GENERAL ESTIMATE

While no essay on a philosopher and his thought could be regarded as complete without a general evaluation, one who attempts the latter must face the hazards of a biographer. As a matter of fact, writing on the philosophy of a thinker is a biography to a large extent—biography of his intellectual life. Thus the historian of his philosophy must find himself in a predicament similar to that of a historian of his life. But he has the advantages of a biographer, too. If he betrays a bias towards his hero and gives the impression of championing his cause, it is to be regarded with indulgence—as the privilege of a biographer. After all a sympathetic attitude towards the subject is a sine qua non for any estimate that strives to be just.

But the hazards are many in the case of Madhva. He is a Hindu through and through—even when he philosophizes—and as a typical scholastic of the medieval times is not apt to make a distinction between philosophy and theology. While for a Greek and a western philosopher in general philosophy means love of wisdom, which is primarily speculative, having for its end the beatific vision or contemplation of truth, the Indian sage would see in right knowledge in general and philosophic wisdom in particular an essential means to liberation. A westerner would keep out all authorities in the treatment of ultimate reality, regarding them as belonging to theology and religion. Every truth in philosophy must be proved by reason or its equivalent. Among most of the orthodox Hindu philosophers, on the other hand, reason plays a subordinate part where the ultimate reality is in question, since all importance is assigned to suprasensible authority alone. Thus Madhva asserts apodictically that in the absence of a suprasensible
authority right and wrong cannot be established, and that this would deprive philosophy of its raison d'être. Such a conception, it might be objected, no doubt, would reduce the role of an orthodox philosopher merely to that of a commentator. The objection is valid, but mostly in theory or in the claim of the 'commentators' themselves. But the facts, one suspects, have a different tale to tell.

If the entire corpus of Hindu philosophy had one common and uniform source for its suprasensible authority, and if speculation on it meant merely a commentary or elucidation of what was implicit, we should have had but one system of orthodox Hindu philosophy. In point of fact, however, we have several, certainly more than the classical number of six. Even a cursory glance at them would tell us the disparate views they propose—the radical pluralism of the Sāṅkhya and of the Nyāya, a half-hearted theism of the Yoga and of the Mīmāṃsā, the agnosticism of the Sāṅkhya, the monism of Śākara, the pantheism of Bhāskara, the qualified monism of Rāmānuja and the theism of Madhva. There are several others. How could an outsider take any of these systems as a true commentary on the Vedic tenets when their very divergence would tell against all such contentions?

It is not without reason, then, that the historians have alleged that in India, even among the orthodox circles, the thinkers have initiated systems on their own and have then proceeded to prop them up with authoritative texts of their choice. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan puts it in black and white, "the Indian philosophers first arrive at a system of consistent doctrine and then look about for texts of an earlier age to support their position. They either force them into such support or ingeniously explain them away." Such a procedure

1. V.T.V., 6ss.
2. Iph. I, p.130
may at times betray signs of straining, but it need not become
downright ridiculous. The entire body of the Vedic lore being
what it is in its historic origin, it may be expected to embody
any shade of opinion which will favour one view or another.
It is much too hard to digest that the multitude of sages, air­ing
their views on topics which are apt to play hide and seek
with human mind, should speak with one voice and tongue.
Bādarāyana was evidently aware of this fact when he set about
to attempt a reconciliation in his sūtras.3 The multiplicity
of his interpreters is perhaps a telling commentary on his
success. To the variety of views expressed in the Vedic
literature we may add also the quirks of language, which make
it possible to read in the same statement various meanings,
even contradictory to each other.4

But the orthodox philosopher labours under one major draw­
back. Whatever be the evidence to the contrary, under no
circumstances can he admit that the Vedas contain irreconcili­
able opinions. Any such admission would prove lethal to his
orthodoxy and consequently to his position as a philosopher.
He would have no unassailable means of knowledge where the
ultimate reality is concerned. We can now understand why the
interpreters to a man resort to all sorts of tricks and subter­
fuges—picking up those statements which underscore their
position best, giving a figurative meaning to some, and a
different sense to others by re-interpreting the passage,
changing the context and ignoring the rest. Since such a
procedure is in keeping with the rules of hermeneutics laid
down by the Mīmāṃsā, no orthodox philosopher can take exception
to it. That was the way adopted by Śankara in his commentary
on the Brahmasūtras and other texts. That was the method

4. For instance, Madhva reads "śvetaketo-a-tattvam-asi"
in place of the usual "śvetaketo tattvam-asi". Grammatically
both the readings are equally possible.
resumed by Rāmānuja; and that again was the procedure followed by Madhva.

We may, then, legitimately conclude from this discussion that it is not the reading of the Brahmasūtras that made Śankara a pure monist, or Rāmānuja a qualified monist, or again Madhva a theist. It is more than likely that as an heir to Buddhistic thought through Gauḍapāda Śaṅkara was already a convinced monist apart from the Brahmasūtras. We may also believe that if Rāmānuja broke away from the monistic domination it was not because of the Brahmasūtras, but under the influence of the Bhakti movement. As for Madhva, we know that though the learned circles in which he was born were theoretically Śaṅkarite, in practice they were more devoted to Viśnu. A devotional cult of Viṣṇu, known as Bhāgavata-sampradāya seems to have held sway over those classes of Brahmins in which Madhva grew up. They held in highest esteem the Bhāgavata-purāṇa which extols devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Madhva himself would later on deem it his duty to write a commentary on the Purāṇa. All this shows that Madhva's rejection of Śaṅkara's Advaita was not so sudden or inspired by the reading of the Brahmasūtras. The sources of his convictions were evidently elsewhere. If he tried to see their evidence in the prasthāna-traya, the recognized triple Vedanta text, we may believe that he was no less sincere than those who had gone before him.

