

## Introduction

Existing translations of Vedic texts, however etymologically 'accurate', are too often unintelligible or unconvincing, sometimes admittedly unintelligible to the translator himself. Neither the 'Sacred Books of the East', nor for example such translations of the Upaniṣads as those of R.E. Hume, or those of Mitra, Roer, and Cowell, recently reprinted, even approach the standards set by such works as Thomas Taylor's version of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, or Friedländer's of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. Translators of the Vedas do not seem to have possessed any previous knowledge of metaphysics, but rather to have gained their first and only notions of ontology from Sanskrit sources. As remarked by Jung, *Psychological Types*, p. 263, with reference to the study of the Upaniṣads under existing conditions, 'any true perception of the quite extraordinary depth of those ideas and their amazing psychological accuracy is still but a remote possibility'.

It is very evident that for an understanding of the Vedas, a knowledge of Sanskrit, *however profound*, is insufficient. Indians themselves do not rely upon their knowledge of Sanskrit here, but insist upon the absolute necessity of study at the feet of a *guru*. That is not possible in the same sense for European students. Yet Europe also possesses a tradition founded in first principles. That mentality which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought into being an intellectual Christianity owing as much to Maimonides, Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> and the Arabs as to the Bible itself, would not have found the Vedas 'difficult'. For example, those who understood that 'Paternity and filiation . . . are *dependent* properties', or that God 'cannot be a Person without a Nature, nor can his Nature be without a Person', Eckhart, I.268 and 394,<sup>2</sup> or had read later Dante's 'O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son', *Paradiso*, xxxiii, would not have seen in the mutual generation of Puruṣa and Virāḥ, or Dakṣa and Aditi an arbitrary or primitive mode of thought: those familiar with Christian conceptions of Godhead as 'void', 'naked', and 'as though it were not', would not have been disconcerted by descriptions of That as 'Death' (*mṛtyu*), and as being 'in no wise' (*nehi, neiti*). To those who even to-day have some idea of what is meant by a 'reconciliation of opposites', or have partly understood the relation between man's conscious consciousness and the *unconscious* sources of his powers, the significance of the Waters as an 'inexhaustible well' of the

<sup>1</sup>One of our most ancient philosophers who found the truth long, long before God's birth, ere ever there was Christian faith at all as it is now, Eckhart, I.103. Cf. Note 60.

<sup>2</sup>Except where otherwise stated, references to Eckhart are to C. de B. Evans' admirable version in two volumes, London, 1924.

possibilities of existence might be apparent. When Blake speaks of a 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell', or Swinburne writes, 'I bid you but be', there is included more of the Vedas than can be found in many learned disquisitions on their 'philosophy'. What right have Sanskritists to confine their labours to the solution of linguistic problems: is it fear that precludes their wrestling with the ideology of the texts they undertake? Our scholarship is too little humane.<sup>3</sup>

What I have called here a 'new approach to the Vedas' is nothing more than an essay in the exposition of Vedic ideas by means of a translation and a commentary in which the resources of other forms of the universal tradition are taken for granted. Max Müller, in 1891, held that the Veda would continue to occupy scholars 'for centuries to come'. Meanwhile there are others beside professional scholars, for whom the Vedas are significant. In any case, no great extension of our present measure of understanding can be expected from philological research alone, however valuable such methods of research may have been in the past: and what is true for Sumero-Babylonian religion is no less true for the Vedas, viz., that 'further progress in the interpretation of the difficult cycle of . . . liturgies cannot be made until the cult is more profoundly interpreted from the point of view of the history of religion'.<sup>4</sup>

As regards the translation: every English word employed has been used advisedly with respect to its technical significance. For example, 'nature' is here always the correlative of 'essence', and denoted that whereby the world is as it is; never as in modern colloquial usage to denote the world, *as naturata*. Similarly, existence is distinguished from being, creation from emanation, local movement from the principle of motion, the incalculable from the infinite, and so forth. All that is absolutely necessary if the sense of the Vedic texts is to be conveyed. In addition, the few English words added to complete the sense of the translation are italicized: and when several English words are employed to render one Sanskrit term, the English words are generally connected by hyphens, e.g. Āditya, 'Supernal-Sun'; Akṣara, 'Imperishable-Word'.

