



FIND

India-Europe Foundation for New Dialogues

Founded by Alain Daniélou en 1969

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काये द ला फोंदास्यो



"The first duty of man is to understand his own nature and the basic elements of his being, which he must fulfill to the best of his ability"

Alain Daniélou



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Letter from the Honorary President Jacques Cloarec

Dear Friends of FIND,

Another year begins: with the New Year new challenges arise, and with each challenge there is also a sense of renewal. As Alain Daniélou wrote, cyclic time is a framework of experience surpassing the mere human will to be the centre of all universal processes. With each challenge we have to accept the conditions and limits of our actions, as well as our small – but important – role in contributing our fair share to make things better.

Last year's main challenge was the budget reduction FIND was forced to effect. This reduction led to a restructuring phase to be accomplished in 2017. However, there is no doubt that creativity and right action are also possible on a smaller scale even with more apparent limits.

In 2016, Artistic Dialogue organised great concerts by renowned Indian musicians (Hariprasad Chaurasia and Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, among others) in Rome, together with a workshop at the Labyrinth, and it also saw the completion of Riccardo Biadene's documentary *Into the Labyrinth*, which will be launched this year worldwide.

Intellectual Dialogue produced a joint-project with the C. G. Jung Institute of Zurich on various themes serving as a bridge between East and West (Tantra, Depth Psychology, the Self, Alchemy, Gnosticism, etc.), involving a varied group of participants from Spain and the USA to India and Afghanistan, which had a very positive resonance. At the same time, new perspectives are opening for FIND in Germany, through cooperation of FIND Intellectual Dialogue with the Universities of Freiburg, Heidelberg and Würzburg in the fields of History of Religion and Indology, which will certainly enhance the transcultural direction of our Foundation not only in Europe, but also in India.

Last but not least, 2016 saw the accomplishment of the long-standing publication project for ten e-books in French by Alain Daniélou, while FIND's website was also renovated – opening yet another window on the world. This broad restructuring project also extends to our Musical Semantic and Alain Daniélou sites.

This year the President of our Board of Directors and FIND's representative in India, Mr. Basant Gupta, takes up his activities in that country. He will collaborate closely with Artistic and Intellectual Dialogue in opening up new roads of interaction with Indian thinkers and artists. We wish him all the best in his task and are glad to have him among us.

As you can see, our reduced financial possibilities notwithstanding, we are achieving important goals. In other words, we are determined to accept the challenge of showing the European and Indian public our will and ability to tackle and contribute to today's intercultural dialogue demands. We are also confident that, in view of the quality of our initiatives, our activities will attract support from sponsors in those fields and aspects that require it. This is also a good opportunity to express our gratitude to all those institutions, both Indian and European, which in some way or other have contributed funds and support for our activities, in a firm belief in the work we are doing.

Before closing this letter, I wish to pay my deepest respects to the memory of the late Dileep Padgaonkar, a member of our Honorary Board, who passed away in November 2016 at the early age of 72. Our last encounter took place in 2015 in Delhi, during a trip to India with our Director of Intellectual Dialogue, Adrián Navigante. After playing us the most refined and delightful ragas, over supper at a traditional restaurant Padgaonkar told us of his desire to publish a volume in English of essays by Alain Daniélou to show their relevance to pressing issues of today, from ecology to the art of tolerance beyond the commonplace. I sincerely hope this noble initiative of his will very soon be accomplished by FIND, since there is no doubt that Alain Daniélou's thought is up to that task.

With my very best wishes for 2017,

Jacques Cloarec
FIND's Honorary President

Alain Daniélou's Philosophical Realism: A lesson in *Ars Vivendi*

Adrián Navigante : FIND Research and Intellectual Dialogue

If we take the term “realism” as an attitude to life based on solid convictions (and not just on whimsical prejudices), we could say there are basically two types. The first is a cold and reductionist realism, whose purpose is to limit experience in order to avoid not only cognitive but also emotional confusion, excessive opinion and wild speculation. The second type is creative and rather expansive, aiming at the cultivation of an understanding closely linked to an increasingly refined perception. The danger of the first type is that it may end up putting a straightjacket on life itself in the name of a meagre *Realpolitik*. The virtue of the second type is that it may help overcome not only old prejudices but also easily-acquired convictions that ultimately cannot stand the real test of life. Both types share a tendency to mental lucidity combined with a rejection of exacerbated idealism and fantastic thinking, but mental lucidity can sometimes be excessively one-sided. However, it is not true that the exercise of realism *in et per se* goes hand-in-hand with an impoverishment of imagination and sensitivity. On the contrary, it facilitates the proper use of such faculties to achieve a better, deeper understanding of life itself



*Dancing figure expressing the rhythms of creation,
photo by Aleksandra Wentz.*

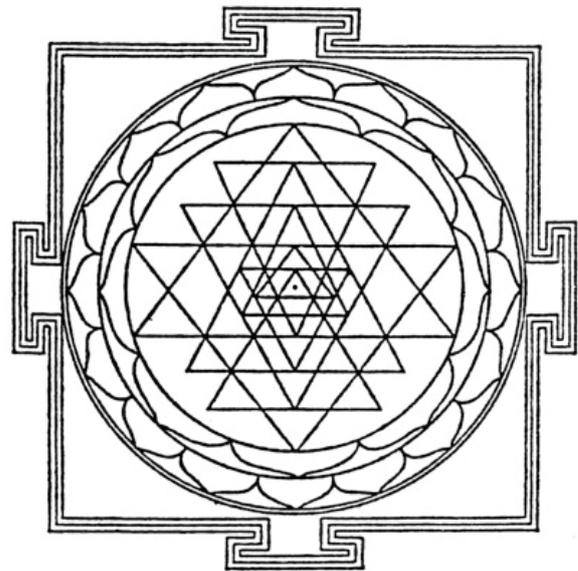
Alain Daniélou's realism belongs to in the second type, and that is perhaps why his message does not evoke a distant and forgotten past, although many of the concepts he formulated were inscribed in a quite different, almost unrecognizable, context from that of today. Two interpretations of his thought seem to me overly biased and simple, that is, too poor to do justice to his unruly spirit. The first tries to see in Daniélou only the artist, the individualist, the insurgent genius whose activity was to speak and act *against* convention, conformism, mediocrity, to react, to polarize and to polemize. The second seeks to make him a dull and overcast traditionalist, an unbending mind who opposed everything related to the modern world, as well as to subjective creation and any plurality of viewpoints. The line between these two poles should not be seen as a natural demarcation, but rather as a paradoxical confluence and subtle transformation of them.

Because Daniélou knew how tradition works, he introduced variations in its conception and showed that transmission of *real knowledge* is – because of its historical inscription – at the same time unity (in terms of its paradigmatic value scale) and plurality (in terms of its configuration dynamics). Because he knew that the only type of knowledge that is worth having is that of an integrated life in theory and practice, he always sought to question his own convictions by studying different approaches, and to integrate them in his own special art of living. Not every life is a work of art, even if such potential is already there at the level of the most basic manifestation. Life becomes art in the hands of those human beings who choose to do justice to the complex thread they see and experience in the cosmic pattern wherein they are inscribed. One of the bases of Daniélou's approach to life (through Hinduism) is consideration of the six philosophical systems [darśana-s]

complementary perspectives in grasping reality. He was not interested in historical debates on Indian philosophy (where each system may appear in conflict with the others in order to affirm itself), but rather in what he had learned from the *paṇḍit-s* during the almost two decades he spent in Varāṇasī: how to apply a combination or practical synthesis of those systems in order to achieve his own awareness in tune with the complexity of the real: “many different relative truths can coexist without negating one another” (1), writes Daniélou, because for him ‘the real’ is a world of opposites in constant tension, in which human beings need to find a balance without reducing the dynamics of manifestation to a fixed dogma or preconceived idea (2). Because our faculties are limited, at every attempt to grasp the nature of reality, we stumble more than once upon the limit of the unknowable. In other words, knowledge can only be partial, and experienced truth cannot be other than manifold (and relative) (3). The difference between Daniélou and any post-modern thinker of today lies in the way this plurality is conceived and how it is integrated into a unifying background. According to Daniélou, rejection of religion (which characterizes the modern attitude toward reality) is absurd because it is simply a matter of assigning it its proper place within the scope of human life. The Hindu viewpoint considers religion a unifying factor encompassing a free plurality of research lines on the mystery of the real. According to Daniélou, this perspective is convincing merely because of the attitude it creates: respect and admiration for something we cannot fully understand, but in which we are embedded and can actively participate. “I have grown far too accustomed to an open and inquiring attitude toward all things [...] and only feel comfortable with people who [...] are completely without ready-made ideas or taboos”, he writes in his autobiography, and at the same time he declares, “the main purpose of religion is to provide men with a sense of the supernatural and an awareness of the divine nature of the world” (4). These judgements would appear contradictory in the eyes of a modern-trained European (since ideology is viewed as a dogmatic barrier to knowledge), but not in Daniélou’s eyes. For him religion is first and foremost an ‘intuition’ of nature as a living whole – *natura generatrix, prakṛti* or *śakti* – that precedes the ‘concept’ of nature as a profane world upheld by a sacred being beyond its reach. This intuition is an attitude to life found in the archaic religions of pre-Christian Europe and has been preserved in India for more than three thousand years. That is why Daniélou always tries to reconsider European antiquity in the light of Hindu thought (5) and integrate what is lacking in a Western world “so ignorant of the sources of its own culture” (6).

Daniélou’s outlook on life was in general terms that of a Hindu, that is, somebody who identified deeply with the type of knowledge transmission he received in a specific system of values (rituals, beliefs, myths and laws) in which he was also initiated [*dīkṣā*] in one of its major branches: Shaivism. However, the life-process is always much more complex than the living individual, and the ritual of initiation should not be confused with a path of spiritual enlightenment. What Daniélou embraced was Hinduism as a way of life, that is, according to the socio-cosmic framework of traditional Indian society and with special emphasis on a philosophical and artistic mode of existence. This is not the same as exclusively embracing *saṁnyāsa*, if we take the term to mean a radical form of asceticism attempting to surpass all human and natural limitations of the individual being and seeking liberation from *saṁsāra*. It suffices to read Daniélou’s book *The Four Aims of Life* (1992), which is a study of the double axis structuring Indian individual and social life: the doctrines of *puruṣārtha-s* (the four aims of social life: *kāma*, *artha*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*) and *puruṣāśrama-s* (the four stages of individual life: *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vanaprastha* and *saṁnyāsa*), to realize that Daniélou’s integral vision of Hinduism as a system of values has no absolute, but a proportionate (and therefore limited) place for *mokṣa* and *saṁnyāsa*. In other words: he conceived absolute liberation from mundane chains as one of the paths followed by certain individuals (saints, yogis, mystics), but not as the highest ideal and only prescriptive aim of human life in general – as many Western ‘adepts’ of ashram-based Neo-Hindu movements nowadays do, even when they ignore almost all other aspects of Indian culture.

Daniélou was quite convinced of the Hindu way of life as a commendable product of human culture, precisely because of the special attention that Hindu culture gives to the natural order of things – something that in his opinion prevents not only ecological disasters but also human alienation and existential crises. From a Western point of view this position represents a real problem, because in the West the basis of modernity goes hand-in-hand with a radical revision of the idea of ‘nature’ and ‘natural laws’, and modern social critique focuses rather on the problem of a ‘construction of nature’ or an ‘invention of eternal laws’ – a problem of a purely ideological nature that cannot be analyzed from a metaphysical and cosmological point of view. That is why his defence of the *caturvarṇa* system in India (that is, the distinction of four [*catur*] colorations [*varṇa-s*] in terms of status and function in society and its further division into clans or communities [*jāti-s*]) is a real scandal when judged by the standards of modern Western thought and has always been misunderstood. For Daniélou the *caturvarṇa* system is in the first place a millenary attempt to organize a society as close as possible to its natural function and holistic coherence (7). That is why the totalitarian idea of homogeneous identity is ruled out from the very beginning (8); the excesses of each group are regulated a priori by the organic dependence of the whole structure, and every expression of difference is accepted within the framework of local identities of different types. Although Daniélou recognizes that in the course of history this system has had its own problems (9), the main question for him remains how the coexistence of different human groups can be ensured in the long term (in the case of India more or less three millennia), and how diversity can be preserved in spite of the predatory nature of human beings. In this sense he was sceptical of the democratic experiment – especially after the end of traditional republicanism, the conjunction of liberal economy and shallow egalitarianism and the idea of exporting such new forms of democratic organization to non-Western cultures.



