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Panentheism versus Pantheism in the East and West with Special Reference to Shankara and Ramanuja's Views: an overview

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ABSTRACT

Panentheism and pantheism represent one of the most profound, even startling parallels across the world's great metaphysical traditions about which the present article seeks to explore and carry out a comparative study of certain Eastern and Western philosophers with special reference to the views of two chief exponents of Advaita Vedanta of Indian philosophy, Shankara and Ramanuja. Both these terms, touch on the relation of God and the universe with the difference that the former seems to be rigid, motionless, and abstract and lacks a kind of religious fervor in its approach, while the latter is presumed to be concrete and palpable and seeks to reconcile philosophical thinking with the demands of religious feelings as well. God in pantheism is compared to the God of Spinoza, the Neutrum of Schelling, and Shankara's concept of indeterminate Brahman. In contrast, in the West Hegelian Absolute, and Ramanuja's qualified Brahman in Indian tradition, both are accredited with panentheism in which a personal God, identity-in-and-through-difference, has all auspicious qualities. Though these philosophers are from totally different temperaments and cultures, their philosophical method has certain similarities that have been examined in this work.

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Introduction

There is a significant overlapping between Eastern and Western philosophical traditions concerning the notions of pantheism and panentheism that both deal with the relation of God and the universe with the difference that the former is a bare intellectual and abstract identity without any shade of difference as some called it rigid and motionless or a bloodless Absolute dark with the excess of light. In this approach God is compared to the God of Spinoza and the Neutrum of Schelling and in the East with Shankara's concept of Brahman, on the whole, all of them seem to lack religious fervor. In contrast, the latter's Absolute has been called a concrete individual, an identity-in-and-through-difference that has been compared to the Hegelian Absolute and Ramanuja's qualified Brahman. It is also called personal God like that of Pringle-Pattison. In the East, Ramanuja is accredited with panentheism by trying to reconcile philosophical thinking with religious feelings. As we will see, panentheism and pantheism represent one of the most profound, even startling parallels across the world's great metaphysical traditions. Unfortunately, people are either misled by these terms or put off by them for they sound strange and unhelpful. But since there is no better term available the alternatives also may even be more cumbersome, so the author seeks to shed some light on these concepts in the light of a comparative study to pave the way for having a clear picture of the issues. So let us first proceed to evoke and define these terms before turning to specific examples in Eastern and Western philosophical traditions comparatively.

Panentheism

"Panentheism", not to be confused with Pandeism, Pantheism, or Panpsychism, is a term composed of three Greek terms "pan", meaning all, "en", meaning in, and "Theo", meaning God. It is the belief, according to which God intersects every part of the world and, at the same time, extends beyond it. This term was coined first by the German philosopher Karl Krause in 1828 after reviewing Hindu scripture to distinguish the ideas of Hegel (1770–1831) and Schelling (1775–1854) about the relation of God and the universe from the pantheism of Spinoza that considers God and the world to be inter-related.

Moreover, while panentheism offers an increasingly popular alternative to classical theism, both panentheism and classical theistic systems affirm divine transcendence and immanence. Yet, classical theistic systems by prioritizing the difference between God and the world reject any influence upon God by the world, while, panentheism to some extent affirms the world's influence upon God.

Again, while pantheism emphasizes God's identity with the world, panentheism affirms God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world. Indeed, Panentheism occupies a position midway between theism and pantheism. For panentheism, while it is not strictly true that everything is God, making the two interdependent. (Bunnin, Nicholas and Yu Jiyuan, 2009, 501)

Anticipations of panentheistic understandings of God have occurred in both philosophical and theological writings throughout history (Hartshorne and Reese 1953; J. Cooper, 2006). However, a rich diversity of panentheistic understandings has developed in the past two centuries primarily in Christian traditions responding to scientific thought (Clayton and Peacocke 2004). There are specific forms of panentheism, drawing from different sources, that explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the significance of the world for the identity of God.

Although panentheism affirms God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world, specific forms of panentheism, drawing from different sources, explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the nature of the significance of the world for the identity of God. Panentheists have responded to two primary criticisms: (1) the panentheistic God is a limited God, and (2) panentheism cannot be distinguished from other forms of theism such as classical theism or pantheism.

In panentheism, the universal spirit is present everywhere, which at the same time "transcends" all things created. While pantheism asserts that "all is God", panentheism claims that God is greater than the universe. Some versions of panentheism suggest that the universe is nothing more than the manifestation of God. In addition, some forms indicate that the universe is contained within God, like in the Kabbalah concept of *tzimtzum*. Much of Hindu thought is highly characterized by panentheism and pantheism.