As regards the commentary: here I have simply used the resources of Vedic and Christian scriptures side by side. An extended use of Sumerian, Taoist, Sūfī, and Gnostic sources would have been at once possible and illuminating, but would have stretched the discussion beyond reasonable limits.<sup>5</sup> As for the

<sup>3</sup>On the one hand, the professional scholar, who has direct access to the sources, functions in isolation: on the other, the amateur propagandist of Indian thought disseminates mistaken notions. Between the two, no provision is made for the educated man of good will.

<sup>4</sup>Langdon, S., *Tammuz and Ishtar*, Oxford, 1914, p. v.

<sup>5</sup>It is not without good reason that Jahāngīr speaks of 'the science of the Vedānta which is the science of Sufism', *Tazuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, translated by Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 356. Parallels to almost all the ideas discussed below could be adduced from Islamic theology: see especially Nicholson, R.A., *Studies in Islamic mysticism*, 1921, and

Vedic and Christian sources, each illuminates the other. And that is in itself an important contribution to understanding, for as Whitman expresses it, 'These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me. If they are not yours as much as mine, they are nothing, or next to nothing.' Whatever may be asserted or denied with respect to the 'value' of the Vedas, this at least is certain, that their fundamental doctrines are by no means singular.

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ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

Macdonald, D.B., *The development of the idea of spirit in Islam*, Acta Orientalia, IX, 1931. It may be noted that the ontology of a non-Christian tradition has been competently discussed by these authors in a way that has never been attempted by any professional European student of the Vedas.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, I, 2  
(= Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa X, 6, 5)

In the beginning (*agre*) no thing whatsoever was here. This-all (*idam*) was veiled by Death (*mṛtyu*), by Privation (*āsanāyā*): for Privation is Death. That (*tad*) took-on (*akuruta*) Intellect (*manas*), 'Let me be Selfed' (*ātmanvī-syām*). He (*sah*), Self, manifested Light (*arcam acarāt*). Of Him, as he shone, were the Waters (*āpah*) born (*jāyanta*). Verily, whilst I shone, there was Delight' (*kam*), said-He (*itā*). This is the Sheen (*arkatva*) of Shining (*arka*). Verily, there is delight for him who knoweth thus the sheen of shining. 1.

Our text deals with the origin of Light from Darkness, Life from Death, Actuality from Possibility, Self from the Un-selfed, *saguṇa* from *nirguṇa* Brahman, 'I am' from Unconsciousness, God from Godhead. 'The first formal assumption in Godhead is being . . . God', Eckhart, I.267. 'The Nothing bringeth itself into a Will', Böhme, *XL Questions concerning the Soule*, I.178: 'an eternal will arises in the nothing, to introduce the nothing into something, that the will might find, feel, and behold itself', *Signatura Rerum*, I.8. 'The Tao became One', *Tao Tē Chung*, II.42.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>A distinction of existence from pure being is easily made: 'being in itself is modeless, 'existence' is being in a mode. Essence and nature, *per se*, are evidently non-existent: it need scarcely be added that this 'non-existence', viz., the absence of properties, has nothing in common with the non-existence of the absurd or self-contradictory, for example, a square circle; it is not illogical, but alogical, or ineffable, all that can be said of it being purely analogical. Nevertheless, the practical use of the terms Non-being, Being, and Existence, presents real difficulties.