It is certainly unfair, then, to accuse Madhva of rigging the texts. As for his reading theism in the Brahmasūtras, we must remember that Badarāyana was inspired by a spirit of reconciliation. That would imply that Madhva was as entitled to read his views in them as Śaṅkara was in his manipulation. Also in Madhva's favour we might note that as historical evidence stands, Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara were the first monistic commentators on the sūtras which had been until then

5. D.M., pp.11ss.
interpreted from the dualistic point of view. Who was more guilty of textual manipulation, then? There is another accusation. Madhva, say the critics, quotes profusely from śaṃti literature—Epics, Purāṇas, etc. Although the objection is irrelevant to us who view Madhva as a philosopher primarily for greater understanding it might be pointed out that the Ācārya's main source is prasthānātraya. If he draws upon other texts it is to show that he is not alone in his interpretation. As for Madhva's custom of citing texts from unknown sources or even from the apocrypha (Khila-śrutis), Vijayindra Tīrtha has already retorted by pointing out that Sankara, Rāmānuja and Śrīkantha also quoted from unknown texts. In such an argument we should know that 'plus et minus non mutant speciem'. For a parallel case we may note that the Kṛpa-śūtras-kārṣ, authors of the ritualistic works, quote extensively from Khila-śrutis. And yet they are accepted by all.

The most damaging of all accusations has been levelled against Madhva by Appayya Dīkṣita in the 16th century. For the first time he charges Madhva with having forged his sources. In answer it might be pointed out that the charge comes a bit too late in the history of controversy between the two schools; that Madhva was a voracious reader and scholar, and owned a library of rare manuscripts which even his adversaries tried to confiscate; that in his extensive tours he seems to have taken down lengthy quotations from books he could not secure for

6. Dasg. I, p.422. "The fact that we do not know of any Hindu writer who held such monistic views as Gauḍa-pāda or Sāṅkara, and who interpreted the Brahma-sūtras in accordance with these monistic ideas when combined with the fact that the dualists had been writing commentaries on the Brahma-sūtras goes to show that the Brahma-sūtras were originally regarded as an authoritative work of the dualists...It seems that Bādarīyāna, the writer of the Brahma-sūtras was probably more a theist than an absolutist like his commentator Sāṅkara."

7. "More or less do not bring in specific difference.'


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himself. That might explain his habit of citing at length from little-known texts while he gives brief references to well-known sources. Also the names of śrutis given by Madhva sound similar to some of the saṃhitas of the Pañcarātra. Perhaps Madhva followed the tradition of calling them śrutis, convinced as he was that the origin of both the Veda and the Pañcarātra was the same. We may bring in a negative argument: Had Madhva forged his texts, he would have certainly inserted some of his pet ideas like the doctrine of Śākṣin in works like Brahma-tarka. But he does not.⁹ We think it most unlikely, therefore, that Madhva wilfully tampered with his texts, again noting that the point is relevant only to his orthodoxy, not to his status as a philosopher. As for that status and the intellectual appeal as found in Madhva's writings as well as those of his school there should be no doubt with regard to its excellence—even when compared to the Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja schools.¹⁰ To consign Madhva's works, therefore, to religious history as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan does¹¹ is certainly not the result of enlightenment.

The way Madhva gives proof of his respect for human experience as well as of his orthodoxy is best seen whenever he handles a controversial text or develops a new idea on his own. 'Śrutyanubhavavirodhāt' or 'Vedapratyakṣavirodhāt'—such are the declarations which in his eyes should silence any cavilling from the adversary's part. His respect for Āgama is great, but not a jot greater than for perception in its own sphere.


¹⁰. Dr. S. N. Dasgupta in his third volume of 'A History of Indian Philosophy' (p.112) has this to say of Rāmānuja school: As with Śaṅkara, and not as with Madhva, the emphasis in the school has always been on the interpretations of Vedic texts, and the intellectual appeal has always been subordinated to the appeal to the Upanisadic texts and their interpretations. (underlines inserted.)

Thus no Agāma text could go counter to what is established by perception or experience. If it did, the text would forfeit its own validity. Madhva would have wholeheartedly agreed with Vācaspati Miśra that not a thousand texts could change a jar into a cloth. His treatment of pramāṇa which he characterizes as yathārtham is another indication of the esteem in which he holds human experience. So is his idea of self-validity of knowledge. An analysis of our cognition will tell us that when we really know a thing we also know implicitly that our knowledge is true. Objectively, then, the validity of knowledge must be sought in knowledge itself. All knowledge is true by its very nature. Else it would not be real knowledge.

