integral to the structure of Christian theological inquiry, providing the foundation of the theological system to be constructed. Especially the truths captured in the *advaita* school of the *Vedānta* can serve as an apt natural foundation upon which to position the supernatural truths of Christian revelation. There is a harmonious continuity between the natural and supernatural verities, and the truths derived from divine revelation perfect and bring to completion those attained by human reason and reflection.

Upādhyāy gives a fascinating interpretation of Śaṅkara's doctrines of the identity of the world as *māyā* and *līlā*, and of *Brahman* as *nirguṇa* and *asaṅga*, who is *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. Upādhyāy's creativity in using *advaitic* categories and conceptions to theologize has long been recognized. He avers that Śaṅkara reached a depth of profundity unattained by any other religious philosopher on the natural level. Śaṅkara's doctrines are brought to completion by Christian conceptions, such as the Trinitarian inner life of God, which are beyond the scope of the unaided human mind. Upādhyāy has regularly been described as the "Father of Indian Christian theology" due to his innovative and bold thinking. However, his form of fulfilment theology did not escape the critique of contemporaries. A Jesuit Sanskritist from Bombay, Fr. Hegglin, openly challenged his interpretations, asserting that Upādhyāy was flagrantly *re*-interpreting Śaṅkara's views in a way which misrepresented the *advaitic* position. Hegglin believed that Upādhyāy's portrayal of *advaita* as affirming a contingent world to which God is related out of grace rather than necessity was inaccurate and unfaithful to Śaṅkara's metaphysics.

2. *Farquhar*

Farquhar is regarded as the premier exponent of Protestant fulfilment theology, and his writings portray a second, distinctive model of fulfilment. His book *The Crown of Hinduism* is usually considered his classic exposition, bringing

the earlier theories to an articulate expression.⁵⁹⁹ The central idea communicated in this volume is that Christ alone can fulfill the aspirations and hopes which gave rise to the doctrines and institutions of Hinduism, and only Christ can meet the needs of a modernizing India. For a specific example of this general principle, one can look to Farquhar's treatment in *Gītā and Gospel*, where he argues that the figure of Kṛṣṇa and the message of the *Gītā* show that India is longing for a savior who is the incarnate God. This desire points toward Christ, and those Hindus who "bow down to the idea of Kṛṣṇa are really seeking the incarnate Son of God."⁶⁰⁰ The implication is that once a Hindu recognizes that Christ meets the deep needs that are expressed in the *Gītā*, there is "no *continuing* role for *Gītā* and Kṛṣṇa, for they have been superseded."⁶⁰¹ Kṛṣṇa is merely the personage in whom Indians have expressed their yearning that God descend to earth and save sinners; but he cannot satiate this "natural instinct which is later fulfilled in Christ, making Kṛṣṇa obsolete once the latter fulfilment is realized and embraced."⁶⁰² The reason why Farquhar feels that Kṛṣṇa, caste, and *karma* can be dispensed with is because each Hindu religious principle is of value "only so long as it is the very highest the people know."⁶⁰³ Once the people encounter a more developed form of religion, the old can be left behind. Farquhar adopts an evolutionary model of religious development where there are cruder forms of expression which must give way to higher ones. He feels that the recognition of the evolutionary development of human religiosity is based upon very clear empirical evidence, produced by the scientific study of religion. Farquhar's *Crown of Hinduism* surveys various aspects of Hinduism, such as ablutions, *satī*, *mantras*, sacrifices, purity laws, guru-reverence, and caste, and attempts to identify the need that is being expressed by the heart that engages in these practices; the need, he argues, can only be adequately satisfied in Christ. Only the higher religion of Christ can fulfill the religious expressions of the less developed Hinduism.

It must be noted that, for Farquhar, Christ does not so much fulfill the actual practices and doctrines of Hinduism as He satisfies the *yearnings* which caused these facets of Hinduism to be constructed by humans in the first place. Some of these

⁵⁹⁹ Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, London: Oxford University Press, 1913.

⁶⁰⁰ Farquhar, *Gītā and Gospel*, Madras: CLS, 1917, p. 73.

⁶⁰¹ Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, p. 326. Emphasis by Lipner.

⁶⁰² Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: the Legacy of Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000. p. 332.