Srī Yantra, diagram with a special vibration of sound and light. Source: Alain Daniélou, Mantra: les principes du langage et de la musique selon la cosmologie hindoue, in: Cahiers d'Ethnomusicologie 4, 1991.

Social life is – beyond each specific cultural system – a dialectics of freedom and constraint, and it is within this dialectics that the individual should be placed. The fact that the individual does not come first in the organization of life has, for Daniélou, its metaphysical reasons. Any thought about the place of human beings in the cosmos has metaphysical implications, since it attempts to answer questions whose relevance lies beyond any empirical basis. The Western world has always seen in the human capacity to build a world of social structures, religious beliefs and political dynamics a qualitative difference with regard to any other form of life on earth. Daniélou did not feel comfortable with the idea that a species called *homo sapiens*, whose rise dates back to around 50,000 years ago (10) (an insignificantly short span of time on a cosmic scale), should be the centre of creation. The Purāṇic cosmologies helped him in his attempt to decentralise human beings from their privileged place as *imago Dei* or demiurge of history. Indeed, they show the insignificance of human life compared with broader, bigger and much more complex life-cycles, cycles of gods and Tradition (11). In his enigmatic book *While the Gods Play* (1987), Daniélou states that the time span of *homo sapiens* seems to correspond to the seventh human cycle [*mahāyuga*](12) and is inscribed in a much larger context of impersonal cosmic rhythms [*kalpa, mahākalpa*]. From the reduced perspective of human history, it seems that human beings have the powers of a divine creator, since they can alter (by means of seemingly complex acts of will) not only historical but also natural events. The cosmic point of view shows how narrow-minded this conception is, just by taking a look at the duration of a *kalpa* (or “day of Brahmā”, which corresponds to 4 *yuga-s*): 432,000,000 human years. The metaphor of the god falling asleep (at the end of his cosmic day) is a way of saying that the cycle comes to an end with the total absorption of everything that exists, a return to *mūlaprakṛti*, that is, to the non-manifested root of manifested nature. The illusion of the human will is to think that it can in some way have some sort of control over such cosmic patterns. For Daniélou, it means exactly the opposite: gaining awareness of the

limited position of man within the complexity of the universe and understanding the process of creation as far as possible by fully reintegrating oneself in it. Re-integration is in this sense synonymous with de-centralization.

Two further aspects of Daniélou's philosophical realism deserve to be mentioned. The first concerns his rejection of the doctrine of reincarnation and the second his deification of eroticism. Daniélou's critical attitude toward the belief in reincarnation is based on two aspects related to reception of the *karma* conception within the framework of Indian asceticism: the deterministic morality that ensues from it, and the denial of every form of enhanced life as an ensnaring mechanism of ego-based ignorance. Within the horizon of *dharmasāstra*, such a critical attitude would make Daniélou a *nāstika*, that is, a heretic, somebody whose reasoning stands above the authority of tradition (13). It suffices to realize that belief in reincarnation is already established in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, serving as the main support of the soteriological identification between *ātman* and *brahman*, and that the mechanics of *saṁsāra* as a bondage of perpetual death and rebirth depends very much on the logics of desire, that is, an irrational energy binding and driving human beings to different types of objects and thus preventing them from attaining the transcendent ground of all existence (14). Daniélou's anti-ascetic attitude rescues the trans-personal aspect of desire (the cosmogonic and divine *kāma*) (15) and relates it to specific philosophical aspects of Shaivite *saṁpradāya* in which Tantric elements become ostensible. In his book *The Hindu Temple* (2001) he writes the following: "The uniting of the sexes is an expression of the nature of being that we envisage at a physical, mental, intellectual, subtle, or transcendent level. Upon reflection, it can reveal to us the secret of divine nature" (15). Life turns out to be a divine play, and human beings can be conscious participants in it. Enhanced awareness is also enhanced experience in every aspect of manifested reality: in the relationship with nature, animals and other human beings. There is no need to extend this awareness in time – both forwards and backwards – beyond individual existence and imagine a continuation beyond its concrete biological frame, since this extension is an abstraction and – on a social level – can be easily used for manipulation. The main thing is to realize the awareness of the all-encompassing cosmic thread in aesthetic pleasure, something which ultimately corresponds to religious and divine bliss. No wonder Daniélou explored dance, music, painting and writing as means to develop and express this awareness. His deification of eroticism is closely related to the way in which he cultivated the aesthetic sphere (through an expansion and an intensification of perception) as an approach to the divine: "Pleasure is not only the image but also the experience or realization of the divine [...]. Only the voluptuousness of love, of pleasure, can give some idea of the divine bliss of which it is the reflection. Through this, we manage to get the taste of it and have the strength to renounce all our earthly ties" (17).

Such appreciations about sexuality and pleasure may shock the ordinary spiritual aspirant aiming at reaching *mokṣa* through renunciation of all worldly ties, but Daniélou's view is never one-sided. In fact, he recognizes the metaphysical implications of the ties of Nature and he even uses the vocabulary of classical ascetic reformism in order to express the importance of the *mokṣa*-ideal within the Hindu tradition: "Whoever wishes to achieve liberation must conquer his or her own sexual nature, escape the flow of life, and interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. Nature and the gods, on the other hand, seek to keep human beings enslaved" (18). In this respect he resorts to the Tantric tradition and shows a very important aspect of the way human beings may deal with such enslavement. Sexuality (the strongest power of Nature) enslaves human beings only through their obsession with it, so that the most effective way of creating this obsession turns out to be a *dissimulation* of the thing itself: "Whatever dissimulates sexuality, whatever distinguishes it physically and morally – such as lying, modesty, and the notion of sin – are merely so many ways of dissimulating reality, so many weapons employed by nature to keep us more firmly in her nets" (19). In other words: Daniélou inverts the handed-down rules in order to achieve the same goal. This is a typical Tantric strategy, a principle of reversal (*pratiloman* = against the grain, or *parāvṛtti* = inversion) (20) introduced to render the search for liberation an expansive path, a path in which life is affirmed and embraced in its mysterious ambivalence and manifoldness, instead of being radically (and often pathologically) denied. If one takes a short step further, it is even possible to think of the reductive path of liberation as a constraint and replace it with a mode of living that is not so far from Nietzsche's Dionysian world vision. After all, there is no possible eroticism

without a background of vitalism.

Daniélou's synthesis of *hindu dharma* is not only to be appreciated in his theoretical writings about it. In fact, theoretical appreciations are always one-sided, and theoreticians are obsessed with the reconstruction of a truth that is always partial and related to their own ego. The value of Daniélou's work lies not only (and not mainly) in the perspective he developed out of long experience and study, a perspective he called "Shaivite" and defended against Christian, Muslim and even Brahmanic homogenization. It is rather to be seen in his own life, in his artistic work and in the heritage he bequeathed after his return to Europe. After all, what else is the Labyrinth at Zagarolo than a place in which human beings can be closer to nature, accepting its beauty and its violence without imposing any moral question, living in harmony with animals and plants and leaving aside any prejudice towards the behaviour of their neighbours? There is a whole *ars vivendi* in Daniélou that is still not as visible as it should be. Should we not regret this? Perhaps the greatest art, the highest expression of Daniélou's spirit, is not to fully reveal the work in order to preserve it from the predators outside. Those who are part of the Labyrinth know that very well.



The Labyrinth at Zagarolo, where the gods still live,
photo by Sarah Eichner.

Notes:

- 1) Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, New York 1987, p. 308.
- (2) Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Approche de l'hindouisme*, Paris 2007, p. 21.
- (3) Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem.*, pp. 19-20.
- (4) Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 325.
- (5) Alain Daniélou, *Approche de l'hindouisme*, p. 22.
- (6) Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 326.
- (7) It suffices to take a look at the line running from the *puruṣūkta* of the *R̥gveda* to *Manusmṛiti* I, 87 to become aware of the importance of this system not only for the Hindu religion and social organization but also for the Indian imaginary, as well as the main representations of cosmic and human balance.
- (8) "The natural recognition of racial and professional divisions, of the caste as natural basis of society, is probably the only remedy against nationalist excess and total war, the latter being a logical consequence of the former" (Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, Paris 2003, p. 36).
- (9) Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem.*, p. 45.
- (10) If we take into account the African ancestor of homo sapiens, who at that time seems to have migrated to the Middle-East and Asia. This is the line Daniélou followed in his research of cosmic cycles, since he speaks of the appearance of Cro-Magnon in 58,042 BCE
- (11) Cf. Alain Daniélou, Viṣṇu the Pervader, in: *Adyar Library Bulletin (New Series)*, Vol. XVIII, part 3-4, December 1954, pp. 336-380, especially p. 340.
- (12) That is, a cycle of four yuga-s: *kr̥ta yuga* (age of accomplishment), *tretā yuga* (age of the three ritual fires), *dvāpara yuga* (age of doubt) and *kali yuga* (age of conflict), cf. Alain Daniélou, *While the Gods Play*, Rochester: Vermont 1987, p. 198.
- (13) Cf. in this respect *Manusmṛiti* II, 8, where the positive authority of revelation [*śrutiprāmānya*] is clearly placed beyond the eye of knowledge [*jñānacakṣu*].
- (14) Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* III, 8, where the only real satisfaction of desire lies in freedom from all desire as a condition for the possibility of the identification of the personal self [*ātman*] with the ultimate and absolute reality [*brahman*].
- (15) It is not surprising that Daniélou quotes among other sources the Vedic cosmogonic myth reproduced in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (I, 4.3) in order to emphasize exactly the opposite of what is highlighted by ascetic soteriology.
- (16) Alain Daniélou, *The Hindu Temple: Deification of Eroticism*, Rochester: Vermont 2001, p. 8.
- (17) Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem.*, p. 103.
- (18) Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem.*, p. 116.
- (19) Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem.*
- (20) Cf. Georg Feuerstein, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*, Boston: Massachusetts 1998, p. 8.

Swāmī Karpātrī: The Nation's Development and Dharma,

Translation from the Hindi and introduction by Himadri Ketu Sanyal (FIND grantee)

Introduction

Swāmī Karpātrī (1907-1982) was an unusual figure in Indian thought who, while leading the life of a *sannyasin*, didn't quite renounce the world, but rather took an active part in it for different purposes of social and cultural relevance to his country (1). In the following translation of his text- राष्ट्रोन्नति और धर्म (2), (*The Nation's Development and Dharma*), his position in the wake of Indian nationalism comes to the fore, especially his vision of an independent Indian nation and the role that *dharma* should play in it.

Karpātrī propounded a particular vision of India which corresponded neither to the dichotomy capitalism/communism nor to that of contemporary (liberal) democracy. Instead, he stressed the need to base the independent Indian nation on the traditional ideal of *dharma*, as it appears in Vedic tradition. According to Karpātrī, communism and capitalism are political systems inevitably driven by greed and force. Instead of following either of these systems, Karpātrī emphasized the duties and aims of the individual from the perspective of the famous doctrine of the *puruṣārthas* (3): *kāma*, *artha*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*. This doctrine states that a human being should first aim at fulfilling the duties of the external world before seeking liberation from mundane existence, meaning that social duty plays a central role, and in this sense, is a harmonious and thoroughly regulated collective instance that alone can guarantee the people's happiness and establish harmony in their lives. In the following text, presented in the original Hindi with an English translation, Karpātrī explains various kinds of *dharmas*, especially *rājadharma* (king's duty), and *svadharmas* (duties of an individual) with references and examples drawn from the Epic tradition (*Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) to state the importance of *dharma* for both individual and society and stress its contribution to the welfare of both.

With Swāmī Karpātrī, we are confronted with a line of thought that at the time of the struggle for Indian Independence constituted an alternative position with regard to modern democratic reformism (clearly a European import) and to the nationalist option also based on modern (Western) political regimes. We also find a doctrinary emphasis on ethical aspects of Indian social life that traditional thought considered central to the establishment of social order. In this sense, the immediate context of his social and political interventions as well as the pedagogical character of his writings should not obscure the problematic behind them, which is ultimately the coexistence of a traditional position in the real political arena with other trends that seem exclusively to characterize social life in modern India. As difficult as it may appear to link politics with *dharma* in the context of modern political institutions, Swāmī Karpātrī saw a need to emphasize that link as the sole remedy for the otherwise inevitable decadence of institutional life.