We understand Non-being and Being to be correlative aspects, the inseparable Nature and Essence, of Brahman, the Supreme Identity, not yet existent, antecedent to procession, *solus ante principium*, *aspraveritū*, *Kauṣītaki Up.*, IV.8: and understand Existence to include all multiplicity, whether nominal and informal, or real and formal. Non-being is the permissive principle, first cause, of Being: Being the permissive principle, first cause, of Existence. Thus:

|      |   |   |   |                  |
|------|---|---|---|------------------|
| Asat | Non-being<br>( <i>avyakta</i> )<br>Being<br>( <i>vyakti-avyakta</i> ) | anātmya<br><br>param-ātman                      | nirguṇa, amūrta,<br>akāla                 | Brahman<br>satya |
| Sat  | Existence<br>( <i>vyakta</i> )  | prag-ātman<br>(Viśve Devāh,<br>visvā bhuvanāni) | saguṇa, mūrta,<br>kāla, sthita,<br>martya |                  |

Compare *Taittirīya Uṅ.*, II.7 *svayam akuruḥ ātmānam* 'of itself assumed Self', and *svayambhū*, 'self-become', Upaniṣads *passim*: *Maitrī Uṅ.*, V.2 and II.5, 'In the beginning this world was a Dark-Inert (*taṃas*) . . . that proceeds to differentiation (*viśvamatva*) . . . even as the awakening of a sleeper.' That is Eckhart's 'passive welling up': 'the beginning of the Father is primary, not proceeding', 'the Father is the manifestation of the Godhead', I. 268, 267 and 135. Just as also, microcosmically, 'Without a doubt, consciousness is derived from the unconscious' (Wilhelm and Jung).

Now as to 'One': an intelligible distinction can be made between the innumerable Unity of God 'without a second', the Sameness of Godhead, and the Identity, Deity, of God and Godhead, *mūṛta* and *amūṛta* Brahman: 'between the pillars of the conscious and unconscious . . . all beings and all worlds', Kabir, Bolpur ed. II.59: 'One and One uniting, there is the Supreme Being', Eckhart, I.368. That these are here 'rational, not real' distinctions (Eckhart, I.268) appears in the fact that 'One' can be spoken equally of Unity, Sameness, and Identity: God, Godhead, Deity, is not a distinction of Persons. On the other hand, 'One' cannot be said of the Trinity as such. These distinctions, necessarily and clearly made in exegesis, when literally interpreted, become definitions of sectarian points of view, theistic, nihilistic, and metaphysical: in *bhakti-vāda* the Unity, in *śūnya-vāda* the Sameness, in *jñāna-vāda* the Identity are respectively *pāramārthika*, ultimately significant. In Śākta cults there survives an ontology antedating patriarchal modes of thought, and the relation of the conjoint principles is reversed (*viparīta*) in gender: here Śiva, inert, effecting nothing by himself, represents the Godhead, while Sakti, Mother of All Things, is the active power, engendering, preserving, and resolving, *ilā* is not 'his' but 'hers'. In 'mysticism' there is an emotional realization of all or any of these points of view. In reality, 'the path men take from everyside is mine', *Bhagavad Gītā*, IV.11, 'In whatever way you find God best and are most aware of him that way pursue', Eckhart, I.482.

It should be observed further that while we speak in theology<sup>8</sup> of First, Second, and Third Persons, the Persons being connected (*bandhu*, *Rgveda*, X.129.4, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Uṅ.*, I.1.2) by opposite relation,<sup>9</sup> the numerical

It follows that *asat* can be rendered correctly either as Non-being or as Non-existence: *sat* either as Being or as Existence, as may best suit the context. The problem arises only in connection with 'Being': if we render *asat* and *sat* as Non-being and Being, then, *sat* must cover both being in itself and Being in a mode. The terms are further discussed below, pp. 85-6.

<sup>8</sup>Not that these are commensurable terms: Theistic and Nihilistic points of view are partial, and therefore in apparent opposition, as for example in the case of Śaivism and Buddhism; while Metaphysics, *jñāna-vāda*, underlies, justifies, and embraces all other points of view.

<sup>9</sup>From the Vedic point of view, 'angelology' would be more accurate.