⁶⁰³ Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 32.

yearnings are discernible within diverse cultures and belief systems and are not specific to India. Hinduism reveals many of these spiritual longings and needs through such doctrines as *karma* and transmigration. But Farquhar is unclear in addressing exactly how Christ completes these doctrines; fulfilling deep needs that gave rise to these conceptions is not the same thing as bringing a doctrine's inner trajectory to full development. Similarly, Christ does not fulfill the Hindu practices of *satī* or caste-observance in any direct sense. It was the discerning Scottish theologian A.G. Hogg who especially took Farquhar to task for his vague abstraction of "fulfilment."⁶⁰⁴ Hogg stated that Christ "leaves out so much of what was in Hinduism, and he fulfills so much of what was never in Hinduism;" therefore, Farquhar's claim that Christ is the crown of Hinduism is contentious at best and baseless at worse.⁶⁰⁵

3. Johanns

Johanns advocated a style of fulfilment theology which escapes the basic criticisms leveled against Farquhar and Upādhyāy. Johanns did not center his theology in the vague language of yearnings that are satisfied by Christianity, and he did not make potentially contentious claims that such institutions as caste or *satī* are fulfilled by a Christian worldview. Both Upādhyāy's and Johanns' analysis of specific *Vedāntic* doctrines displays much more depth and learning than Farquhar's. Hogg had leveled the charge that "Mr. Farquhar does not seem at his best in theology."⁶⁰⁶ Upādhyāy, and particularly Johanns, were well read in philosophical theology of *Vedāntic* and Catholic varieties. Comparing Upādhyāy and Johanns with Farquhar, it seems clear that the apex of Protestant fulfilment theology, the Crown of Hinduism, is not as rigorous and subtle as the theologies produced by the Thomists.

Also, Johanns is less open to the criticism of radical re-interpretation of the *Vedānta* than Upādhyāy, since one of his main objectives was to articulate the positions of the *ācāryas* as accurately as possible. Johanns made similar theological

⁶⁰⁴ Hogg (1875-1954) was professor of philosophy at the Madras Christian College. He wrote Karma and Redemption, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970, and Redemption from this World, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922. See Eric Sharpe, Theology of A.G. Hogg, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971.

⁶⁰⁵ Hogg, *International Review of Mission*, 3 (1914), p. 172.

⁶⁰⁶ Hogg, *International Review of Mission*, 3 (1914), p. 172.

points as his predecessor Upādhyāy, not through creative *re*-interpretation, but through synthesis of accurate interpretations of each teacher. The majority interpretation of Śāṅkara, both in Johanns' day and currently, would question Upādhyāy's portrayal of a real, but contingent world within *advaitic* metaphysics. Johanns taught the standard reading of Śāṅkara, despite its apparent conflict with Thomist metaphysics. Johanns and Upādhyāy both suggested that the *Vedānta* contains a rich source of foundational truths for natural theology, but it could be argued that Upādhyāy does not make this essentially Thomist perspective a convincing one by his practice of re-interpreting Śāṅkara. Śāṅkara should be allowed to speak in the integrity of his own position, without the need to creatively alter his teachings, if one is to speak of supernatural Christianity fulfilling aspects of natural *advaita*. Johanns did his best to faithfully communicate the basic position of each *Vedāntin*. His creativity is displayed by the way in which he wove the various *Vedāntic* teachings together to form a holistic metaphysic. He also explored with originality what truths, however one-sided or partial, might be gleaned from a position which differs from his, such as acosmism. Comparing him with those theologians of his time period, it can be affirmed that Johanns' breadth of exploration is as impressive as his depth of analysis, and his concern for faithful exposition is laudable. All of these traits allowed him to form a fulfilment theology which is more faithful to the *Vedāntic* testimony than Upādhyāy's and more erudite than Farquhar's.