A portrait of Swāmī Karpātrī from the book
Vicāra piyūṣa



राष्ट्रान्ति और धर्म

बिना धार्मिक भावनाओं का प्रतिष्ठापन हुए सुखपूर्वक समाज एवं राष्ट्र का सुसंघटन हो ही नहीं सकता। सुन्दर स्त्री, रत्न तथा राज्यादिविहीन दूसरों की उक्त सुख सामग्रियों को देखकर स्पृहा या ईर्ष्या करते हैं। कोई क्यों साम्राज्यादि सुख-सामग्री-संपन्न और हम क्यों दरिद्र एवं दुःखी रहे? बस, एतन्मूलक राजा-प्रजा, किसान-जमींदार और पूँजीपति-मजदूरों का संघर्ष होना स्वाभाविक है। एक ओर ईर्ष्या या रागवश मजदूर, किसान संघटन करते हैं और क्रांति पैदा करके पूँजीपति, जमींदार आदि को मिटा देना चाहते हैं। दूसरी ओर राजा तथा धनीमानियों को भी प्रमादवश गरीबों का शोषण करके अपनी ही भोगसामग्रियों में सर्वस्व लगाने की सूझती है। एक वर्ग कुछ नहीं देना चाहता, दूसरा सब कुछ ले लेना चाहता है। इस तरह धन एवं भोग में आसक्त धनिकवर्ग दरिद्रता, उत्पीड़न एवं ईर्ष्या से पीड़ित निर्धनवर्ग अपने-अपने कर्तव्यों से वंचित होकर राष्ट्र और समाज के जीवन को संकटपूर्ण बना देते हैं। शास्त्र एवं धर्म एक ऐसी वस्तु है, जिससे सभी में संतोष एवं सामंजस्य की भावना प्रतिष्ठित होती है। शास्त्र और धर्म का प्रभाव ऐसा था कि लोग पर-स्त्री एवं पर-द्रव्य को विष के समान मानते थे। लोगों की यह धारणा थी कि सम्पत्ति-विपत्ति, सुख-दुःख में अपने शुभाशुभ कर्म ही मुख्य हेतु है। क्यों हम दुःखी एवं दरिद्र हुये, इसका समाधान वे इस तरह कर लेते थे कि जैसे अपने कर्मवश कोई पशु, कोई पक्षी, कोई अंध बधिर या उन्मत्त होता है, वैसे ही कर्मों के अनुसार ही कोई भोग-सामग्री से विहीन और कोई उससे सम्पन्न होता है। प्राणी को अपने शुभाशुभ कर्मों के अनुसार सुख-दुःख, सम्पत्ति-विपत्ति भोगनी पड़ती है। उसे अपनी ही सम्पत्ति तथा सुख-सामग्री में सन्तुष्ट रहना चाहिये। परकीय धन या कलत्र की स्पृहा न करनी चाहिए। पुरुषार्थ से अपने आप हृष्ट-पुष्ट हो जाना और बात है, दूसरों की हृष्टि पुष्टता मिटाकर अपने समान उसे भी बना देना और बात है। ऐसे ही अपने सत्यप्रयत्नों से सुन्दर भोग-सामग्री सम्पादन करना यद्यपि युक्त ही है, तथापि दूसरों की सामग्रियों से ईर्ष्या करना, उसे अपहरण करना अवश्य ही पाप है। ऋषिलोग अरण्यों में रहते थे और नदियों के तट पर कुदाल आदि में कुछ सामग्री उत्पन्न करते थे। उसमें से भी वे राजा का अंश निकालकर उसकी इच्छा ना होते हुए भी उसे दे आते थे। पाप बन जाने पर पापी स्वयं जाकर राजा से दंड ग्रहण करते और उससे अपनी शुद्धि समझते थे। अब भी पाप बन जाने से अपने आप पापों के प्रायश्चित्त करने की प्रथा भारत में कुछ प्रचलित है। लिखित महर्षि ने अपने भाई शंख के ही उद्यान से फल लेने को चोरी समझा और शुद्ध होने लिए राजा के वहाँ स्वयं जाकर राजा की अनिच्छा रहते हुए भी हस्तच्छेदन कराया। इस तरह जब अपनी न्यायोपाजित सामग्रियों में सन्तुष्ट रहने का अभ्यास था, परकीय या अन्याय-समागत वस्तुओं से घृणा एवं भय था, परोपकार करने में पुण्यवृद्धि एवं उत्सुकता तथा पर-पीड़न में घृणा और उद्वेग होता था, तब समाज तथा राष्ट्र की व्यवस्था स्वाभाविक ही थी। मिलने पर भी सभी भरसक यही प्रयत्न करते थे कि दूसरे की वस्तु न ली जाय। इसके विपरीत देने वालों को यही स्पृहा रहती थी कि किस प्रकार अपनी वस्तु परोपकार में लगे। घर-घर आतिथ्यसत्कार की प्रथा थी। वैश्वदेव के उपरांत द्वार पर खड़े होकर अतिथि पाने की प्रतीक्षा की जाती थी। उसके न मिलने पर खेद प्रकट किया जाता था। अग्निहोत्र में अग्नि भगवान् से अतिथि पाने की प्रार्थना की जाती है। क्या ही उदात्त भावना थी। बहुत उपवासों के बाद श्रीरन्तिदेव वैश्वदेवादि कृत्य करके थोड़ासा सत्तू खाने बैठे, तब पुल्कस आदि कई अतिथि आ पहुँचे। रंतिदेव सब कुछ उन्हें देकर जलपान करने लगे। इतने में ही एक श्वपच अपने कुत्तों के साथ आ पहुँचा और उसने अपनी क्षुधा पिपासा की व्यथा सुनायी। श्रीरन्तिदेव समस्त जलप्रदान करके भगवान् से प्रार्थना करने लगे कि हे, नाथ ! मैं स्वर्ग-अपवर्ग आदि कुछ भी नहीं चाहता हूँ केवल यही कि संतप्त, आर्त प्राणियों का कष्ट मुझे मिल जाय और सभी प्राणी सुखी हो जाँय-

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम्।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम्॥

यज्ञ-यागादि के व्याज से सभी सम्पत्तिशाली अपनी सम्पत्तियों का विभाग करके समता उत्पन्न कर देते थे। राम के यज्ञ में महाभाग वैदेही के हाथ में केवल सौमंगल्य सूत्र ही अविशिष्ट रह गया। यद्यपि वह समय साम्राज्यवाद का था, तथापि वर्तमान जनतंत्र या साम्यवाद उस शासन के सौन्दर्य की बराबरी कथमपि नहीं कर सकते। राजा अपने भुजबल से साम्राज्यपालन करते थे, उनका राष्ट्र निज भुजबल पर सुरक्षित था, सेना शोभा के लिए थी। उसके शैथिल्य होने पर सम्राट स्वतः युद्ध भूमि में अवतीर्ण होते थे, फिर भी बिना प्रजा के अनुमति के पुत्र तक को शासन भार नहीं दिया जा सकता था। प्रजा के लिए सम्राट अपने पुत्र, पत्नी तक का परित्याग कर सकते थे। सूर्य जैसे तिमिरश्मियों से पृथ्वी का रस ग्रहण करते हैं और वर्षाक्रतु में उसे भूमि को प्रदान कर देते हैं, वैसे ही प्रजा से कर तो लिया जाता था, परंतु उनका लक्ष्य केवल प्रजा का संरक्षण ही था।

परलोक में अभीष्ट फलप्रदान करने वाले संध्या, जपादि धर्म का अनुष्ठान तथा अनिष्टप्रद सुरापान और अमृत-परिवर्जन तो नास्तिकों को भी करना चाहिए। फल के संदेह में भी कृषि, व्यापारादि कार्य किये ही जाते हैं। इसी तरह परलोक के संदेह में भी धर्म करना ही चाहिए यदि परलोक में धर्म की अपेक्षा हुई, तब तो धर्म न करने वाला पछतायेगा तथा करनेवाला आनन्दित होगा और धर्म की कुछ अपेक्षा न हुई, तो भी करनेवाले को कोई हानि नहीं। फिर किसी दूर जंगली प्रदेश में जाना हो, तो भोजन-सामग्री और रक्षा के साधन शास्त्र-अस्त्रादि से सुसज्जित होकर ही जाना चाहिए। यदि वहाँ व्याघ्रादि का आक्रमण हुआ, तो वे काम आयेगे, नहीं तो पछताकर प्राण गवाना पड़ेगा। परंतु सामग्री रहने पर यदि आवश्यकता न भी हुई, तो भी कोई हानि नहीं। अनादि काल से आस्तिक-नास्तिक का शस्त्राथ चलता है, कभी नास्तिकों का और कभी आस्तिकों का पराजय होता है। कोई भी मत अत्यंत खण्डित या मण्डित नहीं हो सकता। सर्वत्र ही पराजय होने पर भी मति का ही दौर्बल्य समझ जाता है, न कि मत का। इसलिए समझदार नास्तिक को भी परमेश्वर और धर्म के विषय में संदेह तो हो ही सकता है, परन्तु ऐसे भी बहिर्मुख देश तथा समाज हैं, जहाँ परमेश्वर और धर्म की चर्चा तक नहीं, फिर संदेह कहाँ से हो सकता है ? संदेह से जिज्ञासा और जिज्ञासा से बोध भी अनिवार्य होता है। अतः ईश्वर और धर्म में संदेह तक अतिदुर्लभ है। इसलिए संदेह हो तो भी नास्तिकों को धर्म का अनुष्ठान करना परमावश्यक है।

कुछ लोग कहते हैं कि शास्त्रों एवं तदुक्त धर्मों को मानने वालों में कष्ट ही दिखाई देता है, शास्त्र न मानना ही श्रेष्ठ है। परंतु यह ठीक नहीं, जहाँ शास्त्र न मानने वालों की संख्या अधिक है, वहाँ शास्त्र मानने वालों को कष्ट है और जहाँ शास्त्र मानने वालों की संख्या अधिक है, वहाँ उसके न माननेवालों को भी दुःख है। परंतु बुद्धिमानों को तो यह सुनिश्चित है कि यथेष्ट चेष्टावाले बानर की अपेक्षा नर में यही विशेषता है कि वह शास्त्र मानता है और शास्त्रानुसार व्यवहार करता है। प्रमाणभूत शास्त्र के बिना जैसे लोग सुख के भाजन नहीं होते, वैसे ही प्रमाणभूत शास्त्र के बिना भी प्राणियों को सुख नहीं होता। कहा जाता है कि लोक में तो विपरीत ही देखने में आता है। सशस्त्र दुःखी और अशस्त्र सुखी हैं। परंतु यह बात बिना विचार से ही है। तृप्ति को ही सुख कहा जाता है, पशुओं में भोजन से और मनुष्यों में ज्ञान से तृप्ति होती है। ज्ञान शास्त्र से होता है। क्या ज्ञान सुख का प्रतिबंधक है ? कौन सा ऐसा सुखपात्र है जो प्रमाणविहीन हो? आरण्यक पशुओं को भी तो सुख के लिए क्षोत्र, चक्षु आदि प्रमाणों की अपेक्षा है, उनके वैगुण्य में वे भी दुःखी ही होते हैं। मनुष्य की यह विशेषता है कि उसमें पशुसाधारण प्रत्यक्ष तथा अनुमान प्रमाण है, साथ ही शास्त्रप्रमाण अधिक है। जैसे राजा का आश्रय लेकर निर्बल प्राणी भी प्रबल से प्रबल को जीत लेता है, वैसे ही धर्म और न्याय के सहारे प्राणी सम्राट को दबा सकता है। महास्वतन्त्र निजभुजबल से विश्वविजेता धर्म के ही भय से आत्मनियंत्रण करता है। खड्गादि अस्त्र-शस्त्र संपन्न करोड़ों शूरवीर निःशस्त्र स्वामी के भी अधिक्षेपों को सहते हैं। प्रधान कारण यहाँ स्वामिद्रोह का भय ही है। कहीं-कहीं अधर्म के प्राबल्य में भी प्राणी को अनंत साम्राज्य, समृद्धि तथा वैभव देखा जाता है। परंतु वहाँ पूर्व जन्म का ही धर्म और तप मूल समझना चाहिए। रावण का अद्भुत वैभव देखकर श्रीहनुमान जी ने कहा था कि यदि अधर्म बलवान न होता, तब तो यह रावण शस्त्रसहित सुरलोक का शासक होता-

यद्यधर्मो न बलवान् स्यादयं राक्षसेश्वरः।
स्यादयं सुरलोकस्य सशक्रस्यापि रक्षिता॥

दूसरे प्रसंग में रावण से ही श्रीहनुमान जी ने कहा था कि 'हे रावण ! पूर्व सुकृतों का फल तुमने पा लिया, अब अधर्म का भी फल शीघ्र ही पाओगे-

प्राप्तं धर्मफलं तावत् भवता नात्र संशयः।
फलमस्याप्यधर्मस्य क्षिप्रमेव प्रपत्स्यसे॥

इसलिए सिद्धान्त यही होना चाहिए कि जो कर्म धर्म से विरुद्ध हो उससे चाहे कितना भी बड़ा फल क्यों ना हो, बुद्धिमान पुरुष उसका सेवन कदापि करें-

धर्मादपेतं यत्कर्म यद्यपि स्यान्महाफलम्।
न तत्सेवेत मेधावी न हि तद्धितमुच्यते॥

धर्म से विद्या, रूप, धन, शौर्य, कुलीनता, आरोग्य, राज्य, स्वर्ग-मोक्ष सब कुछ मिलता है-

विद्या रूपं धनं शौर्यं कुलीनत्वमरोगता।
राज्यं स्वर्गश्च मोक्षश्च सर्वं धर्मादवाप्यते॥

ऐसे धर्म को छोड़कर क्या कोई राष्ट्र उन्नति कर सकता है?