Pantheism

Pantheism is a term originated by John Toland for the belief that God is identical with the universe, that is, rather than being a supernatural power above or alongside the universe. Because God is the universe taken as a whole, no divine act of creation is required and the distinction between God and his creature, sharply drawn in Christianity, is denied. All is God, God is all. Everything in the universe is a mode or element of God. The claim that the divine is all-inclusive distinguishes pantheism from panentheism, which holds that God includes all things but is greater than their totality. (Bunnin, Nicholas and Yu Jiyuan, 2009, p.501)

The idea of pantheism is very ancient, and any survey of the history of philosophy will uncover numerous pantheist or pantheistically inclined thinkers; although it should also be noted that in many cases all that history has preserved for us are second-hand reportings of attributed doctrines, any reconstruction of which is too conjectural to provide much by way of philosophical illumination (see Kahn 1960).

Pantheist belief does not recognize a distinct personal god, anthropomorphic or otherwise, but instead characterizes a broad range of doctrines differing in forms of relationships between reality and divinity. Pantheistic concepts date back thousands of years, and pantheistic elements have been identified in various religious traditions. It is believed that The term *pantheism* was first coined by

a mathematician named Joseph Raphson in 1697 and since then, it has been used in various fields and different manners.

This term was popularized in the West as a theology and philosophy based on the work of Spinoza, particularly his book *Ethics*. A pantheistic stance was also taken in the 16th century by philosopher and cosmologist Giordano Bruno. apart from Spinoza, Hegel is also considered a pantheist due to his identification with the whole of being.

In the East, Advaita Vedanta, a school of Hindu philosophy as developed by Shankara is thought to be similar to the Western version of pantheism while Ramanuja the other exponent of Advaita Vedanta represents a kind of panentheism that we will throw some light on their views in this article. In this region, The early Taoism of Laozi and Zhuangzi is also sometimes considered pantheistic, although it could be more similar to panentheism. Cheondoism, which arose in the Joseon Dynasty of Korea, and Won Buddhism are also considered pantheistic.

However, given the complex and contested nature of the concepts involved, there is insufficient consensus among philosophers to permit the construction of any more detailed definition not open to serious objection from some quarter or other. Moreover, the label is a controversial one, where strong desires either to appropriate or to reject it often serve only to obscure the actual issues, and it would be a sad irony if pantheism revealed itself to be most like a traditional religion in its sectarian disputes over just what counts as ‘true pantheism.’ Therefore, pantheism should not be thought of as a single codifiable position. Rather it should be understood as a diverse family of distinct doctrines; many of whom would be surprised—and, indeed, disconcerted—to find themselves regarded as members of a single household. Further, since the concept has porous and disputed boundaries there is no clear consensus on just who qualifies, and no definitive roll-call of past pantheists. Given this situation, the range of things that may be usefully said about *all* pantheisms is perhaps limited, but nonetheless, a variety of concepts may be clarified, the nature of contentious issues explored, and the range of possible options more precisely mapped out (see Buckareff & Nagasawa 2016; Buckareff 2022).

Univocity of Being

One of the constitutive elements of pantheism is the belief in the univocity of being. In other words, the univocity of being constitutes the basis of pantheism. So, univocity implies pantheism. The doctrine of the “univocity of Being” is, indeed, an ontological theory developed in the thirteenth century by Duns Scotus, following Henry of Ghent.

In the Middle Ages, univocity was a heterodox position, constantly at the borders of heresy, and had limited currency outside the Scotistic school. This term later on turned out to be an important concept in contemporary philosophy particularly Deleuze ontology. In his ontology, Deleuze drew on both Spinoza and Duns Scotus to develop his own metaphysics of immanence based on difference.