Johanns can be placed within the first model of fulfilment theology, which emphasized the distinction between natural and revealed truths. His project was essentially a further development of the style of theology articulated by Upādhyāy, seeking to identify natural truths operative within Hindu philosophical theology which would be perfected by supernatural verities of Christian revelation. The two models of fulfilment theology represented by Upādhyāy and Farquhar's approaches are distinct in their way of articulating how Christ fulfills various elements in Hinduism. Upādhyāy objected to Farquhar's version of fulfilment theology, particularly to his treatment of the relation of Kṛṣṇa to Christ. Upādhyāy, in a technical theological exposition, averred that Farquhar misunderstands the difference between *avatāra* and incarnation; Kṛṣṇa is not an incarnation and his role as a moral exemplar is ongoing and is not set aside once Christ is accepted as the incarnation of God.⁶⁰⁷ Importantly, Upādhyāy suggested that the notion of divine incarnation is a

⁶⁰⁷ Lipner, *Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 326 ff.

revealed truth which is not attainable by a natural religion such as Hinduism, and so Farquhar is misguided in suggesting that Hindus are yearning for an incarnate savior-God. Upādhyāy claimed that Farquhar expects a natural religion to perform a function that it cannot, particularly when he indicates that Hindus may be catching glimpses of supernatural truths. A natural religion can perceive Kṛṣṇa as a moral exemplar, however, and these moral truths which Kṛṣṇa displays need not be abandoned once the revealed truths of Christianity are accepted. According to Upādhyāy, Kṛṣṇa's role as exemplar is not impugned and his abiding value is not dispensed with when one accepts the complementary supernatural elements which perfect the natural, moral truths.

This first model, articulated by Upādhyāy and developed by Johanns, was embraced by the "Calcutta school." The Catholics who endorsed the first model displayed a much better grasp of the details of the *Vedānta* in their writings and theological reflections than did their Protestant contemporaries. They attempted to make clear how the various components of *Vedāntic* philosophical theology can form a natural platform which prepares the way for the reception of supernatural Christian doctrines. There is more precision and less reliance upon indistinct references to yearnings in the Hindu heart. One can see their basic assumptions reflected in the writings of younger Jesuits who worked in Bengal after Johanns returned to Belgium. For instance, in the important Jesuit work Religious Hinduism, Robert Antoine and Pierre Fallon reiterate the nature-grace distinction between Hinduism and Christianity, and they use the language of discovering "stepping stones" in Hinduism which serve as "preparations" for Christianity.⁶⁰⁸ The majority of scholars who contributed articles to this work have a connection either with educational institutions in Calcutta or in the Pontifical Athenaeum in Pune. The seminal Belgian Jesuit Richard V. De Smet, who taught philosophy in Pune, read Johanns' writings very carefully in preparation for missionary work in India.⁶⁰⁹ Interestingly, the

⁶⁰⁸ See the articles by Antoine and Fallon in Religious Hinduism, ed. R. De Smet and J. Neuner, Allahabad: St. Paul Publications, 1968. See also similar articles by other prominent Catholics contained in God's Word Among Men, ed. G. Gispert-Sauch, Delhi: Vidyajyoti, 1973. Robert Antoine (1914-1981) taught Sanskrit at St. Xavier's and Comparative Literature at Jadavpur in Calcutta. Pierre Fallon (b.1912) taught at St. Xavier's College and was a scholar of the Bengali language. Antoine and Fallon formed the Shanti Bhawan, which was a community of scholars and seekers who lived together in a Bengali hostel. See the unpublished article by J. Felix Raj, S.J. entitled "Robert Antoine: The Indologist," on the website www.goethals.org/robert.htm for more information on these two Jesuits who followed in the tradition of Johanns and Dandoy.

⁶⁰⁹ See Bradley Malkovsky, "Introduction," New Perspectives on advaita Vedānta: Essays in Commemoration of Professor Richard De Smet, Leiden: Brill, 2000.

famous Benedictine Bede Griffiths, in his article on “Hinduism” in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, based his discussion of the relation of Hinduism and Christian on the writings of Johanns.⁶¹⁰

There has been further theological development in Jesuit approaches to Indian religions subsequent to the time of Johanns. Modern Jesuit theologians are not as rigid in the nature/grace dichotomy and often speak of grace as operative within Hinduism. One need only examine the writings of the Belgian theologian and scholar of Hinduism Jacques Dupuis, who once taught at St. Xavier’s as a young lecturer, to observe the new theological dynamics at work in Jesuit circles.⁶¹¹ But without the initial example provided by pioneer Jesuits such as Johanns of respectful engagement with Hinduism, of deep study of Indian religiosity, and of education in indigenous culture and texts, the modern developments would hardly have been possible. Johanns contributed to the emphasis in Jesuit circles in India on the importance of scholarly study and instruction with regard to Hinduism at the university level, furthering the endorsement of the humanist tradition in Jesuit education.