English Translation

It is not possible to form a harmonious society and nation without establishing *dharma* (4) in it. Without beautiful women, gems and kingdoms, etc., a man becomes covetous or envious of such possessions belonging to others. Why should somebody else be well off with all the assets of comfort, kingdoms, etc. and why should we remain poor and miserable? It is only natural therefore that conflicts arise between a king and his subjects, between farmers and landowners, capitalists and workers. On the one hand, out of envy and zeal, workers and farmers organize themselves and through revolution they seek to annihilate capitalists, landlords and so on. On the other hand, the king and affluent people engage entirely in material enjoyment through the insane exploitation of the poor. One class does not want to cede anything and the other wants to take everything. Thus, the rich class, indulging in riches and material luxuries, and the poor class stricken with poverty, oppression and envy repudiate their duties, thereby threatening the harmony of the society and nation. *Śāstra* (5) and *dharma* are what induces the spirit of contentment and harmony among people. *Śāstra* and *dharma* once had such an effect that people considered others' women and wealth as evil. People had this belief that our own good and evil deeds, i.e. *karma* (6), were our only chief aid in times of prosperity or poverty, or in times of welfare or hardship. The cause of grief and poverty was once understood as determined by *karma*, for example being born as an animal or a bird or being blind, deaf or insane, was all believed to be determined by *karma*, and similarly *karma* was understood to be the cause of people's poverty or prosperity. All living beings experience joy and grief, prosperity and hardship only according to their *karma*. A man should be content with his own assets and material possessions. He should not covet others' riches and women. It is one thing to prosper by one's own efforts and another to deprive somebody of his possessions and make him like oneself. Therefore, although it is appropriate to generate fine material wealth from one's own noble endeavours, it is nevertheless always a sin to envy others' possessions and steal them. The sages used to live in the jungles and would produce goods with the help of a spade on the banks of rivers. From that produce they would give part to the king, even against the wishes of the king. Having committed a crime, the culprit used to go to the king himself to receive punishment and considered it as a purification of himself. The practice of atoning for one's sins oneself is still somewhat prevalent in *Bhārata* (7). The great sage *Likhit* (8) regarded taking fruit from his own brother *Shankh's* garden as an act of stealing and for his self-purification he went to the king and got his hands chopped off against the king's wish. Thus, when the practice prevailed of being content with one's own rightfully earned things, people used to resent and even fear the unjust acquisition of others' property; charity was performed eagerly and was seen as virtuous, whereas atrocities against others were despicable and dreadful; all this resulted in the natural order of society and the nation. Even when offered, people tried their best not to take others' goods. At the same time, the wealthy eagerly desired to offer their goods for others'

welfare in every way. Hospitality was a tradition in every household. After the Vaishwadeva (9) ceremony, a man would wait at the gate to receive guests. He would be remorseful if no guests came. The god Agni (10) is prayed to at the fire altar in order to receive guests as a blessing. What a noble sentiment that was! When after a long fast Srirantideva (11) sat to eat some roasted gram flour after making an offering to Vaishwadeva, members of the Pulkaśas caste then arrived (12). Rantideva offered them everything and himself started drinking water. At that moment came a Shwapac (13) with his dogs and told Rantideva his grief for hunger and thirst. Srirantideva gave all his water to him and began to pray to god: O Lord! I do not crave for heaven or mokṣa (14), etc., but I only wish to take on myself the sufferings of agonized and distressed beings so that everybody may be blessed with joy-

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम्।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम्॥

By the virtue of oblations and sacrifices, wealthy people used to divide their wealth and create parity. In her oblation for the lord Rama (15) the very prosperous Vaidehi (16) had only the very auspicious thread left in her hands. Although that was the time of Sāmrajyavad (17), the current form of governance, democracy or communism, cannot in any way match the beauty of that governance at all. The king would run the empire by his own prowess, the nation's safety was granted by his prowess alone and the army was but an embellishment. When the army became weary, the emperor himself would appear on the battlefield, but his son would not however be allowed to rule the kingdom without the people's permission. The emperor might abandon his son, even his wife, in order to serve his people. Just as the sun receives earth's water through its rays, and gives it back during the rainy season, similarly tax was collected from the people, but its only reason was to provide protection for them.

Even atheists should say evening prayers, chant mantras, perform dharma-rites, drink terrible potions and abstain from sweet nectar in order to receive the desired result in the next world, or heaven. Despite the uncertainty of the end result, farming, business, etc., goes ahead. Similarly, even when doubtful about the existence of the other world, a man should attend to his dharma, so that if dharma is expected in the next world, then the man who has not done his dharma rites will regret it and the one who has performed his dharma rites will be exhilarated; and if dharma is not expected, then still no harm is done to dharma believers. When a man has to go to a faraway wild land, he should go provided with adequate food supplies, and means and weapons for protection. If tigers invade, then such equipment will be of use, otherwise he will have to die, unfortunately. But even if the weapons carried are not used, there is no loss. From time immemorial, there has been debate between theists and atheists, leading sometimes to the defeat of the atheists and sometimes of the theists. No argument can be completely deficient or completely defensive. Even after being defeated everywhere, it is the argument that is considered weak, not the faith. Therefore a wise atheist can have doubts concerning the subjects of god and dharma, but there are also liberal countries and societies where there is no debate about god and dharma, and therefore, how is it possible to have room for doubt? Doubt leads to curiosity and curiosity certainly leads to knowledge. Hence, even doubt in god and dharma is very rare. So even in the case of doubt, it is important for atheists to perform the rites of dharma.

Some say that only suffering appears on the path following the śāstras and the dharmas mentioned therein, so it is best not to follow the śāstras. But this is not right: where large numbers of non-believers live, not following the śāstras causes trouble to śāstra-believers, whereas when there is a large number of śāstra-believers, there it becomes troublesome for non-believers in the śāstras. But the wise man definitely knows that it is an attribute of human beings as compared to the bountiful attempts of an ape that he can follow the śāstras and behave accordingly. Indeed, without the authoritative śāstras people will not even know contentment, and so, without the authoritative śāstras, it is not possible to achieve contentment. It is said that the opposite is witnessed in this world: śāstra-believers are miserable and non-believers are prosperous. But this opinion is formed without contemplation. Contentment is the only true joy: animals achieve

it by means of food and human beings through wisdom. The śāstras are the origins of wisdom. Does wisdom restrict contentment? Is it possible to achieve contentment without any evidence? Even wild animals have ears, eyes, etc. as evidence for achieving contentment, and in their deprivation they also grieve. It is a characteristic of human beings that they possess ordinary animal perceptions and thinking capabilities, but also have the testimony of the śāstras. For example, a weak man can overpower a more powerful one with the help of the king, likewise with the help of dharma and *nyaya* (Justice), one can even overcome the emperor. The great winner who can beat the world solely by his own prowess achieves self-control only from fear of dharma. Millions of knights laced in armour and weapons bear the scorn of their weaponless masters. The main reason is that they fear to protest against their masters. Sometimes we also witness endless empire, prosperity and wealth under the domination of *adharmā* (18). But that should be regarded as the result of good deeds or dharma in a previous birth. Seeing the wonderful splendour of Rāvaṇa (19), Srihanumanji (20) said that if *adharmā* had been powerful, then Ravana would have been the ruler of heaven with his Rakshshas (Demons)-

यद्यधर्मो न बलवान् स्यादयं राक्षसेश्वरः।
स्यादयं सुरलोकस्य सशक्रस्यापि रक्षिता।।

In another context Srihanumanji said to Ravana, 'O Ravana! You have attained the fruit of former good deeds and now soon you will get the fruit of your *adharmā*.'

प्राप्तं धर्मफलं तावत् भवता नात्र संशयः।
फलमस्याप्यधर्मस्य क्षिप्रमेव प्रपत्स्यसे।।

The principle must therefore be that whatever the act against dharma, no matter how much greater its fruit may be, wise men should always avoid it-

धर्मादपेतं यत्कर्म यद्यपि स्यान्महाफलम्।
न तत्सेवेत मेधावी न हि तद्धितमुच्यते।।

From dharma one gains everything: wisdom, beautiful appearance, chivalry, nobility, health, estates, heaven and mokṣa-

विद्या रूपं धनं शौर्यं कुलीनत्वमरोगता।
राज्यं स्वर्गश्च मोक्षश्च सर्वं धर्मादवाप्यते।।

Is it possible for any nation to develop without such dharma?

Notes:

(1) He established *Dharma Sangha* in 1940, a cultural association for the defence of traditional Hinduism against modern trends and, in 1941, a daily paper *Sanmarg* in Varanasi. Within the context of a newly independent India struggling to find its identity, he founded the political party *Ram Rajya Parishad* in 1948, a traditionalist Hindu party in which he brought politics and religion to a single platform for the welfare of the people. He published more than twenty works dealing with relations between politics and religion, most of which have not so far been translated.

(2) The text is taken from the book *Samgharṣa aur Śānti* (Vārāṇasī 2001, 4th Edition) (*Struggle and Peace*), a compilation of articles by Karpātrī, previously published in the daily paper *Sanmarg* or the periodical *Siddhanta*.

(3) *Puruṣa* means "person" or "man," and *artha* means "aim" or "goal" or "purpose," in addition to the narrower meaning of "means" or "wealth" (Koller 1968, 315). The four main human aims or *puruṣārthas* are dharma, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*.

(4) The term dharma is essentially untranslatable in any language, as it presents a very complex set of meanings and English words such as religion, law, morality or goodness cannot convey the deep meaning which this term has acquired during the development of Hindu thought (Suda 1970, 359). The word etymologically comes from the root *dhr-*, "to sustain" or "to uphold" (Klostermaier 1989, 47). Klaus K. Klostermaier explains that dharma has its roots in the structure of the cosmos, and encompasses the socioethical laws of humanity as well as prescribing functions and duties to the separate classes of society to maintain harmony and well-being in that society (ib., 47-50). In the Upanishads, dharma manifests itself as a supreme power, as a "Force of Forces" and "Power of Powers" (Rao 2007, 106).