<sup>10</sup>On this 'kinship' depends the 'incestuous' character of so many myths of creation. It should be observed that the term 'myth' property implies the symbolic (verbal, iconographic or dramatic) representation of the operation of power or energy.

ordering of the Persons is purely conventional (*samketita*), not a chronological or real order of coming into being: for the Persons are connascent, *itaretarjanyamāna*, the Trinity (*tridhā*) is an arrangement (*samhitā*), not a process. For example, the Son creates the Father as much as the Father the Son,<sup>10</sup> for there can be no paternity without a filiation, and *vice versa*, and that is what is meant by 'opposite relation'. Similarly, there cannot be a Person (Puruṣa) without Nature (Prakṛti), and *vice versa*. That is why in metaphysical 'mythology' we meet with 'inversions', as for example, when in the *Rgveda*, X.72.4, Dakṣa (a personal name of the Progenitor, see *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II.4.4.2) is born of Aditi as her son, and she also of him as his daughter; or X.90.5, where Virāji is born of Puruṣa, and *vice versa*. Metaphysics are consistent, but not systematic: system is found only in religious extensions,<sup>11</sup> where a given ordering of the Persons becomes a dogma, and it is precisely by such 'matters of faith', and not by a difference of metaphysical basis, that one religion is distinguished from another. That is truly a 'distinction without a difference.'

It should be observed that the connascent (*sahajanya*) of Father-essence and Mother-nature, the 'two forms' of Brahman, though metaphorically spoken of as 'birth' (*janma*), is not a sexual-begetting, not a generation from conjoint principles, *maithunya prajanya*: in that sense both are equally unborn, un-born, as in *Śvetāśvatara Uṅ.*, I.8. *dāvājavau*, or as implied in the

protons and electrons in this sense are 'mythical' beings. A myth, such as the Grail myth, or the Birth of Brahmā, is neither a 'fairy tale' nor a 'mystery' in the modern sense of the words, but simply a presentation. He who regards the myth or icon as a statement of fact, and he who regards it as fantasy, are equally misled: myth is to history as universal to particular, *raison d'être*, to *l'être* icon to species as exemplar to instance. Symbolism and imagery (*prāśika*, *prātibimba*, etc.), the purest form of art, is the proper language of metaphysics: the symbol always presupposes that the chosen expression is the best possible description, or formula, of a relatively unknown fact . . . which is none the less known or postulated as existing' (Jung). Traditional symbolism is also more nearly a universal language than any other; the greater part of its idiom is the common property and inheritance of nearly all peoples, and can be traced back at least to the fifth or sixth millennium BC (cf. Winckler, *Die babylonische Geisteskultur*, 1907; Jeremias *Handbuch des altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, 1929 and Langdon, *Semitic mythology*, 1931), and to the beginnings of agriculture or there beyond.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. 'He hath brought me forth His son in the image of His eternal fatherhood, that I should also be a father and bring forth Him', Eckhart, Claud Field's *Sermons*, p. 26; cf. Jñi, cited by Nicholson, *Studies* . . . p. 112, 'I am the child whose father is his son, and the wine whose vine is its jar . . . I met the mothers who bore me, and I asked them in marriage, and they let me marry them.' 'The Snake's Bull-Father—the Bull's Father-snake' is cited by Harrison, *Prolegomena* . . . p. 495, from frg. ap. Clem (ent) of Alexandria, *Protr.*, I.2.12. Or again, of Agni, 'being the Son of the Angels, thou hast become their Father', *Rvāda*, I.69. 1: Agni is the father of his father', *ibid.*, VI.16.35, and 'whoever understands this (*yastā vijāna*) is his father's father', i.e. surpasses his father.

<sup>11</sup>Also, of course, in science, 'philosophy', psychology, and other 'practical' disciplines.

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Uṇ.*, I.4.3 where the origination of the conjoint principles called a 'falling apart', diremption, or karyokinesis, *dvedhā-pāta*. 'One became Two', viz., Yin and Yang, *Tao Tz' Ching*, II.42.