Conclusion

Thus, Johanns, when measured against his contemporaries, displayed a level of erudition, comprehensiveness, and a concern for accuracy which was distinctive for his generation. Johanns wrote with greater detail and specificity than the Protestant missionary-scholars of his generation, and his breadth of exploration is unrivaled by his Catholic colleagues. He was adept at describing subtle metaphysical doctrines and relationships between God and the world, and he skillfully reduced complicated positions into concise explanations. He was able to helpfully draw out the practical implications that emerge from these metaphysical relationships. Johanns wove the disparate *Vedāntic* views into a coherent synthesis which sought to protect the self-sufficiency of the Absolute while safeguarding the contingent reality

⁶¹⁰ Bede Griffiths, “Hinduism,” New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 6, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 1135-1136.

⁶¹¹ See Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997. See also the articles by J. Neuner, J. Masson, and Piet Fransen in Christian Revelation and World Religions, ed. J. Neuner, London: Burns & Oates, 1967, for examples of the theological developments in Jesuit approaches to Hinduism after the time of Johanns. Neuner, the editor, taught at the Pontifical Athenaeum in Pune.

of a world which depends upon the interactive God for support. His concern for synthesis is a legitimate procedure, from a neo-Thomist perspective, which is not alien to the spirit of *Vedāntic* philosophical inquiry. The version of fulfilment theology which he articulated is as rigorous, if not more so, than the varieties articulated by Farquhar and Upādhyāy. Johanns tended to accentuate the theoretical dimensions of the *Vedāntic* systems, downplaying the cultic, mythological, or sectarian elements which were as formative for the *ācāryas* as the philosophical features. When describing the contours of the philosophical theologies of the *Vedāntins*, Johanns at times employed scholastic or modern terminology which subtly prepares the doctrines to be incorporated within his conception of perennial philosophy, even before they have been detailed according to the integrity of their tradition. But these potential weaknesses should not detract from the overall accomplishments of Johanns, especially when he is evaluated within his historical milieu. Johanns carried the mantle of Upādhyāy well, and breathed new life into Jesuit interaction with Hinduism.

Conclusion

This thesis has described and evaluated several components of Johanns' theological project of synthesizing the *Vedānta*. Johanns had a complex and rich intellectual life which was the result of his distinctive academic training and religious formation. His role as an expositor of Indian philosophy, as a neo-Thomist synthesist, and as a fulfilment theologian has been addressed; his identity as an Orientalist, a Jesuit humanist, and a follower of the approach of Upādhyāy has been noted. Johanns self-consciously developed a theological project, informed by the figures and movements that influenced him most, which he believed would be beneficial to the Church of Christ and to *Vedāntic* philosophy. This project is the lasting legacy for which Johanns is remembered. A survey of six key contributions of Johanns with respect to Christian engagement with Hinduism is now provided, in order to highlight the most important features of Johanns' ideals and activities that have emerged from the preceding analysis of his project.

Summary of Key Contributions of Johanns

1. *The necessity of Christian interaction with the Vedānta*

Johanns was committed to the deep exploration of the *Vedānta*, submitting its philosophical and practical teachings to theological inquiry from a Christian perspective. O.V. Jathanna, of United Theological College, writes: "Johanns, by common consent, is regarded as the most systematic and creative Roman Catholic missionary thinker among those who, in the first part of the twentieth century, made an attempt to interpret the meaning of Jesus Christ and of Christianity in relation to the classical *Vedāntic* systems of thought."⁶¹² Johanns was convinced that this quest for rapprochement with the *Vedānta* would be beneficial to the Christian Church, and so he modeled an exemplary pursuit of theological interaction with the classical Hindu systems, based upon a combination of learning and sympathy. Johanns conducted one of the most thoroughgoing analyses of the *Vedānta* from a Christian perspective, and his "masterful expositions, such as, for example, that of Vallabha's

⁶¹² O.V. Jathanna, "Forword," *To Christ through the Vedānta: The Writings of P. Johanns*, ed. Theo de Greeff, vol. 1, Bangalore: United Theological College, p. xiv.

system, are unparalleled to this day” by Christian theologians in India.⁶¹³ His life’s work was to promote and carry out this demanding type of engagement.