- (5) The vast corpus of wisdom in Hinduism has its origin in the Vedas (Singh 2001: 100). The earliest record of Indian thought and culture is found in the Vedas, the scripture of Hinduism, which is not a single book but comprises a vast literature. The scriptures that illustrate the social aspect of dharma are: Nitiśāstra, Ayurveda, Rasayanśāstra, Gandharvaśāstra, Sangeet, Kaamśāstra (sciences of ethics, medicine, chemicals, musical subject matter, music, sex).
- (6) The doctrine of karma and rebirth has been given great importance in the various Indian religious traditions (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain) and Karpātrī explains, with the help of karma theory, all the suffering that results from every individual's wrongdoing, whether in this or in a previous life; all wrongdoing in this present life will be punished in either this or a future life. The author Whitley R. P. Kaufman argues in his article *Karma, Rebirth and the Problem of Evil* (2005) that the doctrine of karma and rebirth works like a theory of causation and provides Indian religion with a more emotionally and intellectually satisfying account of evil and suffering.
- (7) Another official name of India, derived from the ancient Hindu Puranas.
- (8) The story of the brothers Likhit and Shankh is told by Vyasa to Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata to highlight the importance of punishment (*daṇḍa*). King Sudyumna had to take the harsh decision of chopping off the hands of sage Likhit as punishment for taking fruits from his brother's garden without his permission. Karpātrī shows by this example that *daṇḍa*, along with dharma was also necessary to maintain order in society, but more important was self-acknowledgement that one has committed a mistake and deserves punishment for purification.
- (9) Vaishwadeva is a Vedic ceremony, at which cooked food is first offered to gods through the sacred fire and then an unknown guest is invited to the house to partake of it; only later does the householder eat the remnants. In section XCVII of the Mahābhārata, Bhishma explains to Yudhiṣṭhira the importance of this ceremony for a householder.
- (10) Vedic fire god.
- (11) Srirantidev, a very generous king, fasted for 48 days in order to save his kingdom and people from famine, and when he sat down to break his fast, there arrived members of low castes to whom the king gave his food and water and prayed to god to give him all the sufferings of these people.
- (12) Besides the usual four castes, there are also certain outcastes, such as the Chaṇḍālas, Pulkaśas and slaves (Viswanatha 2000, 128).
- (13) Member of an outcaste who light the fire to burn corpses at the crematorium.
- (14) Mokṣa is seen as the ultimate spiritual aim, the other three being dharma, artha and kāma, interpreted as material aims of life.
- (15) The seventh avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu.
- (16) Another name of the goddess Sita.
- (17) Reference to *Ramrajya*, Kingdom of Rama. The king's rule of his kingdom is called rājadharmā. In Karpātrī's text, although Ramrajya is perceived as the most ideal society, where the king's duty, rājadharmā was devoted only to the welfare of his people, the power to choose the king, or to overthrow him, is given to the people. Dharma is the main regulatory force in society and it comes before the king.
- (18) Opposite of dharma.
- (19) Prime antagonist in the Hindu epic Rāmāyaṇa.
- (20) Devotee of the Lord Rama.

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From Spectator to Dancer, Performance Metaphor and the Quest for Knowledge in India

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I am a spectator, so to speak, of the molecular whirlwind which men call individual life; I am conscious of an incessant metamorphosis, an irresistible movement of existence, which is going on within me – and this phenomenology of myself serves as a window opened upon the mystery of the world. I am, or rather my sensible consciousness is, concentrated upon this ideal standing-point, this invisible threshold, as it were, whence one hears the impetuous passage of time, rushing and foaming as it flows out into the changeless ocean of eternity.

Henri Frederic Amiel

Introduction

In general, Indian philosophy, viewed through the lens of performance metaphor, is recognized as a theory of the spectator open to a variety of subject positions vis-à-vis the empirical world, or, in other words, different positions between the centre and the periphery. In the field of Indian philosophy, the performance paradigm rests upon a conceptual system that sees the enacted form of knowledge as being both internally patterned in one's own experience as *jīva* and as part of a larger metaphysical entity, Brahman or Śiva. The Brāhmaṇical philosophies of Advaita Vedānta and Sāṃkhya account for the ironic distance that separates the spectator from the phenomenal world of experience. The Brāhmaṇical spectator (*sākṣin*) is the ascetic, solitary, immobile and desireless seer who puts into practice the theory of a purely passive spectator and its metaphysical unrelatedness to the phenomenal world. Here, an event of saving knowledge or liberation is equated with the isolation and authority of a spectator position, presupposing enstatic absorption. By contrast, Kashmiri Śaivism replaces spectator-consciousness with dancer-body-consciousness, whose agency is recognised as a performative modality of life-experience. For Kashmiri Śaivites, he who attains the coveted status of liberation-while-alive dances the world and this dance is conveyed by the image of Śiva-the-dancer. This, in turn, represents both enstatic and ecstatic forms of knowledge.



Naṭarāja, photo by Aleksandra Wenta

The Solitary Spectator as the Soteriological Goal in Indian Philosophy

The philosophical speculation of the Upaniṣads, the earliest texts of which were composed between 700 and 300 BCE, saw renewed interest in the theme of 'seeing'. For example, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.1.5), Yajñavalkya attributes truth-value to 'sight' when he tells Janaka: "Sight is 'being truth' – its quality of being truth (*satyata*) is shown by the fact that when they say to one who sees 'Have you seen' and he says 'I have seen' – that is truth" (1). This 'sight' has nothing to do with the outer sight of naïve realism expounded by Nyāya that makes sense-object-contact (*sannikarṣa*) central to perception. On the contrary, the Upaniṣads' special emphasis is on the supra-sensory character of 'seeing' which belongs to the self (*ātman*). The *ātman*, conceived of as indwelling intelligence, immortal, an inner controller beyond the cognizance of the senses, is the Seer. The *Katha Upaniṣad* (IV.2) makes an even stronger claim of this 'inner sight' located beyond the cognizance of the senses, when it declares:

It has no sound or touch, no appearance, taste, or smell; it is without beginning or end, undecaying and eternal. When a man perceives it, fixed and beyond the immense, he is freed from the jaws of death. Hidden in all beings, this self is not visibly displayed. Yet people of keen vision see him (*darśibhiḥ*), with eminent and sharp minds (*sukṣmaya buddhaya*). The self-existent One pierced the apertures outward, therefore, one looks out, and not into oneself. A certain wise men in search of immortality, turned his sight inward and saw the self within. (2)

It is generally agreed that the emergence of Upaniṣadic teachings marked the beginning of a concept of world-renouncer (3) (*saṃnyāsīn, parivrājaka, bhikṣu*), a spiritual ideal that presupposed turning away from the impurity of the material body and the senses to the inner purity of the heart where 'seeing' with the inner eye took place. This inner vision promoted by the Upaniṣads became the soteriological goal not only of Brāhmaṇism, but also of Indian philosophy as a whole, insofar as it laid the foundation for the 'epistemology of religious experience' (Forsthoefel 2002), firmly rooted in the self-realization of [in]sight. In the words of Bina Gupta (1995:28),

...in Indian philosophy the final goal of liberation is articulated on the model of visual perception rather than on a process of thinking or reflection. Thinking or thought is subordinated as a means to the end of perception.

Even though this statement surely applies to Indian philosophy as a whole, nevertheless, nowhere does inward perception play so central a role in the soteriological metaphysics as in the Advaita Vedānta promulgated primarily by Śaṅkara (8th century), its greatest exponent. It was in the Advaita Vedānta (the system typically regarded as the most direct continuation of Upaniṣadic thought) that still nascent ideas concerning 'inner seeing' recorded in the Upaniṣads were developed as the key theoretical concept of 'witness' or 'observer' (*śākṣīn*). For classical Advaita Vedānta – a form of idealist monism – the supreme principle, *brahman/ātman* (4), is defined as existence, pure consciousness and bliss. *Brahman/ātman* is eternal, one without any second, which consequently transcends the empirical level without undergoing any change, even though it is non-different from the embodied individual (*jīva*). *Brahman/ātman* is further characterized as pure and immobile, as it exists for and in itself, free from any direct involvement or relationship with the empirical level of experience. The ontological status of sheer disengagement from the world of ignorance (*avidyā*) and false appearances (*māyā*) makes *brahman/ātman* a non-agent and a non-experiencer, a mere witness. *Brahman/ātman*'s presence is thus attested by the fact that it possesses the characteristic of all-witness (*sarvasākṣīn*), which is a 'form reflexivity, that is neutral to the event occurrence' (5). In the words of Śaṅkara,

The seer of the seeing is actually the seeing [itself]; it perpetually sees the seeing, for never is seeing not seen by the seer. Here the seeing of the seer must be perpetual. If the seeing of the seer were transitory, then the seeing which is [the object]seen, might sometimes not be seen; just as something like a pot would not [always] be [seen]by transitory vision. But the seer of the seeing never ceases to see the seeing like that... (6)

As Bina Gupta explains, 'etymologically "*sākṣīn*" refers to a witness in the sense of the phenomenologically pure observer, the observer who observes without bringing anything to the observation. It signifies seeing without being the agent of the act under consideration. Its interests are not involved in what occurs. It signifies the self, which though not itself involved in the cognitive process, functions as a disinterested, uninvolved onlooker or witness-consciousness' (7). The soteriological goal of *jīva* is to attain the status of a pure observer who is characterized by 'unconditioned reflexivity that remains at the end of stripping away of contingent individuation' (8). It takes place by cancelling epistemic failure (*avidyā*). Central to this account is the concept of "disinterested witness" (Gupta), which is explicated in terms of the non-agency of the self, assuming the form of a passive spectator. In the Advaita Vedānta, the notion of 'agency' is confined to the manner in which the embodied individual (*jīva*) engages in sensory experience, prompting the arousal of desire and attachment that leads to suffering (*duḥkha*). However, this suffering is not presupposed in the ontological status of the embodied individual, which undermines its value as a person (for according to the monistic view of Advaita Vedānta there is no ontological difference between *jīva* and *brahman/ātman*), but in the epistemic failure that causes erroneous identification of the *jīva* with the psychophysical mind-body apparatus. Due to this epistemic failure, the *jīva* identifies itself with contingent features of individuated experiences that exist in conformity with the primary axiom of 'agency'. On account of being an agent the *jīva* is held in bondage and ignorance. Śaṅkara's 'saving knowledge' of a spectator is clearly located outside the body and the senses, in the realm of solitary, disembodied awareness (*aśārīracit*), static and desireless. The idea of liberation promoted here in fact replaces the agency pertaining to the embodied individual (*jīva*) with the non-agency of the true self (*brahman/ātman*) assuming the form of a static witness.

'Dancer' as *Jīvanmukta*: An Example of Kashmir Śaivism

By contrast, tantric traditions, such as so-called Kashmiri Śaivism, replace spectator-consciousness with dancer-body-consciousness, whose agency as a performative modality of life-experience is recognized. For Kashmiri Śaivites, one attains the coveted status of liberation-while-living dances the world and this dance is conveyed by the image of Śiva-the-dancer. The celebrated passage of the *Śivasūtras* says:

The Self is the Dancer.
 The stage (which is the body) is the inner Self.
 The senses are the spectators (of his dancing).
 The cognition (of such a yogī) is pure.
 Therefore, the State of Being Totally Free (*svatantrabhāva*) is achieved.
 As he can manifest Freedom in his own body, so can he elsewhere. (9)

By applying the 'dance metaphor' to refer to the highest degree of spiritual fulfilment, Kashmiri Śaivites pass beyond the Self-body dichotomy, as well as the antonyms of the transcendent and the immanent. Thus, unlike earlier traditions that stressed liberation at the expense of the body, Kashmiri Śaivism attempts to override the stereotype of world-denial and understand liberation as life and as the process of living, which is of an essentially aesthetic nature. The 'dance metaphor' perfectly supports this new model of understanding, for it epitomizes the centrality of the playful Self existing in intricate unity with the aesthetic body. The principle strength of the Kashmiri Śaiva argument is the idea that the body is ontologically identical with the Self. This argument is reinforced by Kṣemarāja (11th century) who in his commentary (*vimarśinī*) on the verses of the *Śivasūtras* says: "the place where the Self-the Dancer takes delight with the intention of performing the world-dance is the stage [...]. The stage which consists of subtle and gross body is the inner Self. Having planted his feet on that stage of the inner Self, this Dancer (the Self) displays the world-dance by means of the active movements of his sense-organs" (10). What we have here is the analogy between the Dancer and the *jīvanmukta* founded on the adaptation of Bharata's *rasa* theory as expounded in his *Naṭyaśāstra*. Bharata distinguished between ordinary, personal emotive states (*bhāvas*) and universalized, transpersonal aesthetic emotions (*rasas*). *Rasa* literally 'flavour', 'savour', 'liquid essence', 'sentiment' is a technical term in aesthetic theory (11), depicting transpersonal aesthetic emotion, but the Kashmiri Śaiva masters often adopt aesthetic terminology to describe spiritual experience (12). *Rasa* is one of these aesthetic terms most frequently used to depict the liquid essence of pure consciousness (*cid-rasa*), savoured by a *jīvanmukta*. In the case of an experienced dancer, *rasa* is the outcome of developed artistic skills through which he projects a specific kind of transpersonal emotion or the essence of feelings related to particular situations he creates (13). In the case of a *jīvanmukta*, the experience of *rasa* is brought out in the spiritual experience from which he extracts the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) of each emotive state (*bhāva*) he encounters. This capacity to extract the *rasa* is connected with the ability to assume every state of being. In addition, the ability to extract *rasa* is strictly linked to the proclivities of the senses. It is again the psycho-physical mind-body complex inhabited by the sensory faculties that becomes the only warrant of aesthetic-cum-religious experience. Thus, in the commentary on the stanza: "the senses are the spectators (of his dancing)," Kṣemarāja explains, thus: the senses, like the eye, etc. are the spectators, for they actively view the cosmic dance of the Self, savouring aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) of the pure consciousness that pours through the vision of universal oneness. They provide *jīvanmukta* with the fullness of aesthetic wonder (*camatkāra*) (14) in which the sense of difference has disappeared." (15)

Kashmiri Śaivism integrates the theory of *rasa* into a systematic account of embodied liberation (*jīvanmuktī*), characterized as the ultimate form of empowerment (*parasiddhi*). In doing so, Kashmiri Śaiva masters argue that embodied liberation depends on the process of aesthetic transformation in which the entire psycho-physical mind-body complex becomes metaphorically transformed into fundamental components of dance-performance: Self becomes the Dancer, the body converts into the stage, and the senses turn into the spectators. Moreover, all these components partake as fully as possible in bringing about the aesthetic experience (*rasa*) characterized by wonder. The *jīvanmukta* dances on the stage of his own body savouring aesthetic



Naṭarāja, photo by Aleksandra Wenta

emotions (*rasa*) through the expanded fund of his own senses. This total transformation of the ordinary body into its aesthetic equivalent results in total freedom, which is nothing else but realization of one's own body as the cosmic body. Liberation in Kashmiri Śaivism, then, can be seen as recognition of one's own ordinary, karmic body as the aesthetic body of the Dancer that involves expanding one's own body to include the whole universe. For such a *yogī*, everything appears as Śiva's play, according to the stanza of the *Spandakarikā*: 'he who has this realization (of his identity with the whole universe), being constantly united with the Divine, views the entire world as the play (*krīḍā*) of the Self identical with Śiva, and is liberated while alive' (16).