Knowledge, however, could be viewed either as an act or as a quality or as substance itself. We know what is meant by an act of cognition. We also know what is usually implied by our faculty of knowing. But there are philosophers according to whom knowledge is the very nature of the soul. Madhva, too, subscribes to such belief, maintaining that the essence of the jīva is satcit-ānanda. This cognitive aspect of the soul, theoretical in itself, is brought down to practical level by him in his ingenious doctrine of Sākṣin. In general we can maintain that all knowledge, whatever be its nature, has its source in the soul. But it cannot manifest itself conceptually except through the senses whether external or internal. The senses have been usually regarded as instruments for the jīva in his acquisition of knowledge. But to be exact, it is not knowledge that the jīva acquires. The senses provide him with impressions in which through the instrumentality of manas he conceptualizes and cognizes. However, we should note that it is wrong to regard the impressions as static and discrete copies of the objects or of any aspects of them. They may have in them material elements which give them their static aspect, but as cognitive and cognoscible images they are also immaterial. It is a fallacy to hold that material things of this world are
made of matter pure and simple. Since knowledge, both in its subjective and objective aspects is thoroughly immaterial, matter pure and simple could never be an object of knowledge and consequently a subject of intelligible speech. Even stronger is the case with the senses. Because their raison d'être itself is to be found in their helping in the acquisition of knowledge their very being as faculties must be immaterial whatever be their nature as organs. Needless to say that this applies with still greater reason to manas.

We have discussed the matter somewhat at length in order to bring out the strength and limitations of Madhva's epistemology. Senses, manas, sākṣīn—these are the three points on which the realism of his epistemology rests. They it is that justify his insistence on perception and experience. All knowledge, we said, has its ultimate source in the jīva. In that source, as long as nothing external interferes with it, there can be no error or illusion. Hence the cognition that belongs strictly to sākṣīn is infallibly true. Hence also our internal experiences like 'I feel pain' can never be erroneous because they are the experiences of sākṣīn. A perception, too, as long as it is complete, and not mutilated, enjoys the same validity which again is the result of sākṣīn. By extension we should say that the first principles of identity, of finality, of sufficient reason, are also infallibly valid, because they are the laws of all beings including the jīva. Sākṣīn, then, cannot help experiencing its own laws—without even a possibility of error.

Madhva, therefore, is not justified even from his own principles in belittling the role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge, be it of the Ultimate. If sākṣīn can be the infallible guide in our experiences internal and external as also in the apprehending of the first principles, there is no reason why the case cannot be extended to reasoning. After all it is the first principles that govern all reasoning which has
its material supplied by external and internal experiences. One does not see on what grounds could reasoning be excluded from the exercise of its legitimate rights. It may be that in the hands of adversaries inference has been employed as a weapon against orthodoxy. But a weapon could be used rightly, too. What does an orthodox philosopher do when he encounters an embarrassing text? Does he not re-interpret it according to the six canons of the Mīmāṃsā—sat tātparyāyinas—the whole procedure depending on reason? How does he meet the objections of the adversaries either from his own system or from theirs? Is it not usually through reasoning? It might be objected, no doubt, that what is established by reasoning could be demolished by counter-reasoning. In reply we may as well point out that what is apparently asserted in one text is apparently denied in another. It is ironical that rather than questioning the credentials of authority as the right means of knowledge or pramāṇa, one should kowtow to the much abused courtesan of reasoning—kāmacārinī—in order to effect a reconciliation!

If there has been an abuse of reason it must be righted by sound reasoning. If a philosopher feels himself unequal to the task let him doff the robes of a philosopher and take to irrationalism. Only let him remember that irrationalism, whether in religious sphere or outside, is intellectual suicide which cannot even legitimate itself, one blind faith being as good as another.

The pity of it is that once the legitimate status of reason has been brought low a series of anti-intellectual gimmicks is bound to come home to roost. We know how Madhva arranges and develops them. We may, for our intellectual curiosity, counter them with a few objections. Granted that reasoning is inadequate in coming to the knowledge of the Infinite, how could we know that Āgama is the right means except through reasoning? The strength of an argument is the strength of its weakest link. If the hypothesis that the Āgama
alone is the adequate means for the knowledge of God is thus dependent on an inference, either the inference is unassailable or the hypothesis itself could be legitimately disputed. As for the second supposition that the Veda is apauruṣeya we must say that such a hypothesis is beyond human experience and the testimony of sākṣin. Moreover it is against the law of universal causality, and is diametrically opposed to Madhva's theory of svatantra. No being besides God could have in itself adequate explanation of its own existence. If it did, it would be svatantra in its being and consequently in its operation which is clearly impossible. Madhva is certainly unfair in rejecting the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika contention that God must be regarded as the author of the Vedas. His own argument that we should sin by excess if we postulate omniscience on the part of the author and the certainty that he would never deceive is no more than specious. If reason could establish the existence of God, it could as well demonstrate that He is omniscient and that He can neither deceive nor be deceived. No special hypothesis will be called for. The Puranic conception that God deceives the wicked is as weird as the other assertion that even those who hate Him will be saved. Let it be, then, reinterpreted as the latter is.

It is worth noting that even if the triple conception—that an omniscient God who cannot deceive is the author of the Veda—were a postulate it would be much less unreasonable than the hypothesis which maintains that the Veda is authorless. It is not the number that matters here so much as the degree of reasonableness or the lack of it. Also Madhva's contention that because the author of the Veda is not known it is needless to postulate one is unsound. All that we assert is that there should be an author. The question whether it is God or man or a group of men who is the author is not ours to discuss since it belongs to the introductory part of Hindu theology. So is the case with Madhva's declaration that the knowledge and
practice of dharma is impossible if one does not admit the authority of the Veda. Dharma is a complex concept implying the obligations of man both as a human being and as a subject of religion. While for the latter he may need to submit himself to positive revelation and religious authority the former he can know by reason alone. Else no country could have a civil or criminal law applicable to all, irrespective of caste or creed. Hence Madhva's argument that life is impossible but for dharma, and dharma is impossible but for the Veda is fallacious in its assumption as well as in its conclusion. We may note also the repeated appeal he makes to fallible reason in establishing the authority of the infallible Veda.