On the other hand, their common Son, Agni Brahmā-Prajāpati, etc., being consubstantial with the Spirit (*prāṇa*) is at once unborn in the same sense, and born by a generation from the conjoint principles.<sup>13</sup> Only the latter birth can be thought of as an 'event' taking place at the dawn of a creative cycle, in the beginning, *agṛe*.

With respect to *kāma*, 'Delight', 'Affirmation': Will (*kāma*) or Fiat (*syād*) are the moving power (*lakṣa*, *reviṇa*) in all procession (*krama*, *prasarana*), *kāma* is the will-to-life, 'so great indeed is *kāma*', *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Uṇ.*, I.4.17. Will, *kāma*, is an essential name of God; it is by his Will that his intrinsic-form (*svarūpa*) signs and seals intrinsic-nature (*svabhāva*), Nature for her part desiring form. So the single Will in Deity may be regarded from two points of view, with respect to essence as the Will-spirit, and with respect to nature as the Craving<sup>14</sup>; as Gandharva and Apsaras (= Urvaśi, *Rgveda*, VII.33.11, and *Apyā*, X.13.4, Kāmadeva and Rati, Eros and Psyche; cf. *Viṣṇu Purāna*, I.8.20 and 33, where Nārāyaṇa is 'love' (*kāma*, *lobha*, *rāga*) and Śrī-Lakṣmi is 'desire' (*icchā*, *trṣṇā*, *rati*).

These two aspects of the Will are plainly seen in the Vedic 'legend' of the 'Hence the constant use of essential names common to both, a certain indistinction of Father and Son, the distinction of Person being lost in their unity of Godhead, of the common nature.

<sup>13</sup> Thus, antecedent to procession:

Person (Father)—Spirit (Will)—Nature (Mother)  
and posterior to procession:  
Person (Father)—Nature (Mother)  
    \                      /  
    Spirit (Son, Life) /

<sup>14</sup> See Böhme, *Mysterium Panophaicum*, I-III. Only when the Will is dually personified as Kāmadeva and Rati can it be said that the Will-spirit and the Craving are actually distinguished: elsewhere, either *kāma* represents the Will as an undivided principle, or we must understand from the context *what* will is implied. In our text, especially vv. 1 and 4, where it is Death, Privation, Godhead, that wills (*syām*, *akāmayat*)—a thing that can only be conceived analogically in the Not-Self—we must understand it is not the Will-spirit (*kāma*, *libido*, 'libet'), but the Craving (*trṣṇā*, coveting, fatality, that which 'draws a man on' when he is 'fey'); that is the desire of Nature (*prakṛti*) for intrinsic form (*svarūpa*), the ardour of the Waters 'in their season', *Pañcaviṅśa Brāhmaṇa*, VII.8.1, an unconscious, functional, dark will-to-life. In X.129.4 (p. 79) on the other hand, where *kāma* is identified with the 'primal seed (*retas*) of Intellect (*manas*)'—not, i.e. the germinal source of Intellect, but the germinal aspect of Intellect, *logos spermaticos*, the *rasa* of *Rgveda*, I.164.8—the light Will-spirit is clearly implied. The two wills are immediately correlated and perfectly balanced in unitary being: representing His knowledge of himself (in both senses of the verb to 'know'). In other words, the movement of the Will-spirit towards its object is the 'answer' to the unspoken 'wish' of the unconscious, as in *Rgveda*, I.164.8, 'He by Intellect forewent her.' These considerations seem to solve the difficulties felt by Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, p. 436.