In a highly original formulation of embodied liberation, Kashmiri Śaivites incorporated the principle of enjoyment (*bhoga*) to constitute the essence of freedom (17). It was, in part, an effort to lend conceptual specificity to the experiential dimension of liberation advocating blissful adoration of life engaging the body. As a result, enjoyment came to be exalted as concomitant with spiritual perfection, and sensual pleasure – though filtered through aesthetic discourse of *rasa* theory – was inexorably equated with religious experience.

Conclusion

Reflecting on systems of Indian religio-philosophical speculation vis-à-vis Kashmiri Śaivism and pursuing this reflection within the conceptual framework that appropriates the "performance metaphor", we may notice two different directions in which such contemplation takes us, that of the spectator and that of the dancer. These two paths, which can be further classified as Brāhmaṇical (adhering to Vedic revelation) and non-Brāhmaṇical (rejecting the authority of the Vedas) hardly ever intersect and therefore conform to different epistemological and ontological conditions. The 'spectator' and the 'dancer' thus come to represent competing paradigms of the Indian quest for knowledge. With regard to the 'spectator', Indian tradition classifies two different adaptations of 'seeing'. The first, represented by the philosophical schools of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta, locates the act of bearing witness in the context of solitary disengagement from the world, as contemplative en-stasis, as non-agential passivity, and finally as the desirelessness of the disinterested spectator (*sākṣin*), founded on a wider Brāhmaṇical paradigm of restraint and ascetic denial. At the other end of the spectrum is the tantric tradition of Kashmir Śaivism that brings into vivid focus an acute critique of the Brāhmaṇical concept of the passive spectator and puts forward a more dynamic model of the 'dancer' whose conceptualization is largely influenced by aesthetic theories

Notes:

- (1) Cf. Witz, G. Klaus, *The Supreme Wisdom of the Upanisads*, p. 230.
- (2) *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4.2., tr. P. Olivelle
- (3) Black, Brian, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, SUNY Press, New York 2007, p.95.
- (4) In the Advaita Vedānta, *brahman* is the supreme reality, the universal consciousness-spirit, while *ātman* is the pure self, identical with *brahman*.
- (5) Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, *Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought*, London: Palgrave 2001, p.166.
- (6) Śaṅkara, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣadbhāṣya* I.4.10, Anandashrama Sanskrit Series, Poona 1914 I.4.10, pp.161-6, quoted in Ram Prasad 2001:171.
- (7) Gupta, Bina, *The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology*, p.4.
- (8) Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, *Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought*, London: Palgrave 2001, p.168.
- (9) Singh, *Śivasūtras*, pp. 152-161.
- (10) Singh, *Śivasūtras*, p.155.
- (11) Ruth Katz; Arvind Sharma, 'The Aesthetics of Abhinavagupta', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 17 (3): 259-265, 1977.
- (12) For relations between aesthetic savouring (*rasāsvāda*) and mystical experience (*brahmāsvāda*), see Gerow E, *Indian Poetics*, Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977.
- (13) Bhāskara's argument that locates the experience of *rasa* in the dancer seems to follow the main thesis of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa (9th century) who was the first commentator on Bharata's *Naṭyaśāstra*. According to Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa "*rasa* is located in both the original character (*anukārya*) and also in the performer (*anukartarī*), due to the power of congruous connection (*anusandhāna*)". Due to *anusandhāna* the performer becomes emotionally identified with the role. This argument is against Abhinavagupta's contention arguing that the performer is too involved in imitating the character to have the experience of *rasa*. According to Abhinavagupta, *rasa* requires the proper "artistic distance" that is possible only for the spectator. Cf. Haberman L. David, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.23-4.
- (14) *Rasa* and *camatkāra* are closely related. These two technical terms borrowed from Indian aesthetics are the warp and woof of Kashmiri Śaiva spiritual experience. The term *camatkāra* has a much more extensive application in Kashmiri Śaiva metaphysics where it

becomes synonymous with the aestheticism of the spiritual experience conveyed by terms such as: enjoyment (*nirveśa*), relish (*rasanā*), taste (*āsvāda*), eating (*bhoga*), completion (*samāpatti*), rest (*laya*), repose (*viśrānti*).

(15) *Śivasūtras* with Kṣemarāja's commentary, Singh, p. 157.

(16) *Spandakarikā*, 2.2. Singh, p. 119.

(17) According to the view of the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, quoted by Maheśvarānanda in his *Mahārthamañjarī*, a direct experience of fusion of both enjoyment (*bhoga*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) is the condition of liberation while living. Stanza 52.

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On the Subtle Body in Neoplatonism

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A subtle body located between the material body of flesh and the immaterial soul is an idea found in many traditions. In the Far East it plays a decisive role in various practices ranging from medicine and sexuality to spirituality and yoga (1), but is also found in both Islamic and Jewish mysticism. In the Western tradition, the idea of the subtle body is found particularly in Neoplatonism, in the Platonism of the Renaissance and in the Cambridge Platonists, as well as in Gnostic, hermetic, alchemical and esoteric traditions. Within the framework of Christianity, the subtle body appears in the context of how resurrection is to be conceived (2). If we regard this spectrum, we get the impression that the subtle body – as G. R. S. Mead very properly remarked – is “one of the most persistent persuasions of mankind in all ages and climes” (3) and has an exceptional potential for intercultural and comparative research.

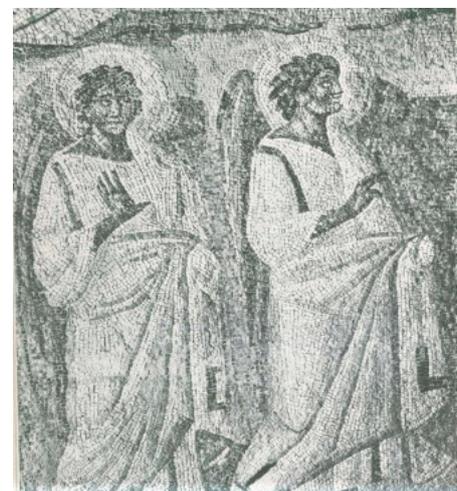
The English term “subtle body” was coined in modern times. It can be traced back to a specific lexical option for *sūkṣmaśarīra* – an important concept in the Hindu tradition – within the framework of the Theosophical Society’s translations of Sanskrit texts (4). In the terminology of Neoplatonic thought, the terms *ochema* (that is, *vehiculum*, soul-carriage) or *pneuma* (that is, *spiritus*, life-breath) are used in the sense of subtle body, since they mean the form that clothes the soul as it descends through the heavenly spheres before becoming incarnate in a material body. Another term used to speak of this subtle body is ‘astral body’, in which the composition of this body from substances of the planetary sphere is taken for granted. What role is ascribed to this body by Neoplatonic thinkers and what are the sources of such ideas? We shall now take a closer look at this question.

In the first place, it is convenient to distinguish six functions of the subtle body:

1. From an ontological perspective, it is a mediation between the immaterial soul and the material body, and the descent of the soul through the spheres assumes a process of individualization.
2. From an epistemological perspective, it mostly appears as bearer of the faculty of imagination and perception.
3. From an eschatological and soteriological perspective, it acts as a medium to atone for wrongdoings and be able to return to the heavenly abode.
4. From a topological perspective, it enables movement of the soul within the cosmos and its emplacement beyond this universe after death.
5. From a theurgic point of view, it is the object of ritual practices aiming at self-purification.
6. Within the context of Neoplatonic demonology, it has a certain relevance due to the idea that such cosmic entities are also endowed with subtle features.

The philosophical foundations in Plato and Aristotle, on which later notions of the subtle body are based, are easily recognizable.

1. Plato’s use of the term *ochema* in his dialogues *Timeaus* (41e-2, 44e-2, 69c-7), *Phaedrus* (247b-2), *Phaedo* (113d-5), *Epinomis* (986b-5, a text long attributed to him) and *Laws* (898e-899a), which points to speculations on the existence of a soul-body made of light or air.
2. Aristotle’s definition of *pneuma* as an entity with a structure presenting a certain analogy with cosmic elements (*De Generatione Animalium*, 736b-37, 38). It is from a combination of these two notions – the Platonic *ochema* and the Aristotelian *pneuma* – that later doctrines on the subtle body were built. This should not however lead us to the conclusion that all the resulting ideas about the subtle body were the fruit of a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian exegesis. The fact that many doctrines of the subtle body in late antiquity were elaborated in the form of commentaries does not mean that the inspiration of Neoplatonic thinkers (whose took the classical authorities as their point of departure) has to be reduced



Source: Alfons Rosenberg, Engel und Dämonen. Gestaltwandlung eines Urbildes, München 1986, p. 54.

to an empty form of scholasticism. Their philosophical positions certainly cannot be fully explained by relating them exclusively to the heritage of traditional (classical) authorities. Even within the commentary tradition, the question of the relationship between 'tradition', 'reason' and 'experience' (5) should be thoroughly considered. This is even more ostensible in the case of Neoplatonic authors following Plotinus with regard to the axis of 'experience', mainly because in that case many religious and cultic elements ended up permeating the doctrinal and philosophical field. For this reason we must say that reconstructing the rise of the notion of the subtle body in the philosophical context of the Old Academy is one matter; yet another is to explain its success in Neoplatonic thought after Plotinus. Dealing with this subject exclusively on the basis of the history of ideas most probably risks excluding its experiential basis, that is, the close relationship between doctrine and life. Not by chance did Neoplatonic representations of the subtle body appear primarily in the religion of late antiquity, more precisely in the context of theurgy. The aim of theurgic practices was purification of the soul-body as a means of attaining visions of gods and the ascent of the soul to the higher spheres of heaven (6). In Plotinus such practices were not really essential, and his disciple Porphyry insisted on the primacy of philosophy over theurgy. Iamblichus however thought otherwise on this subject (7). In his opinion theurgy was the exclusive means of separating the soul from the body and of ensuring its ascension. Where do such ideas come from? Do they come mainly from philosophical discourse, from specific exegesis of authoritative texts, or from religious experience related to ritual practice? Do they have their place in the history of philosophy, or rather in the history of religion and cult? There is no doubt that they are relevant in the context of religious history, for example, if we consider the motif of the ascent and descent of the soul through the planetary spheres. It is also the product of various instances of transmission (8) and has its place in the world of archaic religions (for example in the context of Shamanism) and also in Abrahamic monotheism (for example in the rapture of Enoch and Elijah or in Mohammed's ascent to Heaven). In ancient philosophy this kind of conception is held mostly by followers of Plato, and it plays a role in different religious and philosophical trends of late antiquity, for example in the Chaldean Oracles, Gnosticism (*Pistis Sophia*), the Mysteries (of Mithras and Isis), in Hermeticism (*Poimandres*, *Panaretos*) and Alchemy (*Zosimos*). It is very difficult to separate the aforementioned world-visions of that period of history, since they develop (in terms of time) parallel to each other and (in terms of content) with reciprocal influences. This is also why the manifold versions of the doctrine of the subtle body prove to be a very fruitful terrain even from the perspective of history of religions and were widely discussed in the context of the *topoi* of heavenly ascent. We should also bear in mind that the motif of 'stripping off the garments' (*periblēmata*) (9) i.e. the different qualities relating to the body during its ascent through the celestial spheres, is closely connected with the context of the Mysteries, in which ritual correspondences may have occurred.