For Duns Scotus, as for many Scholastic philosophers, the object of theology was God, while the object of philosophy, or rather of the metaphysics crowning it, was Being as Being. In developing his theory of univocity, Duns Scotus was injecting himself into a lively thirteenth-century debate concerning the nature of Being; Being is said of beings, but in what sense? The Scholastics used three precise terms to designate the various ways of resolving the problem: equivocality, univocity, and analogy. Being is equivocal means that the term "Being" is said of beings in several senses, and that these senses have no common measure; "God is" does not have the same sense as "man is," for instance, because God does not have the same type of being as man. By contrast, to say that Being is univocal, as Duns Scotus affirmed, means that Being has only one sense, and is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said, whether it be God or human, animal, or plant. Since these positions seemed to lead to scandalous conclusions (equivocality denied order in the cosmos, univocity implied pantheism), a third alternative was developed between these two extremes: Being is neither equivocal nor univocal but analogical. This became the position of Christian orthodoxy, as formulated by Thomas Aquinas. (Smith, Danial W., (2012)

Muslim philosophers, generally speaking, argued about the notion of being in their works and, believe that there is no real Being but God and that everything other than God is an unreal being; this is another way of saying what Avicenna says, that all things are possible or contingent save the Necessary Being.

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) known by Sufis as *Shaykh al Akbar* (the greatest master) is of the view that being is analogous to light, in which each thing is analogous to a specific and distinct colour. The reality of the distinct colour is not compromised by the fact that each colour makes a single light manifest. No colour has any existence whatsoever without light. Every colour is identified with light, but light remains distinct and incomparable with each colour as also with the sum total of colours. Each thing "exists" (*mawjud*), in a specific mode that does not detract from the incomparability of *wujud* itself. Each thing is thus identical with *wujud* and distinct from it at one and the same time. (Nasr Seyyed Hossein and Leaman, Oliver, (Ed.), P.503). So, Ibn 'Arabi, and even more so his followers like Qûnawî, focused on the Real Being as the one and unique. reality from which all other reality derives (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ibn Arabi, William Chittick).

Mulla Sadra (1572-1640), the most revered of all Muslim philosophers maintained that the whole of existence is not as objects which exist or existents but as a single reality (*Wujud*) whose delimitations by various quiddities (*mahiyyah*) gives the appearance of a multiplicity which exists with various existents being independent of each other. Heidegger complained that Western metaphysics had gone astray since the time of Aristotle by studying the existent (*das Seiende*), to use his vocabulary, and that the proper subject of metaphysics was existence itself or *das Sein* with whose study he was starting a new chapter in Western metaphysical thought. As far as Islamic

philosophy is concerned, such a distinction was made three centuries before Heidegger by Mulla Sadra. (Nasr Seyyed Hossein and Leaman, Oliver, 646)

Shankara, the Expression of Eastern Pantheism

Shankara (6th century AD) is regarded as the founder of the non-dualism Vedanta, which is said developed mainly through his commentary on Badaryana's *Vedanta Aphorisms*, the line of thought is at least as old as the Upanishads themselves. A few centuries before Shankara, Buddhist schools the Vijnanavada and the Madhyamika began calling their ultimate reality non-dual(*advaya*). Shankara believes in a non-qualified Brahman. (Raju, P. T., 1985, 382)

In Shankara's view, Brahman is the only Reality. It is absolutely indeterminate and non-dual. It is beyond speech and mind. It is indescribable because no description of it can be complete. The best description of it is through the negative formula of '*neti neti*' or 'not this, not this'. Yet Brahman is not an abyss of non-entity, because it is the Supreme Self and stands self-revealed as the background of all affirmations and denials. The moment we try to bring this Brahman within the categories of intellect or try to make this ultimate subject an object of our thought, we miss its essential nature. Then it no more remains Unconditioned Consciousness, but becomes conditioned *as it were*. This Brahman, reflected in or conditioned by Maya, is called Ishvara or God. Ishvara is the personal aspect of the impersonal Brahman. This is the celebrated distinction between God and the Absolute which Shankara, following the Upanishads, makes. Ishvara is also known as Apara Brahman or lower Brahman as contrasted with the unconditioned Brahman called Para Brahman. (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 280)

In Shankara's view Just as my ego is continuous with the Brahman, the personal God (Ishvara)also is continuous with it. Shankara uses the term Brahman for both, and calls them the higher Brahman (Para Brahman) and the Lower Brahman (*Apara Brahman*). The lower Brahman is not ultimately real. It is the same as Higher Brahman as facing the world of objectivity, i.e., with reference to the world or Maya. Indeed, it is not overwhelmed and overpowered by Maya, just as the witness who witnesses people fighting is not overpowered by what he witnesses. It is, therefore, not in bondage, i.e., within the power of Maya. Finite souls only are so overpowered.