2. The need for synthesis of various components of Indian religion

Johanns was of the opinion that Christian theological engagement which was limited to interaction with one stream of thought or perspective within Indian religiosity would prove inadequate to allow for a comprehensive vision of reality. Many figures, movements, and orientations in Indian religious history must be studied and brought into creative harmony. Johanns, unlike many other theologians, interacted with various traditions and *mārgas* within *Vedāntism*, allowing for diversity of exploration without losing focus of inquiry. He allowed the *Vedāntic* teachings regarding non-dualist mysticism, emotive-intuitive appreciation of the divine, and submissive devotion to cross-fertilize and to complement one another. He also brought various views of the nature of God and His relation to the world into intellectual dialogue, creating a fresh perspective from the raw materials of the respective systems. A theological methodology which restricts itself to rapport with one expression of Hindu religion will inevitably be truncated and will lack the holism that Johanns desired. This need for a full-orbed outlook requires synthesis of various aspects of Indian metaphysics and practical theology.

3. Leadership within the Calcutta School

The “Calcutta school” was a pivotal circle of Jesuit thinkers who took their theological point of departure from Upādhyāy’s positive regard for the *Vedānta*. They saw the value of continuing and expanding upon the project initiated by Upādhyāy, appreciating the contributions that classical Hindu philosophy could make to Indian Christian theology. Johanns provided leadership within a historically important movement within Catholic mission in India. The Calcutta school was instrumental in turning the tide of Catholic attitudes to Hinduism from negativity to positive and reflective engagement with the indigenous spirituality. The example and writings of Johanns transmitted the ideals of Upādhyāy and William Wallace to younger Jesuits, such as Robert Antoine and Richard De Smet, who carried on the engagement with Hindu religiosity. Many Jesuits educated or teaching at St.

⁶¹³ J. Patmury, “Preface,” *To Christ through the Vedānta: The Writings of P. Johanns*, ed. Theo de Greeff, vol. 1, Bangalore: United Theological College, p. xii.

Xavier's, Calcutta and St. Mary's, Kurseong came under the influence of the teachings of Johanns, and they embraced his irenic perspective, helping to spread it within the Church. Johanns played a key role in transforming the theological climate within Catholic circles in India.

4. The Value of Thomist Critique of the Vedānta

Johanns developed a pioneering approach of bringing the *Vedānta* within Thomist evaluation. The complexity involved in such an undertaking is daunting, and Johanns' critique is discerning and informed. Thomism enjoys a long and learned tradition within Christian reflection, and so this project of bringing Thomism into conversation with the *Vedānta* cannot be easily dismissed. Robin Boyd and Joseph Mattam have correctly noted that Johanns' underlying Thomism is quite programmatic and pervasive in his writings. Boyd feels that in the theologizing of Catholics such as De Nobili, Upādhyāy, and Johanns, "St. Thomas looms too large."⁶¹⁴ However, in Johanns' defence, it is necessary to embrace a well-defined philosophical position in order to engage in the sort of in-depth analysis Johanns was attempting (and especially when wrestling with the subtle nuances of the *Vedānta*). Thomism was a useful starting point and intellectual tool, because of its analytical and open nature, from which Johanns could initiate theological interaction with the *Vedānta*. Johanns believed, not without justification, that Thomism was the most rigorous explication of Christian metaphysics available. Those who are not Thomists can still find value in Johanns' general discussion, even if they don't agree with the specific way that Johanns argued, which was often with technical Thomist categories. Indian Christian theology can and should advance beyond Johanns' particular approach, but it should not overlook the pioneering efforts he made to lay the general foundation for Christian-*Vedāntic* interaction.