Source: Santa Maria Maggiore a Roma, edited by Carlo Pietrangeli, Firenze 1988, p. 13.

It becomes clear that the close relationship between the different conceptions of the subtle body and the complex interaction of religion and rite is a kind of red thread that enables us to grasp the whole scope of the question. Any detailed exposition will include different dimensions such as hermeneutics, religious experience and ritual practice. This can be clearly seen in Iamblichus' work *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*, a wide-scale justification of the soteriological dimension of theurgic practices. Even when Iamblichus attempts to express it in a (rationally elaborated) philosophical discourse, the effectiveness of theurgy for him is something that escapes all philosophical description or understanding and must therefore be carried out or experienced (10). In the third book, he deals thoroughly with different forms of divination and provides extensive descriptions of divine possession – defined as 'illumination' in the literal sense of the word:

“But this education of light illuminates with divine light the ethereal and luciform vehicle with which the soul is surrounded, from which divine visions occupy our phantastic power, these visions being excited by the will of the Gods [...] The attentive power, therefore, and the dianoia of the soul, are conscious of what is effected, since the divine light does not come into contact with these; but the phantastic part is divinely inspired, because it is not excited to the modes of imagination by itself, but by the Gods, the phantasy being then entirely changed from human custom”. (11)

This passage combines the main aspects of Iamblichus’ theory of inspiration. It is the etheric body of light enveloping the soul – which is the soul’s faculty of imagination – that plays a decisive role in ‘illumination’. In general terms, an epiphany is for Iamblichus the luminous self-manifestation of a divine entity in the receptacle of the human imagination. The miraculous aspect of the epiphanic event revolves around ‘taking shape’, since that which adopts a form is something beyond all appearances. This coming-to-presentation has its location in the subtle body, since the imaginary power of the latter enables a transformation of intelligible gods into images, thus making them accessible in the realm of appearances. In this respect, Olympiodorus writes, “It is the imagination that clothes incorporeal realities in bodies” (12). And since the gods manifest themselves only according to the qualifications [*epitêdeiotês*] of the one receiving them, their different appearances refer to the degree of perfection of the theurgic practitioner as mirrored in his subtle body.

Similar elements are found in Proclus and Hermias of Alexandria. Both authors speak about the experience of daemonic or divine appearances, and the question arises as to how the gods can appear (even personified) if they are at the same time immutable in the Platonic sense of the word. For Proclus this is no exclusive contradiction, since the gods cast forth images in order to manifest themselves in the sphere of becoming. The ‘visions’ [theamata] can thus be said to depend both on the gods and on the human beings perceiving them. Proclus speaks quite explicitly of ‘seeing’ [horan], but it is indeed a special kind of vision (as confirmed by his remark concerning the ‘body of light’) of which not all human beings are capable. In fact, the qualified are those whose ‘body of light’ (as the organ of divine manifestation) is in good condition, and the kind of perception related to the divine vision seems to correspond to the faculty of imagination (13). It is this kind of perception to which Hermias also bears witness in his commentary on *Phaedrus*:

When we have these daemonic and divine visions, we do not hear with our sensible ears, nor do we see with our sensory organs of the face and the eyes, but, since there are more originary, more exemplary and more purified perceptions in the spirit, we hear and see the divine manifestations with our pneumatic organs. (14)

What conclusion can we draw from what we have examined so far? Basically, that the subtle body for Neoplatonic thinkers finds its place in the descriptions and philosophical explanations of religious experiences or epiphanies, thus appearing as the vehicle of imagination, since imagination is the faculty that enables us to establish contact with the gods. With regard to the experiential foundation of this idea, it is worth mentioning the parallels G. Shaw established with Eastern doctrines:

“The Neoplatonic doctrine of the imaginal body and its role in the theurgic ascent exemplifies what Mircea Eliade has called a ‘mystical physiology’. In his well known study on yoga Eliade explains that the descriptions of such ‘physiologies’ are not conceptualizations, but ‘images expressing transmundane experiences’. It is in this sense that Iamblichus’ doctrine of the soul’s pneumatic or aethereal body must be understood, for he used physiological terms to describe experiences that transcend the physical realm.” (15)

This last quotation inaugurates another dimension of our inquiry, since there are surprising correspondences between the Neoplatonic doctrines of *ochema* and *pneuma* and the doctrine of the subtle body in the Arabic and Persian traditions, especially bearing in mind the relevance ascribed to the sphere of the so-called ‘imaginal’. It was Henry Corbin who undertook a thorough research into the notion of a *mundus imaginalis* (clearly present in Persian philosophers and mystics) as a middle-realm between the sensible and the intelligible. According to him, the *mundus imaginalis* is actually the very

place of religious experience and its manifold elements (theophanies, visions, eschatological events, etc.), as eminently described in books like *Corps spirituel et Terre céleste: de l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran shī'ite* (1979) and *L'homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (1971). The former contains a number of source texts from the pre-Islamic and Islamic period dealing with the question of the subtle dimension of the body. The latter was defined by Corbin himself as the 'physiology of the light-man' and directly concerns the 'organ' of the subtle body. We may conclude by saying that Corbin clearly shows how a phenomenology of mysticism and visions can be traced back to a metaphysical basis founded in the subtle physiology we have referred to throughout this essay.

Notes:

- (1) A significant example is S. Syman's *Story of Yoga in America*, published under the title *The Subtle Body* (New York 2010).
- (2) St Paul (cf. *Corinthians* 15, 42-44) refers to a 'pneumatic body'. At the same time the identity between the earthly and the resurrected body is explained in terms of the relationship between seed and plant. It should be noticed that Paul Deussen uses the same allegory in his *Philosophie der Upanishad's* (Leipzig 1922, p. 239) in order to illustrate the doctrine of the subtle body in Vedānta.
- (3) G. R. S. Mead, *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition*, London 1919, p. 1. This opinion is shared in the collective volume edited by G. Samuel and J. Johnston, entitled *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West. Between mind and body* (London/New York 2013).
- (4) Cf. G. Samuel/J. Johnston, *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West*, p. 2. It is not surprising that the idea of the subtle body has always aroused particular interest in theosophical circles, and that the only attempt to use this notion in a broader transcultural investigation was carried out by a Theosophist: J. J. Poortman, who wrote the monumental book *Ochēma* (original in Danish, 1954), known in English as *Vehicles of Consciousness. The Concept of Hylic Pluralism*, 1978.
- (5) This point is closely related to A. H. Armstrong's question concerning Plotinus in his essay "Tradition, Reason and Experience in the Thought of Plotinus", in: *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, Roma 1976, pp. 171-194.
- (6) In his *De civitate Dei* (X, 9 and 27) Augustine characterized theurgy – after the fashion of Porphyry – as a purification of the 'spiritual' (pneumatic) part of the soul enabling the individual to "perceive spirits and angels and have vision of gods". In this respect wrote Psellus (*Commentarius*, 1132a): "The Chaldeans say that we cannot be borne upwards towards god, unless we strengthen the vehicle of the soul by material sacraments".
- (7) Cf. *De mysteriis*, II-11, and also Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, I-25.
- (8) Cf. F. Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman paganism*, New Haven 1922, pp. 91-109, pp. 148-169, pp. 206-213; C. Colpe, "Die «Himmelsreise der Seele» als philosophie- und religionsgeschichtliches Problem", in: *Festschrift für J. Klein zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by E. Fries, Göttingen 1967, pp. 85-104. See also I. P. Culianu, *Psychanodia I: a survey of the evidence concerning the ascension of the soul and its relevance*, Leiden 1983.
- (9) Cf. Iamblichus, *De anima*, 38 / 385; *Corpus Hermeticum*, X 17; Porphyrius, *De Abstinencia*, 2, 46; Proclus, *Elementa theologiae*, 209; Marsilio Ficino, *De amore*, VI, 4.
- (10) Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, III-6; III-18; V-21.
- (11) *De mysteriis*, III-14.
- (12) In *Platonis Phaedonem*, 6-2.
- (13) Cf. Procli *Commentarium in Platonis Rem Publicam*, IV-39, 3-10; Procli *Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, III-286, 20-29.
- (14) In *Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, 69. Cf. also Procli *Commentarium in Platonis Alcibiadem*, 80, 4-13.
- (15) G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, Pennsylvania 1995, 222. Cf. also I. P. Culianu, *Eros und Magie in der Renaissance*, Frankfurt/M. 2001, 172 and 195.

A Talk with Alain Daniélou: Shiva-Dionysos Among Us



Alain Daniélou at work, photo by Jacques Cloarec.

The following interview, conducted by Arnaud d'Apremont, appeared for the first time in the magazine *Le Monde Inconnu*, N° 118, July-August 1990 (pp.10-15) under the French title "Rencontre avec Alain Daniélou: Shiva-Dionysos parmi nous". It was republished in the French volume *Approche de l'Hindouisme* in 2007 with some minor changes under the title Shiva, Dionysos, Mithra.

It is interesting to see a text written in 1990 anticipating certain social and religious processes and events that without a doubt have become a problem over the past twenty-five years. While Alain Daniélou's style is never devoid of a certain taste for polemic and his point of view should in many ways be re-adjusted to the present-day context, both content and message are surprisingly instructive, especially his emphasis on respect for creation, the need to perceive the inner aspect of things and the possibility of regaining our experience of the sacred beyond any abstruse search for gurus or tendency towards sectarian initiation – something that is a sign of weak personality rather than of progress in the spiritual life. The reader may decide which aspects of the interview can serve as an orientation for the most urgent cultural problems of our century.

The present text has been translated by Adrián Navigante, and revised by Ken Hurry.

Alain Daniélou could have devoted his life to his natal Brittany, but it was India that appealed to him. "Shiva Sharan" (such was his Hindu name) spent thirty years in that country, living among Indians on the banks of the Ganges in Benares. He has done his utmost to make Indian thought known in the West. Living nowadays in Italy, he occasionally comes to Paris, where we interviewed him.

– Why did you leave India, a country so dear to you, which even now remains the focus of your activities?

AD: I would say that it was India that left me when it fell into the hands of people who tried to reject their own tradition. It became clear to me that I had nothing else to do there, that it was time to leave the country. Nehru himself told me "You are interested in everything we want to destroy".

– Didn't you become *persona non grata* there anyway?

AD: No. I could have returned for short sojourns, but what is the point of doing that? When I lived in Benares, I led the life of a Hindu, I was immersed in that atmosphere. To what purpose should I see that country again from the room of a Hilton or Sheraton hotel, or even become a Hindu once more, just for fifteen days or so?

– It is said that the intelligence service agent who tailed you in India was the same one who took charge of Gurdjieff's case.

AD: Exactly, right after she (the service agent was a woman) finished with Gurdjieff she was told to tail me. This woman was

responsible for Gurdjieff being barred from Great Britain, but in my case she saved me from prison. After she was given the task of tailing me, a relationship gradually grew up between us. With friends of mine, we had fun removing letters from her name. She was called Juliette, so once it was Jules, another time lette, or even Uliet. She even helped me during the Second World War. At that time French nationals were regarded as spies, so the British would have sent me to a concentration camp – of course, a very civilized one, but this woman avoided that.

– You left the riverbanks of the Ganges more than three decades ago. Today you live in Rome, and Italy is also the focus of your last book, *Les contes du labyrinthe*. The title of your biography was *The Way to the Labyrinth*. Do you have the impression that you somehow got lost in it? Or have you found a way out of that Labyrinth?

AD: Quite the contrary. I am right inside it. After looking for a home in Italy, I found out that the place of my choice was called from time immemorial ‘the Labyrinth’. It was a halt where Etruscan pilgrims stopped on their way to the temple of Praeneste dedicated to the goddess, whose priestess was the sibyl Vegoia.