Madhva does an ill turn to reason, and consequently to his realism itself, by denying that man can reach up to God by reason unaided by authority. Given the limited nature of the Naiyāyika God as the fashioner or controller (vyavasthāpaka) of the world Madhva was perhaps right in his criticism of their arguing from effect to cause. If all that God did was to put order in an already existing world one can hardly conclude from it either to his omniscience or to his omnipotence. But to jump from it to a universal conclusion that all arguments from effect to cause in proving the existence of God are unwarranted is itself illegitimate. Madhva himself, let us note, admits in general that the existence of every being entirely depends on God. He also asserts that in a cognitive act like perception the sākṣīn grasps and manifests the existence of the self. The sākṣīn witnesses also the inadequacies experienced by the same self. Can the sākṣīn fail to realize that the limitations reach up to the very core of the jīva's existence? The limitations of the jīva would, then, imply that he does not exist on his own, that his existence is not of his essence, that he does not have within himself sufficient explanation for his existence. This would mean that the explanation is to be sought in someone else who must explain the
existence of the jiva as well as his own. And such a being could only be God.

Can the Agama by itself establish the existence and nature of God? It cannot, even if we take it on blind faith. At Madhva's own admission at least a global knowledge due to experience must be presupposed even to grasp what the Agama talks about. However perfectly and completely the Veda might by itself speak about God it will be partially or fully lost on the individual according to the limitations of his experience. In the absence of all experience, which includes also reasoning, the individual would not be able to grasp the import of the Vedic words, much less their ultimate Object. It follows, then, that natural experience of man has a fundamental and important role to play even in the understanding of the Veda.

Two major considerations, as we can see, must have prompted Madhva to deny that we can reach up to the transcendent. One is the denial of it as seen in the Brahma-sūtras (II, 1, 11); the other his own idea of creation. The shackles of the sūtra text he could hardly escape. But it is also clear that his conception of creation, even though more advanced than that of the Naiyāyikas, stops short of creation ex nihilo, and in so doing puts up an insurmountable barrier between the finite and the Infinite. In fairness to Madhva, however, it must be said that more than any other Indian philosopher, the Ācārya makes the existence of every being without exception totally dependent on God. He grants that the all-perfect Lord does not require this world to fulfil any of his needs, since he has none. He goes further and asserts that God need not have "created" this world, and that He could have created it "someother way."

12. Cf. supra p.121

13. śakto'pi bhagavān viṣṇurākartum kartumanyatha/ svabhinn- neṃ kārṇābhinnabhinnam viśvaṃ karotyajah/—A.V.II 1, 91b-92a.
Since Madhva does not develop the idea further we shall have to interpret the word creation here in the strictest Madhva sense of endowing the reality with further specifications.\textsuperscript{14} And what does anyathä imply? It may mean that God is not bound to use the means He actually employs for the work of creation or specification. Madhva does not raise the question whether the result would be the same in case God utilized some other means. But he seems to assert that even in God's working, particular means give rise to particular results—all under His will.\textsuperscript{15} Anyathä might also mean, as Jayatīrtha seems to think "dispensing with all means or secondary causes".\textsuperscript{16}

If this is true, we should say that God could have created the world without any primeval matter, and this would in turn amount to creation ex nihilo. One might wonder if this is not an instance of reading too much into the text. Certainly creation ex nihilo has not found favour with the followers of Madhva. But the Ācārya himself declares elsewhere that the Lord takes the help of prakṛti just as a man going out for a stroll playfully takes a stick for support although he could very well do without it.\textsuperscript{17} Would the man have the same kind of walk without the stick? And what of the stick itself? Could the world be the same without prakṛti? And what about the prakṛti itself?

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. supra, p.143
\textsuperscript{15} Āśkto'pi hyanyathā kartum sveçchāniyamato hariḥ/ kāraṇairniyataireva karotīdham jagat sadā/—A.V. II 1, 89.
\textsuperscript{16} Anyathā kāraṇair vinā kartum āśkto'pi hariḥ kāra-

nāntarānyupādāyaiva karisyāmīti sveçchāniyamataḥ kāraṇair
evedām jagat sadā srājati/ evam anyathā prakṛtyāhāākāram
saṅkāreṇa mahāntam ityeyam/ tathā prakṛtīm nimittikṛtya
kālādikāṃ copādānikṛtya kartum āśkto'pyṣṭenaivedem etad
upādānikṛtyaivedam śrākgāmīṇītī sveçchāniyamato niyataih
kṛptaireva tathā niyataiḥ svaniyatasattāśaktīśāhābhīr eva
kāraṇair idam jagat sadā karoti/—N.S. (p.220a) quoted D.M.,
p.327.