We now get two ideas of the Divine: The Absolute (Brahman) and God (Ishvara). But how can the Brahman, which is perfect, become God, the less perfect? The concept of God is full of contradictions. If God is the final truth and is, as the concept is understood, the creator of the world, which is full of evil and misery, how can such a perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, all-merciful God be the creator of evil and misery? How can we prove the existence of God? Shankara examines the usual argument for the existence of God and offers the usual criticism. We can show only that the Brahman, which is Being and Consciousness, must be true. We can show that God exists as only a popular concession.

Then what is the ontological status of God? He is the Brahman with reference to the world. Although thought leads us to the idea of pure and indeterminate Being. It wants also to relate this

Being to the empirical world. It thinks of being as perfect, as having all the best qualities that, as human beings, we possess, but are raised to the power of infinity. Being as indeterminate is quality-less (*Nirguna*), but our thought attributes to it all the best qualities and makes it full of qualities (*Saguna*) thus while the Brahman is known to thought as beyond itself, God is only a thought-product. The idea of God is valid only so long as the world lasts. *Sub specie aeternitatis*. God has no reality, but *sub-specie temporis* he is as real as the world. (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 395)

Observations

Of course, It goes without saying that Shankara to quote Sir Charles Eliot: "in consistency, thoroughness, and profundity, holds the first place in Indian philosophy" (Eliot. Sir Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol.ii.P.208), yet, it is believed that he too was considerably influenced by Buddhism. He preserved the best in his philosophy, which was already in the Buddhist school of Mahayana. At the same time, he was a severe critic of Buddhism. At any rate, it must be admitted that his exposition of Buddhism is correct and faithful and his criticism of it is also perfectly justified.

Of all the Eastern and Western philosophers that lean towards pantheism, we can compare Shankara, the renowned exponent of Advaita Vedanta, and Spinoza as the exponent of Western modern philosophy. Though these philosophers are of different temperaments and geographical areas, they meet at one point of 'Absolute Monism' and their method in reaching this is strikingly similar. By saying that ultimate reality is the essence of everything they propound equality as well as Universal Spirituality.

Both Shankara and Spinoza lean towards a kind of pantheistic attitude as they believe in Absolute monism. Spinoza's substance is similar to Shankara's Indeterminate Brahman. All the attributes belonging to this ultimate reality are regarded as the essence of the same. Spinoza's God is eternal; all God's attributes are eternal. Spinoza's God is eternal; all God's attributes are eternal. Spinoza has established the Unity of God and the universe by saying that whatever is in God, and nothing can be conceived without God. (Spinoza, 1, 1954, prop. 15), Shankara has assumed indeterminate Brahman as the Highest Reality. Differences in the corporeal forms of God can be the reason for discord in spirituality. The idea of indeterminate reality has given a clear-cut way to reconcile and subsume corporeal forms of Gods assumed by all religions and philosophies. Shankara used the device of *Maya* to prove the multiplicity of the world while Spinoza used the device of 'modes' to solve the problem of one and many. Differences existing in various religions can be dissolved based on this concept i.e. they are the manifestations of the same reality. Both have adopted the logical method to prove their standpoints. For Shankara, scriptural authority is of prime importance but he has given importance to *tarka* (argument) as well. Spinoza has proved everything based on the geometrical method. It means universality is not just a matter of faith but can be proved based on reason too. Both philosophers have given importance to knowledge as the means of the ultimate goal which is a kind of pure bliss. Both of them agree that the proper

knowledge of the Self and its unity with the ultimate reality and conceding that all are one with the Ultimate real principle constitutes the goal of philosophy. (Shakuntala Gawde, *The International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*)

Ramanuja, the Expression of Eastern Panentheism

Ramanuja (1027 AD) as one of the chief exponents of Advaita Vedanta of Indian philosophy attempts a harmonious combination of absolutism with personal theism. The attempt is not new. We find it in the Gita, in the Mahabharata, particularly in the section called Narayaniya, and in the Puranas, notably in the Vishnu and the Bhagavata. This situation was continued by the Alvar saints and their interpretations, the Acharyas to whom Ramanuja was largely indebted. The attempt to combine personal theism with absolutism took three main lines: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 335)

Ramanuja believes in non-dualism qualified by difference according to which the Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is trained by diversity. It is a concrete whole that consist of the interrelated and inter-dependent subordinate elements which are called 'vishesanas' and the controlling spirit which is called 'vishesya'. Unity means the realization of being a vital member of this organic whole. God or the Absolute is this whole. He is the immanent inner controller, the Supreme Real who holds together in unity the dependent matter and individual soul as His body. Ramanuja recognizes three things as ultimate and real. These are matter(achit), souls(chit), and God (Ishvara). Though all are equally real, the first two are absolutely dependent on God. Though they are substances in themselves, yet in relation to God, they come from his attributes. They are the body of God who is their soul. God is the soul of nature. God is also the soul of souls. Our souls are souls in relation to our bodies, but in relation to God, they become His body and He is their soul. The relation between the soul and the body is that of inner inseparability. This is also the relation between substance and attribute.