5. The Production of a Vigorous Fulfilment Theology

Johanns constructed a version of fulfilment theology which, in comparison with his contemporaries, was comprehensive and erudite. Fulfilment theology had its part to play in the development of Christian approaches to Hinduism. It was considered innovative and progressive during the period when its advocates were

⁶¹⁴ R. Boyd, An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 77.

writing. One must always keep in mind that it was within the shadow of the censure of Upādhyāy's articles by the Catholic authorities that Dandoy and Johanns revived the ideas of Upādhyāy and modeled their *Light of the East* after aspects of his *Sophia*. Without the fulfilment theologies advanced by Upādhyāy, Johanns, Farquhar, and Slater, the modern approaches, which have moved beyond their particular conception of "fulfilment," would not be palatable within Catholic and Protestant circles. Contemporary theologians who are interested in the inter-relation of Christianity and Hinduism owe a great debt to Johanns for courageously rehabilitating a project and perspective that had been initially criticized and suppressed by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

6. Exemplar of Jesuit Scholarship of Hinduism

Catholics, especially Jesuits, came to the early recognition that profound scholarship of Indian religions would be essential for mission/educational work. Johanns is a fine example of a Jesuit trained as an Orientalist engaging in scholarship of Indic languages and literatures for the purpose of mission work. His chosen vocation as an educator who taught both Western and Indian philosophy as a means of promoting virtue and wisdom in his pupils reflects his Jesuit orientation. His understanding of the primary task of intellectual and moral formation which lay behind his particular vocation stimulated his deep immersion into the Hindu scriptures and commentaries. Even today, some eighty years after Johanns published his articles, when competent scholars read Johanns' writings, they sense that he is both "wise and learned."⁶¹⁵ Johanns furthered the Jesuit commitment to excellence in research of the indigenous belief-systems and *belles-lettres*. He sought to convey the importance of respectful study and empathetic understanding of classical Indian philosophy to his pupils and colleagues.

Conclusion

Perhaps, in retrospect, Johanns' most fertile theological suggestion was the need for a synthesis of various components of Indian spirituality in order to achieve a holistic perspective. Rather than limiting oneself to interaction with a single tradition

⁶¹⁵ J. Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986, p. 123.

or philosopher, a Christian theologian should avail himself or herself of the rich resources for reflection latent within various movements and perspectives in Indian history, culture, and intellectual life. Interaction with diverse *mārgas*, with voices from the underside as well as the elite tradition, with emotive and cultic elements as well as intellectual and philosophical emphases, will enable a comprehensive outlook to emerge which takes into account various features of human existence and spirituality. While Johanns applied the methodology of synthesis within the parameters of the *Vedānta*, it is possible to extend this methodology to include engagement with other schools (*Nyāya, Yoga, Jaina*), sects (*Śaiva, Śakta*), orientations (dissent against hegemony), and modern movements (neo-*Vedānta*). A truncated perspective inevitably leads to a restricted theology, anthropology, and soteriology.

In some aspects of his project, Johanns was less original and was helping to develop the ideals of others who had gone before him. For instance, Johanns was only one of several Jesuits, albeit a leader amongst them, to call for patient study and rapport with Indian philosophy. Humanist study of classical texts and the importance of education have been central concerns of the Jesuits throughout the history of their order. Similarly, Johanns was following up on the creative suggestions of his predecessors such as Wallace and Dandoy in his theological explorations. In these dimensions, Johanns assisted in reviving, promoting, and furthering these Jesuit ideals in India.

There are other dimensions of his project which do not have universal appeal to all Christian theologians in India. His identity as a Thomist theologian limits the attractiveness of certain features of his project to those who are not from his tradition. Thomism, while an incisive analytical tool, is not unreservedly accepted by Protestant, Charismatic, and Eastern Orthodox theologians. Many modern Catholics do not take their point of departure from Thomism or neo-Thomism. Also, fulfilment theology in its classical form, with a rigid distinction between grace and nature, is not accepted by many modern leading Catholic theologians.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁶ One example would be Karl Rahner, who sees grace operative in areas and capacities which earlier Catholic theologians would have identified as merely “natural.” Johanns was, however, instrumental in laying the grounds for more systematic Catholic thinking on the nature-grace distinction in regard to other religious traditions, and particularly Hinduism. See *A Rahner Reader*, ed. G. McCool, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975.

But it was Johanns' admonition to interact with a range of traditions and *mārgas* in theological reflection that was his unique personal contribution to Indian Christian theology. This forward-thinking viewpoint, which Johanns deemed as "synthesis," constitutes the truly original, creative aspect of his project. The ongoing legacy of Johanns rests in his challenge to theologians to enlarge their range of inquiry and to intensify their pursuit of a holistic account of God, the world, and human experience. This challenge is still relevant and will undoubtedly remain fresh and progressive for years to come.

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