– In your work, especially in your last book in which you express yourself most freely, you glorify ‘pleasure’ as the sole momentum that brings us close to the divine. Elsewhere, in *Les contes du labyrinthe*, you refer to artwork as a means of approaching the gods. After all, isn’t aestheticism rather than pleasure the real impetus to the divine?

AD: Aren’t pleasure and aestheticism two sides of the same coin? In the Indian texts, it says that aestheticism gives pleasure to the eye. There are other feelings as well. Ultimately, perception of the divine seems to me a profound sensation and experience of the supernatural.

– In *Les contes du labyrinthe* you are very critical towards monotheism and its view of creation. Does the problem lie in the fact that the monotheistic God is not manifest whereas a god should always be manifest?

AD: Monotheistic religions worship a vague and unreal entity. Instead of perceiving the multiplicity of worlds, they reduce the world to a kind of company director without employees. This simplification leads to the absurdity of amalgamating a human image with an unknowable principle. That is a remarkable muddle. For the rest, it is not the god’s manifestation that matters, but his representation made by man in order to apprehend that divine power.

– You advocate a tolerant and non-proselytizing religion. Don’t you in any way fear you may shock members of these so-called monotheistic religions?

AD: I do shock them, without a doubt, but I can’t stop doing it, because I speak about what I know. Nowadays we are witnessing a very dangerous time when the pyres of the inquisition are being lighted once more. People are burned because of their opinions. On my own rather humble level, I try to express the conception of life that I learned in India. This leads me to say, for example, that the gods are an unquestionable reality. It suffices to look for them in order to find them.

– What exactly would you advise people seeking that kind of thing?

AD: Try to feel the inner life of things. If you start realising that there are forces behind plants, climates, animals and minerals, you will discover that a kind of consciousness orders all things, and you may finally even become acquainted with it. In fact, it is not about ‘consuming’ the object through your five senses, but rather about paying attention to how it is made. In order to find the gods, you have to worship them through their creations, their images and their symbols. One of the first steps is without a doubt going into a deep forest to revitalize and get closer to the realities of nature. Those who do that today are few and far between. Ecology, which has become a main trend today, might be a good start, although it doesn’t produce the expected effects because its aim is not research into the reality of the world, but to profit from it.

– When you speak of deep forests, do you have any specific sacred places in mind that you can recommend?

AD: It is a matter of sensitivity. A sacred place is one where you perceive a certain presence and where you feel good. Some special places are sacred due to particular manifestations there. It is remarkable that a sacred place preserves its character from one religion to another. Most of them are quite well-known, perhaps even too well-known...

– Do you mean that if someone who is badly or not at all prepared for such an experience visits that kind of place, they get desacralised just like religious texts in the wrong hands?

AD: Absolutely. It is a serious matter when knowledge is conveyed to unprepared persons under inappropriate conditions. It is impossible to instruct the whole world on that level, and this trend indicates a dark future. Isn't that the meaning of Kali Yuga? Nowadays we witness a dangerous proliferation of fake gurus. Lots of people of good faith fall into the hands of unprepared individuals preaching the most extravagant practices, and simultaneously worrying about what they are going to do that very evening or the day after. That is not serious at all.

– Do you need to go to the other side of the world to apprehend the divine?

AD: No. French seekers would get as much of the divine in the depths of the forest of Saint Germain as they would in any place in India, and perhaps even more so, because it is a place they feel familiar with, it is part of their own universe.

– Why did you go so far yourself?

AD: I wasn't seeking anything. I was interested in music and little by little I discovered a prodigious civilization. Much later I left India simply because I was told that I would be much more use explaining the Hindu tradition to the rest of the world. The tradition of India is fundamental, because it is the only tradition of the ancient world that has remained alive. But as I said, it is not essential to go so far, because if you feel destined for the religious life, the divine reality is present wherever you are. And we mustn't forget that you don't have to look for a master, because it is the master who finds you when he needs a disciple to whom he can transmit his knowledge. In the meanwhile, just communicate with things and seek essential values wherever you are, whether in the forest or on the mountain. Perception of profound realities arises from contemplation of the beauty of the world, of an inner transformation, produced by this change in looking at reality.

– You affirm that the place is not so important, but do you feel that religiosity is expressed in the same way in the East and the West? In other words, have you met Westerners who are authentically and profoundly religious?

AD: Religions are one of the most foolish inventions of the human race. They belong to the domain of the absurd. Fortunately we can be religious in spite of religions. The religious impulse is in the first place a personal search: we have to worship the creator through his tangible creation. In this sense, all research leading to a deeper comprehension of nature and the beauty of the world is a personal experience and at the same time a religious one. The wonder of the artist, the discoveries of the scientist, the experience of pleasure, aesthetics, all that is religion. You can call it Shaivism, Dionysism, Mithraism or otherwise. After all, the name is not essential. Shiva, Dionysos, Mithras are aspects of the same principle, whose symbols, feasts and rites reveal the unity of a very ancient heritage. I have found in Shaivism signs common to all other religions. Only their myths and symbols differ. One of the main principles in India is to resist any form of proselytism, because it is impossible to indicate a path that suits all people. In the first place it is impossible because not everyone is at the same level of spiritual development. We have to give up dogmas and fixed structures, although that does not mean giving up all beliefs and not having any guiding principles. For Hindus, the swastika expresses this very idea. The central point of the swastika stands for fundamental and intangible unity, but its approach is not direct, because human beings are incapable of reaching that unity, and if they rigidly follow such unitarian logic, they get lost. So we have to know where to stop.

– You say we don't need rigid structures, but when you take a look at monastic orders, don't they seem to you a stronghold against present decadence?

AD: In a certain way, yes. In fact, everything that remains of the Shaivite tradition in India has been kept by the *akhārā*-s, or

fraternities of warrior-monks. We shouldn't forget that we have to be contemplative and active at the same time. In fact, the monks of many orders tend to forget the second aspect. Contemplation is something that belongs to the last phase of life, and there is also the question: Contemplation of what? This fundamental point is usually ignored because in most cases people have been unable to discover and understand life and the world.

– With regard to the Shaivite tradition that has been preserved, you recall in most of your books what Indian tradition teaches, that is, that we are moving towards the great cataclysm, the end of the present cycle. Why do Shaivites try to halt what according to their conception is inevitable?

AD: In the first place because we can always postpone a deadline, but most important of all because the attempt should prepare us for survival. The end of a cycle does not mean the last cycle and therefore the end of humanity. There will once again be a golden age, and we can try to take a certain number of things with us.

– What would in your opinion be worthy of being transmitted?

AD: The music of Schubert, the paintings of Turner. That would be wonderful! More seriously: we must always cherish the hope that something will remain of this universe.

– Even the gods are going to die?

AD: The principles they represent are immortal, it is only their personification that is mortal.

– Isn't it amazing to find an exaltation of death, an acceptance of the killing of animals and plants in an author so closely linked to Hinduism? On the contrary, one would tend to imagine a vegetarian, who respects nature. Some years ago, you shocked Jacques Chancel when you declared that there are wars because human sacrifice was forbidden, that sacrifice is indispensable.

AD: Yes, that is true. We have to offer the gods the best we have, and it is possible to destroy life out of love. In India, war is the basis for the initiation of kṣatriya-s and warrior-monks, and there is nothing surprising about it. Life is, by the dynamics of nature, nothing more than destruction. Just open your eyes and look at the world. It is all life and death, alternating perpetually, ineluctably. Above all, we must not replace eternal laws with sentimental ideas. Dying may be sad, but it is necessary and contributes to the order and thus to the beauty of the world. Reducing religion to morality is generally speaking an obstacle to knowledge of the universe, but that is the problem with religions that focus exclusively on human beings instead of understanding the totality of the universe.

– Aren't you actually an anti-humanist?

AD: Perhaps I am. The worst sin of human beings is arrogance. If we found a moral law going beyond man, we could come closer to reality as it is. But we have always tended to focus only on human society and to fence it off from the rest of the universe by means of rules against nature. That is the main problem with religions nowadays.

– The India you admire so much, this living tradition, was one of the first atomic powers. How does an ecologist like you react to that fact?

AD: India is in a crisis imposed by a social, religious and political system that is contrary to its spirit. For those who really know India, however, all that is very superficial. There have always been and will always be people who build up terrible destructive forces, just as there are wise men who lose their sense of responsibility. This also happens in very traditional societies, even in the Golden Age – which is what ushers in the second age.

– In the meantime, your latest work seems a little unfaithful towards India, because it is centred on Italy and evokes hidden

realities, a parallel world of genius, beyond time and space, and it speaks of Mithras and of the Sun.

AD: The sun is the centre of everything in Mithraism – not only the culmination, but also the source. Human knowledge is limited, but these limits can be surpassed and we can then discover a hidden reality: the ancient gods are in this sense a reality, they never went away. Today certain branches of science are attempting once more to reach the fundamental cosmological principles, and action is gradually being reconnected with knowledge. In the ancient world, Christianity replaced Mithraism; it has taken over a world conception that was universal. Jesus Christ is a very agreeable figure and his message of love very appealing. But this message was distorted afterwards.

– So you have rediscovered the European path. Have you considered that the origins of European tradition are regarded as oral? You emphasize that Indian tradition was saved by the *akhārā-s* who preserved the secret texts. Do you confront oral and written tradition?

AD: Written tradition poses a problem. It is a dangerous phenomenon. In India, for example, written transmission is relatively recent, and stress is laid on what has been heard and remembered. It is dangerous to regard any written form as truth. Writing is destructive: for example, in Africa, there are brilliant people, but their knowledge is considered useless because of their oral tradition. So only those whose knowledge is very restricted but who know how to write have access to important functions. There is a terrifying form of superstition and imperialistic policy related to writing. The religions of the book were established according to the notions of a certain period, but with time they became distorted and lapsed, of course. The Hindus say that language is formed in four degrees: first, one has an idea; second, one finds a form for this idea; then one circumscribes it with approximate words; and, lastly, one expresses the sound and the word. If we return to the origin of the word, we tend to reach the universal.

– A language transcending languages could be astrology, which has an important place in your *Contes du labyrinthe*. Do you think that the modern world is likely to understand the true message of astrology, beyond all its mystifications?

AD: We are part of one of the cells in this universe with all its planets, and all the structures of this whole are found in everything the universe contains. Time is divided into cycles, which for humanity are four. Each one of these ages is in its turn divided into four parts and so on and so forth. From macrocosm to microcosm, everything mirrors the same structures. It would be illusory and even dangerous if what affects the upper levels were not to affect the lower in the same way. It is interesting therefore to delve into this kind of relationship. We should, as usual, be careful not to fall into any kind of dogmatism, and that is the real problem. Astrology might be an aid, and we should try to understand its laws. But who can claim to understand all these laws and is capable of imposing them on other individuals? It is this slipping of astrology into religion and its petrification that turns out to be dangerous.

– In *The Way to the Labyrinth* you evoked your own story more than twelve years ago, but you have accomplished much more: you have created libraries and institutes of comparative musical studies in Berlin and Venice. Have you achieved the goal of your existence? Is there anything you regret?

AD: I was interested in music, and that was the first thing that attracted me to India: the musical aspect of its culture. But I spent my life shifting from one subject to another, finding connections between different domains, and I enriched myself with each acquisition in order to deepen the focus of my research. Each time I attained relative proficiency in an art, I had to abandon it: piano, singing, Indian music, painting and other forms of artistic expression. I could have made a profession out of each one of them, but I was destined to be something else because each time I was sidetracked from my object of study and research. In this sense, I have some regrets, yes. But it is insignificant when I see everything I have done and how important this experience has been for me.

– Haven't you ever wanted to teach what you learned?

AD: I have no right to do so, and that was the condition on which I received what I learned. I belong to a caste that cannot

teach. In a certain sense, and as far as I know, that was René Guénon's problem. He too received teachings from an Indian master when he was young. After that he took himself for a prophet, which is why his school is mediocre.

– And what about Julius Evola? He also attempted to bridge East and West and was very interested in subjects quite close to yours, such as Tantric yoga.

AD: Many aspects and intuitions of Evola are stimulating, but everything written in Western languages is alien to me.

– To conclude: if tomorrow a young man comes up to you and asks you to recommend a centre where he can be initiated, a true traditional centre where he can find part of that ancient knowledge transmitted by real masters, or, more simply: if he is European and asks you to tell him where he can find a Mithraic school after the fashion of the main character in your short-story *Le don du soleil* in *Les contes du labyrinthe*, what would you tell him?

AD: Nothing, since – I am sorry to say – I don't know of any such place.



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