Birth of Vasiṣṭha,<sup>15</sup> and the *Pañcaviṅśa Brāhmaṇa* passage cited below, p. 36. In the first case Mitra-Varuṇau is quite literally seduced by the fascinations, of the Apsaras Urvaśi; in the second, the Waters are literally 'in heat'. God

<sup>15</sup> *Rgveda*, VII.33.11, *Bṛhad Devatā*, V.148 and 149, and *Sarvānukramanī*, I.166: the child begotten of Mitrā-Varuṇau and the Waters is Vasiṣṭha, who like Brahmā makes his appearance upon a lotus, i.e. is established in the Waters, in the possibility of existence, and who is in fact the same as Brahmā-Prajāpati, as rightly identified in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II.4.4.2, cf. *Nirukta*, V.1.4. Hence Vasiṣṭha's patronymic Mitrā-varuṇi. Again in the *Āitareya Āraṇyaka*, II.2.1 and 2, Vasiṣṭha and other 'sages' are identified in various ways with the progenitive Person and the positive existence of all things. In *Atharvaveda*, X.8.20, the expression 'churned forth' (*nirmānākatā*), appropriate to Agni, is used of Vasu (=Vasiṣṭha). The name Vasiṣṭha (superlative of *vasu*) seems to be rightly understood by the Commentators to mean 'foremost of those who dwell, exist, or live', either from root *vas* 'to assume a form', or root *vas* 'to live', or 'abide in a given condition'. *Vasu* is also derivable from root *vaso* to shine, giving the secondary meaning 'wealth'. Whatever the root, the meanings are not incompatible, inasmuch as to be undigested of life or existence is the primary 'good'. Cf. Vasudhā, Vasudhārā, Earth as 'Mistress of Wealth', 'Habundia', or 'Upbearer of Life' (Vasudhā also = Lakṣmi); and Vasudhara, Kṛṣṇa as 'Lord of Life' in relation to Rādhā, where both meanings are implied.

Like Vasiṣṭha, Agni (Vaiśvānara) is born of, literally 'churned from' a lotus, i.e. the Earth, *Rgveda*, VI.16.13. That is, as the element of Fire and as Sacrificial fire in the Three Worlds: for Agni as the Supreme Deity is the 'Father', being like Mitrā-Varuṇau seduced by the Waters, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, I.1.3.8, and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II.1.1.4 and 5. Needless to point out that Mitrā-Varuṇau, Sun, Fire, Spirit, etc., are all denotations of one and the same first principle of manifestation, and that the Waters, often called the wives of Varuṇa, or mothers in relation to the Son (Kumāra, Agni Vaiśvānara), are the possibilities of manifestation.

Parallel to the passages cited above is the myth of Purūravas and Urvaśi, *Rgveda*, X.95 (also IV.2.12 and 18), and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI.5.1; their son Āyu, 'Life', is identified in the *Vejāsaneyi Samhitā*, V.2, with Agni, Fire. Purūravas evidently corresponds to Prajāpati, the 'first sacrificer', cf. how in the ŚBr: passage he brings fire to earth by performing the (first) sacrifice, that is after he has lain again with Urvaśi on 'the last night of the year' subsequent to their first intercourse, that means a year of supernal time, the duration of one cycle of manifestation, the 'Year' of our Upniṣad. By the sacrifice, he who had been 'changed in form' and 'walked amongst mortals', and was thus divided from Urvaśi (manifestation, or existence necessarily implying a diremption of essence and nature) he becomes a Gandharva, and is reunited with Urvaśi, that is he becomes again the pure Will-spirit in union with its object. Thus he has proceeded in time, and now returns to the unmanifest at the end of time. Thus also Purūravas corresponds to Aditya (Vivasvat): Āyu may be compared to Manu Vaivasvata. The 'mortality' of Purūravas does not mean that Purūravas was 'a man', but belongs to his existence as Universal Man, *śoguna*, *marītya* Brahman. That all this was clearly understood is shown in connection with the Soma sacrifice, when in the ritual of making fire, the upper and the lower twirling-sticks are addressed as Purūravas and Urvaśi, the pan of *ghṛi* (the food of the sacrificial fire, whereby it exists) as Āyu, 'for Urvaśi was the Apsaras, Purūravas her Lord, from their intercourse was Āyu born, and now in like manner he (the sacrificer) brings forth the sacrifice from their union', *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III.4.1.22.