\textsuperscript{17} Prakṛtyevasaṃbhastu yathā kaścit samarvho'pi pādena
gantuṃ līlayā daṇḍamavaṣṭabhya gacchati/—G.Bh. IX, 8 (p.39).
It is true these questions have no answers in Madhva or in his commentators because they have never been posed. We have posed them now if only to show that in Madhva's theism the problem of creation can find its solution only in creation ex nihilo. Prakṛti and jīvas may be existing from beginningless time. But if they depend on the svatantra for their existence now, it is from him that they have derived their existence from beginningless time. The Lord has created them freely, but not out of anything else that might be imagined as pre-existing. If pre-existing matter is postulated, the problem will only be shifted, not solved. Hence we shall have to state the matter thus: The omniscient and omnipotent God by His free will has created everything else—the world, even in its primordial matter, and the individuals even in their nature as souls. It is a needless supposition, and faulty also to that extent, to make His creative act dependent in any way—de jure or de facto—on pre-existing entity.

Did God create the souls and matter in time or before time? It would seem that our philosophical knowledge as it stands cannot furnish us with a definitive answer. Theoretically we might say that the effects could exist as long as the cause does—this from all eternity. But that is no more than a possibility. Was there sufficient reason for God to create from all eternity what He could as well create in time? The question might be asked and might be disputed. But the reasons advanced by Dr. B.N.K. Sharma against creation in time are far from convincing. "The awkward question arises at once," he says, "as to what induced the Deity, which had obviously kept in its shell, all the time, to suddenly take it into its head to come out and call a Universe into being. The objections apply, in the first place, to creation ex nihilo. But no Vedāntin subscribes to such a view. The hypothesis of creation in time and the argument to the existence of God from the supposed necessity of a prius to the temporal series are definitely
abandoned by Madhva. Creation, to him, is no doubt a real process. But it is a continuous creation—a constant dependence of the world on the Supreme for all its determinations: kālakarmasvabhāvāṁ nityamēvaśvarechchayā/ (B.T., p.14).

In reply we might say that the objection, if it were valid, would rule out any divine intervention in the world. If nothing could induce God to call a universe into being all of a sudden too could have induced Him to call the same universe into being from all eternity; or to preserve it now continuously or through a continuous creation as Dr. Sharma would have it; or even to pay any attention to this contingent universe which cannot add any way to His divine perfections. We might circumvent the problem by a play on words—by labelling eternal dependence as eternal creation. Such an abuse of the word 'creation', however, cannot find its sanction either in etymology or in our usage—philosophical or lay. In other words though dependence may be the result of creation, the two are certainly not identical. We are obliged to declare against Dr. Sharma's belief, therefore, that as far as the jivas and the primeval matter are concerned, Madhva takes their creation or origin for granted. He does not explain it. How they were there from all eternity, why they existed from the beginning-less time—such questions are neither asked nor answered. All that Madhva asserts is that if the Lord so willed he could have brought about the determinations of the world we see without making use of the primordial matter. It would scarcely seem right, therefore, to maintain with Dr. Sharma that Madhva explains the origin of eternal substances through eternal creation "in the sense of positing an eternal and constant dependence of all finite reality in each and every one of its

18. Phil. of Śrī Madhvācārya, p.151. If the trouble is with creation in time it may be easily solved by pointing out that God's decision to create is eternal, but its manifestation takes place in time. After all Madhva himself admits the distinction between sakti (latency) and vyakti (manifestation). Cf. Ibid., p.152.
states of being and becoming (ṣaṃbhāvavikāras) and the eightfold cosmic determinations (sṛṣṭi-dvāṣṭakam), upon the One Infinite and Independent Principle viz., God or Brahma.\footnote{19}

The question, then, as to why God decided to create anything at all is more relevant than whether creation took place in time or in eternity. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan phrases it "If God creates, if the beginning of the world-process is the result of the desire of the divine self, we may, no doubt, be able to account for creation. But the difficulty remains that whatever feels a want or has a desire is imperfect and limited.\footnote{20} This is a common problem, framed in common man's language. Any direct answer to it is bound to look ridiculous for the real reason that the objection itself is ridiculous. It is in fact a pseudo-problem--as non-sensical as to ask--what would happen if two and two do not make four? The truth is that if God decides to create, He does so only because He wants to. If it is further asked why He wants to, the answer would be 'because He wants to'. The absurdity is not with the answer but with the question. Once we posit the all-perfect nature of God, any gainful motivation which has its end either outside or inside the Deity itself is out of question. All primary motivation in the act of creation must be sought only in the spontaneity of God's will, enlightened by his knowledge. Thus the why's may have a gainful aspect in human beings which are imperfect and tend to perfection. But they have certainly no sense in the case of God. This is what is implied by Madhva when he describes God's creating through sport--līlā--or as a spontaneous gesture.

Madhva's doctrine on creation should lead us to his teaching on space and time. Dr. Sharma is right when he declares that according to Madhva space could not have been

\footnotesize{\begin{tabular}{l}
19. \textit{Ibid.}, p.155 \\
20. \textit{Iph.}, p.750
\end{tabular}}
created. It is obvious that what Madhva implies by his denial of creation is creation in time. The implication is that space has been there from all eternity. This is hardly right. Whatever proofs Madhva may trot out in defence of the reality of avyākṛta akāśa, all things considered, it is no more than a mental construct. It could not have been created because it is not real. A brief analysis of the concept is bound to bring the truth home.

Space is postulated as a receptacle for any reality to be in. On this supposition we must ask: Does not space itself need a receptacle to exist in? If it does, we are in for infinite regress. If it does not, neither do other beings. Do spiritual beings require space, too? If they required it, existence of God would necessarily presuppose existence of space. Also, the existence of space would not depend on His free will, and consequently space would be independent of God. If on the other hand it is regarded as dependent, God would be free to annihilate it. If He did, what would there be in the place of space? Or should there be something at all?