Radhakrishnan briefed Ramanuja's overall views as follows: Ramanuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God and argues that God is indeed real and independent, but the souls of the world are real also, though their reality is utterly dependent on that of God. He believes in a spiritual principle at the basis of the world, which is not treated as an illusion. He insists on the continued individual existence of the released souls. Though the world of matter and the individual souls have a real existence of their own, still neither of them is essentially the same as Brahman. For, while Brahman is eternally free from all imperfection, matter is unconscious, and the individual souls are subject to ignorance and suffering. Yet they all form a unity, since matter and souls have existence only as the body of Brahman, *i.e.* they can exist and be what they are simply because Brahman is their soul and controlling power. Apart from Brahman, they are nothing. The individual soul and inanimate nature are essentially different from him, though they have no existence or purpose to serve apart from him or his service. So Ramanuja's theory is an Advaita or non-dualism, though with a qualification (*visesa*), *viz.* that it admits plurality, since the

supreme spirit subsists in a plurality of forms as souls and matter. It is therefore called qualified non-dualism. (Radhakrishna, 661)

Observations

Both Shankara and Ramanuja were the chief exponents of Vedanta philosophy and shared many common points in many issues but at the same time, they had different views concerning the ultimate reality. Ramanuja was opposed to the Advaitic position of Shankara, for instance, unlike Shankara, he maintains that pure identity and pure differences are alike unreal. Here he agrees with Hegel and believes that identity is always qualified by difference. Ramanuja is of the view that Shankara is wrong in saying that Brahman is a pure differenceless being. Brahman or Reality cannot be indeterminate, undifferentiated, and qualityless substance. Hence, Shankara's distinction between Brahman and Ishvara, between higher and lower Brahman, is unwarranted and unjustifiable by Ramanuja.

Philip Claton is impressed by Ramanuja's views and content that he is one of the greatest expressions of panentheistic thought across the world's traditions and holds it up unapologetically as a model for contemporary Western panentheism. In effect, he is implicitly suggesting that Western philosophers could develop a "purer" form of panentheism if they paid closer attention to Ramanuja's thought. A significant point in Ramanuja's view is that he beautifully affirms the dual status of finite individuals. It is possible to ascribe real agency and even a form of freedom to them. And yet finite agents do not have independent subsistence. In Ramanuja's view "*Brahman* is reality, consciousness, and infinite"; hence it alone enjoys independent subsistence. Thus, all conscious and nonconscious entities exist only as modes of *Brahman*. C. J. Bartley also affirms this view by saying that for Ramanuja, a mode is a reality ... which has neither essence, actuality, nor purpose independently of some other entity upon which it is existentially dependent and to which it is 'adjectival'. This amounts to the thesis that contingent-conscious individuals are ultimately subsidiary states and constituents of *Brahman*.

God is not only the efficient cause of things, the way that the potter molds the clay, but is also the "substrative" cause, that of which everything is made. Other agents can thus arise only through a sort of self-limitation on the part of *Brahman*. Thus, we can say that finite agents *are Brahman* as it is conditioned by *karma*(action), *avidyā*(ignorance), and *Kama* (desire).

The significance of Ramanuja's work lies in the fact that he established a perfect balance between *Brahman* and *Atman*. *Atman* is non-different in that it remains a mode rather than an independently existing thing, yet it is different because it is a mode and because, thanks to the grace of *Brahman*, it can exercise its own form of agency. The intricacy of this conceptual balancing act is all the more remarkable when one realizes that Ramanuja is seeking to do justice to three different requirements: the plain sense of the sacred scriptures, the demands of metaphysical reflection, and the requirements of *bhakti*(love), that is, the life of obedience and devotion to God.

Western panentheists, and even many classical theists, have affirmed that all finite things exist

only through participation in the divine. But Ramanuja radicalized the sense of participation, extending it beyond things to include all thought, action, and language as well. In so doing he was able to draw on the widespread Indian view that language, insofar as it is true, does not merely *stand for* its referent but also participates in the reality to which it refers. This allowed him to develop a perfect isomorphism for all aspects of reality: individual things have their existence only in the one true Reality; individual minds or spirits (*atman*) participate in the one *Brahman*; all true affirmations likewise participate in the One and thus express reality both ontologically and conceptually.