It would seem that in Madhva's theory of space the need and law of conceptualization has been made the need and law of being. Even a little introspection is enough to tell us that our thought process cannot take place except in terms of images. We say spirit and conceive it as something concrete. We speak of God, the parama-ātman, and conceptualize Him as a human person. Whatever be the idea, it needs at least the word image to pass through our consciousness. Even such chimeras as a 'square circle' can be thought of only because of different

21. p.74, op.cit. The Doctor's equivocal use of the word 'creation' results in a needless confusion. Having once declared that Madhva teaches eternal creation of eternal entities he now denies that space is ever created at all.

22. Vide note 7, p.64.
images superimposed on each other. But we must remember that it is one thing to conceive and another to understand. We may conceive God as a human person, but we understand Him to be a spirit; we conceive a chimera as something objective, but we understand it to be a self-contradiction; we conceive a 'pure nothing' in terms of a being, but we understand it to be pure naught. So is the case with space. We imagine that every being should exist somewhere. Because we cannot conceive of nothingness except by way of something positive we imagine space where there is nothing else. What else can be 'in there'? we ask. The answer, of course, is 'nothing', not even 'in there'. If it is difficult to conceive of such a possibility, it is at least not impossible to understand it. Does not our eye tell us again and again that the earth is really flat? Yet we understand better. Does not our hand tell us that the plank we write on is a continuum through and through? And yet on microscopic examination we understand that it is more porous than solid.

Space, therefore, is only a mental construct, a convenient 'form' for our conceptualization. It is not infinite; neither is it created nor uncreated precisely because it is not real.23 Madhva's belief, therefore, that space is the object of sáksin is incorrect. Space may be an essential 'form' for buddhi to work in, but it is certainly not the object of sáksin.

What has been said of space may be to a certain extent applied to time as well. But there are differences which are more than accidental. Unlike space, time is not a mental construct. However, it is not a substance, either. It is a relation between movements in material beings, measured in terms

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23. Hence the words of Herbert Spencer, which Dr. Sharma quotes with approval, do become significant albeit in a way not intended by the author. "If space is created, it must have been previously non-existent. The non-existence of space cannot, however, be imagined by any mental effort. If the non-existence of space is absolutely inconceivable, then
of duration, which implies before and after. Hence if the bases of time are absent we cannot speak of real time. Thus because any movement in the strictest sense is found only in material beings, spiritual realities qua spiritual transcend time and all that it implies. It is an illusion, then, to believe that time is without beginning and without end irrespective of material universe. Whatever be the duration of the universe time begins with it and ends with it—if a beginning and an end could be predicated of the material universe or its basis—the primeval matter. We may see also that it is the juxtaposition of the different movements, which provides justification for the divisions of time like, for example, past, present and future. On the other hand it is the mind that reads a unity into them, which unity is extended indefinitely both backwards and forwards—into the indefinite past and the endless future. As a result the conception of an infinite time takes shape, just like the conceptualization of an infinite space. Neither of them is objectively true, because each is characterized by self-contradiction.

If Madhva's theories on space and time cannot be held as altogether defensible, his views on visesa and bheda are at least pointers in the right direction. It is a fact of our everyday experience that while our self-identity does not suffer in the course of time, we undergo numerous minor and major changes within ourselves. Unless, of course, we resort to a brand of monism and deny the objectivity of all changes, and consequently of our experience itself, we must explain how the so-called substance and accidents can co-exist in the same being without endangering either its unity or its diversity. The problem goes even deeper. How could there be a variety in the essence itself, such as, for instance, the essence of God necessarily, its creation is absolutely inconceivable."

--p.74. op.cit. Underlines inserted.
Madhva has tried to explain it through the device of viśeṣa which he identifies with the reality itself. It is not a relation between two or more entities, much less is it an entity by itself. Else we should be led to infinite regress. However, we might ask a further question: In the substance-attribute distinction, is the viśeṣa identical with the substance or the attribute? If it were identical with the substance, then the substance might be distinguished from its attributes; but how do the attributes differ from the substance? If, however, it is identified with the attribute how is the substance distinct from it? If, on the other hand, it is identified with both the entities how do the two viśeṣas, and consequently the two entities—substance and attribute—come to be united?

There is something more. If the viśeṣa is identical with the substance which it distinguishes, how does it explain the distinction? How could we say that a substance is distinct from its attribute because of viśeṣa? We could as well assert that substance is distinct from its attributes because it is substance—viśeṣa being identical with it. Granted, therefore, that viśeṣa is identical with the entity which it distinguishes, it cannot be offered as an explanation, if by explanation reason or cause is meant. Viśeṣa, then, is no more than a label, a convenient label as it is. In point of fact what is meant is that substance is such because it is substance, and attributes are such because they are attributes. In other words, in a being we take substance and attributes for granted, and believe we have explained them, though we have not proved their distinction. It is an age-old illusion to posit intrinsic causes or causes within a being. We forget we cannot go beyond being even in our explanation. At the most we can describe it under different aspects. These different aspects are justified on two counts—because our vision is infinitesimally limited in its intake, and because the being itself is inexhaustible in its richness.
Such an explanation rules out on the one hand any fragmentation of reality. On the other it avoids a sort of monotony within the being itself. But does it leave room for a real distinction within the being so that both its stable and changing elements are preserved? The difficulty arises from our view that makes all being something fixed or static. Such a rigid view would entail insoluble problems. A satisfactory answer, it would seem, must be found only in the view that any being is dynamic by nature and a subsisting relation. Its dynamic nature would make it one and multiple, stable and changing at the same time. It is like a ball of fire. Its relationship to the Absolute would give it its immutability and its bond with other beings would make it evolving. Anyway Madhva's doctrine of višeṣas has something to tell us although it tells it rather clumsily. By and large Madhva has taken the labels of our ordinary parlance as the starting point of his explanation.