Ramanuja boldly used the metaphor of mind and body to explain the relationship between *Brahman* and the world. The mind is the controller of the body; the body, although a real actor in the world, is ultimately the agent of the mind. He argues that the sole essence of the body is to be an attribute of a self. The same relationship holds between *Brahman* and its modes: the world, like bodies, is *apṛthaksiddha*, that is, “incapable of independent existence” or, literally, “not separately established”. From a Vedic perspective, there is a further advantage to this philosophy: just as *atman* is not decreased by the death of the body, but continues on through reincarnation to be paired with another body, so *Brahman* is not affected by the impermanence, change, and decay of the world but remains always in its eternal perfection.

Finally, Ramanuja recognized that considering finite agents as modes of *Brahman* may lead to a kind of fatalism and determinism, the abolition of all human agency. This consequence would be disastrous since it would render the moral exhortations of the scriptures vacuous and would make genuine devotion (*bhakti*) on the part of believers impossible. Here too Ramanuja's answer is a model for the perennial Western struggles with the problem of God and freedom. The same divine self-limitation that allows finite reality to exist also creates a place for finite agency. A purely naturalistic, object-based account of reality, one without the concepts of *Atman* and *Brahman*, is not sufficient to support genuinely free agency. By contrast, the only way that free agency *can* exist is if finite agents are sustained by an ultimate consciousness in which they participate. The Divine gives (and sustains) the capacity for action. In Ramanuja, as in some Western theologians, one finds hints that finite agents are only truly free when they choose to act under the divine purposes; all other action produces *karma* and thus binds the agent more fully to the world of materiality and illusion. But *atman* itself is not ultimately illusory, since its very agency has been given by God. (Philip Claton, 2004)

Radhakrishnan holds that Shankara's Absolute is a bare intellectualism and abstract identity and ignores the demands of religious feelings, but some Indian scholars disagree with Radhakrishna's comments in this regard by saying that Shankara's critics do justice to Ramanuja but do grave injustice to Shankara. They forget the important fact that neither Shankara overlooked the demands of religious feeling nor could Ramanuja satisfactorily harmonize religious feeling with logical thinking. To dub Shankara's Absolute as a bare identity is to betray ignorance even of the

significant name his philosophy bears, Advait, which means not bare identity but denial of ultimate difference. (Radhakrishnan, S,1983, 365)

Concerning combining philosophy and religion or reconciling philosophical thinking with religious demands by Shankara and Ramanuja, it is important to note that it is one thing to combine philosophy with religion, but quite another thing to combine one particular philosophical doctrine with a particular religious creed. Shankara has attempted the former, while Ramanuja has attempted the latter. Moreover, it is believed that there are some inherent contradictions in the philosophy of Ramanuja as well. Even according to some experts in Indian philosophy he was not very successful in expressing the relation between the universe and God.

Conclusion

Pantheism and pantheism are, indeed, two approaches in the East and West concerning the relation of God and the universe, and such a complex issue brings on numerous difficulties that require, indeed, further reflection and research but at the same time is an immensely rich model for attempting to conceive Ultimacy. I hope this work will offer a helpful point of orientation for other comparative philosophers as they explore the rich connections between the great metaphysical traditions of the East and West. It is no small thing that distinct philosophical traditions, often treated as discrete and even antagonistic, should converge on an underlying unity of perspective. Strictly speaking, speculations of philosophers in Pantheism do not comfort us in our stress and suffering for it is abstract, rigid, and motionless like the Absolutism of Shankara, as viewed by some scholars, that remains indifferent to the fear and love of its worshiper, for the advocates of this doctrine make religion more an affair of the head than of the heart or will. while pantheism is far more than a philosophy. Just as distinctive forms of spiritual practice are associated with pantheism on the one side and with classical Western theism on the other, so pantheism fosters its own distinctive spirituality as well. From yogic practices to Quaker worship, these spiritualities make their own contribution to the storehouse of the world's spiritual practices. Moreover, in an age when humanity is on the verge of decimating the world's ecosystems and bringing about the extinction of many of its species, we must assess metaphysical systems in terms of their ecological potential. Arguably, there is no stronger motivation for valuing and preserving the environment than the affirmation that each organism has its own distinct reality and agency, while at the same time inherent in each is the infinite value of the one.

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