However, the Ācārya's treatment of bheda is definitely a happier one. It is a stroke of genius on his part to identify with the nature of a being its difference from all the rest. In the same act of cognition we grasp a being as what it is and what it is not. The second is implied in the first. If we need time and another act to explicitate it we must attribute such a need to the limitations of our discursive intellect. We saw how it is with the so-called višeṣas. We see a similar application in the case of bheda, too. Madhva has made his point to our satisfaction not only positively, but what is more, he has forestalled almost all the objections that might be levelled against his theory.

Madhva's view on yogyatā of jīva is a particular application of his more general theory on svarūpa-bheda. Yogyatā is but another term for the svarūpa of the jīva itself with a particular emphasis on its individual aspect. It is the same
idea, given another name of haṭha that Madhva employs to attempt a solution of the problem of evil. The classical solution, we know, has been the theory of Karma. It is not without reason that the Śaṅkhyaś and the Mīmāṃsakas who have no room for God in their systems find in Karma as good a solution to evil as any other. The rank atheists are the Buddhists, to be sure, who carry the theory to its logical conclusion. But it is inconceivable that the limitations of the solution, despite its classical look, escaped the keen intellects of the Ācāryas. After all, the theory has nothing philosophical about it. Its working is mechanical and solution scientific. The question 'why evil?' is answered, 'because of the earlier evil or of the previous life'. We may push the solution back into eternity, but eternity is not equivalent to causality. We may go round and round in circles for ever and ever, but in so doing we cannot get out of them. Besides, the problems which the solution raises are legion. How did the mechanical law of Karma come to lord it over the apparently spiritual jīvas? How does it, lacking all intelligence, coordinate the infinitely complex mechanism of action, reaction and inter-action which involves an indefinite number of beings starting from eternity? If the law is so potent and inexorable as that, what guarantee do we have that the jīva will not fall a prey to its tentacles even after his liberation?

These and other objections may possibly be dismissed as valid only against atheistic positions. Could not a theistic interpretation hope to muster better cogency? Let us suppose that the Karma theory is postulated to explain the evil in the world and at the same time to save God from its responsibility. The question is whether such a twin objective is possible to achieve. God could be spared the responsibility only if the law were made independent of Him. In that case, however, His omnipotence would be compromised. If on the other hand Karma is subordinated to Him, then His will should
be regarded as ruling the world. That would apparently make Him responsible for everything in it and empty the Karma postulate of any raison d'être. It is true some sort of compromise could be attempted to escape the dilemma. God could be thought of as ruling only according to the Karma of the individual. But such a compromise is more facile than rewarding. If by karma of the individual mere moral justice is meant the postulate of a distinct law of karma is clearly superfluous. The individual's nature, the environment, God's auxiliary grace—these should be the guidelines according to which God meets out justice to the jīva. Also in the solution the ruthlessness of karma is not satisfactorily explained. If God could help the jīva break loose from the shackles of karma why does He fail to mitigate its more abrasive effects? Why did He first of all let the jīva be swallowed up by the monster that is Karma? Or did it take place in spite of Him—His omniscience and omnipotence? We have seen that pushing the explanation into eternity is no more than escapism. For either we admit that the jīva has been always saddled with a body—which would imply that he was given no choice in the matter, or we must grant that at least in priority of order, if not of time, the jīva was without a body. In that case he could not have come in contact with it since apart from his body he is incapable of sinning. And if by some chance he were capable, then there would be no certainty that he will not fall again even after liberation.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that Madhva had to resort to the theory of Karma for resolving the problem of suffering

24. Thus Dr.R.N. Sarma's plea fails to carry conviction. "Then what about the first life prior to which there could not have been any operations of the law of Karma? The reply is that Karma is "Anadi" or beginningless in time. That is the only way of cutting the Gordian knot". (R.R., Sec. Ed., p.612). It would rather appear to be like cutting one's moorings, only to be drifted in an amorphous eternity.
and differences among human beings. As a self-confessed commentator of Badarayana he could not deny what his master asserted in V.S. III 2, 38-41. However, under the impact of his own theistic beliefs he did succeed in whittling down some of the deadly implications of the Karma theory. Thus while he admits that the jīva has been in the clutches of Karma from all eternity he refuses to make Karma the sole cause of differences between the jīvas. Drawing upon his more general doctrine of svarūpa-bheda he finds the ultimate solution in the nature of the individual himself. Thus if in particular circumstances he acts in a definite way, the explanation must be found not only in his past Karma, but also in his individual nature and his self-determining will or prayatna.25 We see also with what success Madhva tries to preserve the freedom of the individual through his insistence on prayatna. Whatever be the motives and compulsions that urge a man to act, we may say in general that he decides finally to act just because he wants to. This element of spontaneity in man, however slender it may be in itself is sacred to him since without it no human act or human freedom and responsibility could be defended. And in the absence of such freedom all ethical effort would turn out to be self-defeating and sham.

Madhva's laudable insistence on the self-determining aspect of man should have logically led him to the conclusion that each man as he is constituted today is free to make or mar his own destiny. But the Ācārya proposes the so-called jīva-travidhya or the threefold classification which makes some jīvas only fit to be saved (muktīyogya), while others are destined either for eternal hell (tamoyogya) or for endless samsāra (nitya-saṃsārins). At first sight the doctrine savours of pessimism, and on that account many a critic has taken exception to it. Admirers of Madhva, however, have been as

25. God's help and Grace must be included, undoubtedly.
quick to defend it with more zeal, it would seem, than reason.26 Thus Dr.R.N. Sarma believes that the doctrine is the offshoot of the three gunas of the Sāṅkhya school.27 This is not true. Madhva has never suggested such an explanation. It would, moreover, go counter to Madhva's svarūpa-bheda theory. It would make karma more fundamental and God merely a care-taker. How does a particular jīva contract particular karma? And how is God free from all responsibility?28

Dr.B.N.K. Sharma has culled a number of ancient texts with a view to proving that the doctrine had been adumbrated earlier.29 But the rigour of the evidence may still be disputed. What is more likely, however, is that Madhva has overshot himself with his doctrine of svarūpa-bheda. Man's actions are righteous or wicked because his nature is righteous or wicked. How did he inherit that nature? To assert that the jīva has been so from all eternity is to evade the issue, not to face it. Mere assertion has never been equated with solution in any philosophy. That some souls are incorrigibly perverse by nature because they have been always so is no more than a tautology. Also if carried to its logical end it will undermine ethical life, too, in that it will have no room for personal responsibility here and now. If a man is perverse by nature his acts will be wicked whatever be his intention. If he is naturally virtuous, his deeds will also be such despite


27. "He who has eyes to see will readily perceive that a doctrine like this is based on the theory of the three gunas which is the mainstay of the Sāṅkhya thought."--R.R. (1st Ed.), p.119.

28. "The determination of eligibility for eternal Heaven or eternal Hell is God's work. Of course there is no arbitriness in God's decisions, as the latter are based on the Karma of individuals."--p.141, op.cit. Cf. also Phil. of Sri Madhva,
his motivations. Or will they be? How could we regard them as morally good or evil if personal choice has been taken away? If a man chooses good he does so because he wants to; if he chooses evil, again he does so because he wants to. He may make or mar himself according to his choice. If, however, the external pressure is too much for him to sustain, or if God were not to aid him with His grace, his moral responsibility will diminish or even disappear altogether. But given all the circumstances his moral act consists in his acting freely or with self-determination. It might be objected, no doubt, that given 'equal' amount of liberty one man will still choose good and another evil. The answer is similar to what we gave to the question why God decides to create. One man wants to do good finally because he wants to, another wants to do evil finally because he wants to. That is precisely the nature of choice or self-determination. Deny it and you have denied liberty itself. One wishes that Madhva had taken note of this idea already implied in his conception of prayatna, and left the classification of men all to themselves.

p.217, for a criticism of the interpretation from the textual point of view.

29. Vide pp.214-17, op. cit.

30. Hence whatever be his premisses Dr. Radhakrishnan is right in his condemnation that 'the theory of election is fraught with great danger to ethical life'. (Iph., p.750). Both R.N. Sarma (R.R., p.119, 1st ed.) and B.N.K. Sharma (Phil. of Sri Madh., p.212) fail to meet the criticism effectively.

31. Thus any psychologist will tell us that an alcoholic is a sick man where his drink is concerned, and scarcely responsible for his action. The fact is taken into consideration even in Law as also the extenuating circumstances like provocation, inadvertence etc.

32. As a consequence R.N. Sarma's spirited defence of an eternal Hell lacks the logical thoroughness he claims for the view. "Madhva's doctrine of eternal Hell owes its origin not to any influence of Christianity but to a sense of logical thoroughness and to an application of the theory of Guṇas to
Thus we see that the Ācārya does labour under a few drawbacks. However, normally they are not of his making. Also, rather than diminish his grandeur they enhance it as an original thinker. It may be that at times he gives us the impression of being a pugilist. But even here he was left with little choice. Śāṅkara's monism was so entrenched that nothing less than a pugilist's fists were needed to batter it for any appreciable result. It is true also that Madhva asks for no quarters and gives none. But then the other Ācāryas are not more sparing in their criticism of adversaries. We should appreciate, then, the spirit which animated Madhva—the spirit of free and independent thinking that soars to the high heavens without losing its roots dug deep in the terra firma. There will be found little that is esoteric in his system, little that is mystifying, little that is irrational. He is a firm believer in human experience and builds his system on human experience. For human experience proceeds from and points to the nature of jīvātman.

the values of the other world. If there should be an eternal Heaven, then why not an eternal Hell? Logical consistency requires that the admission of eternal Heaven necessitates that of eternal Hell." (R.R., p.140; 1st ed.) Logical consistency requires no such thing. A reward may be more than equal to the task done—there is nothing unfair in loading a boy with gifts for a small act of kindness he did. But it would be rank injustice to mutilate his hands for stealing a fruit. Also, bounty is no injustice, miserliness is.