

Chapter Four

INDIA AND MYSTICISM

1. *The Mystical Desacralization of Divine Kingship*

China shows the patriarchal basis of civilization in the Far East. It, like Japan, has provided a model of divine kingship in even modern times. Near Eastern examples such as Egypt are long-dead cultures, surviving in memory through the Hebrew rejection of divine kingship. Yet divine kingship in Egypt differs from China due to the importance of the priesthood and of gods other than Pharaoh, and to Egyptian concern with individual immortality. Securing safe passage to a kingdom of the dead detaches us from a divine kingdom on earth.

In the West, divine kingship yielded to sacred Hebrew kingship, Greek citizenship, and individual human rights. The political world was transformed. But another evolution from divine kingship is possible. Protesting tyranny is part of Hindu tradition, since the second ruling caste is responsible for meeting the obligations of its caste to the people and the common good (*Mahabharata*, 60.20). Yet there is also a move in India from merely protesting oppression to mystical escape from such oppression by viewing it as illusory. In the Western view, this option tends to epitomize India. Yet from its own perspective, India does not escape reality: it escapes only illusion, the ignorance of reality. To say that something is illusory is not to say that it is unreal, but that it appears under a false description. Hinduism escapes false descriptions, not the reality of things. Just as a cord in the dark may appear as a frightening serpent, reality may appear as an oppressive prince. But the West assumes the reality of the "prince" precisely under that description, precisely as a prince. In the Western story of freedom, Indian thought escapes a very true description of an oppressive social reality.

In the West, the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides followed a path similar to India. Yet overall the West rejected that path, opting instead for a will-to-power against the world. Technologically, imperially, financially, scientifically, and culturally, the West struck out against the world and against its limits on us: "...even if he is intellectually developed, powerful by his scientific knowledge and mastery of Nature, even if he has made the elements into his servants and has made Earth the threshold of his throne, modern [Western] man is only a sort of inferior demon who employs his quasi divine powers to satisfy his animal desires, since he has not found a way to develop his heart and spirit." (Aurobindo, 1939, in *Oeuvres* 2, 3894). Yet this inferior demon from Great Britain subjugated India in its colonial empire until 1948. India gained its independence largely by Ghandi's method of passive resistance, but post-independence India has preferred to stand tall among the powers of the world through the atomic bomb. India's emergence as a regional nuclear power in Asia will not end its mystical tradition, but it may end the pre-eminence of that tradition over Indian political life.



Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

Mohandas Gandhi Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi spent his life campaigning for human rights in India. His strategy was to use a combination of passive resistance to and noncooperation with the British, who ruled India. Gandhi said his techniques were inspired by the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, by American writer Henry David Thoreau, and by the teachings of Jesus Christ. In 1947 Gandhi's pacifist efforts brought an end to British rule in India.
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External limits are real to the West. Yet traditional India is an unrealised possibility in the West's own history. For a culture to know itself is to know what choices it has sacrificed. India, too, is moved by a will-to-power, but the world that limits that power is taken as illusory. The will finds satisfaction by an internal meditative discipline, without external struggle: there is nothing external to struggle against. A seeming passivity contrasts with the West's explosive energy. Devotees of mysticism, without governing, reign supreme in traditional India. There is no place for a divine king as such in India as in China.

China maintained imperial unity more uniformly than India. Such rule haunted India, but more common was feudalism, splintered states, or colonization (Greek, Arab, British). Yet this is not the full reason for India's feudal disarray. Political splintering must itself be explained. One cause of India's feudal disarray is religious and philosophical. The Chinese emperor's role was political and religious. He was a living god. The Indian regime is political patriarchy in which princes are not divine and lack supreme religious authority. Yet the prestige of religion in India exceeds that of politics. The caste to which princes belong does not have the highest standing. They do not belong to the highest Brahman caste devoted to reflection and meditation. The prince lacks sway over religious life. He steers at the steering wheel of the state and nothing happens. Chinese emperors had an obligation to Heaven, not to a priestly caste above them. Religion has had immense impact on India, being responsible for a caste system asserting the supremacy of religion and limiting government's power to reform society. If China shows the political achievement of the East, India is pre-eminent in religion and philosophy (Hegel, 1927xi, 191ff). India builds a vast philosophical and religious edifice on a patriarchal social and political basis. Patriarchy is preserved politically but it is overcome on a sacred level.

Sometime between 200 bc and 100 ad, the Manu Smriti, or Law of Manu, was written. In it the Aryan priest-lawmakers created the four great hereditary divisions of society still surviving today, placing their own priestly class at the head of this caste system with the title of earthly gods, or Brahmans. Next in order of rank were the warriors, the Kshatriyas. Then came the Vaisyas, the farmers and merchants. The fourth of the original castes was the Sudras, the laborers, born to be servants to the other three castes, especially the Brahman. Far lower than the Sudras—in fact, entirely outside the social order and limited to doing the most menial and unappealing tasks—were those people of no caste, formerly known as Untouchables. (In the 1930s Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi applied the term Harijans, or "children of God," to this group.) Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

religion. Brahmanist religion rests on no prophet or holy book. It is a hypothesis about enlightenment and how to reach it. Not a dogma, it must be tested by experience. Brahmanist philosophy by itself does not give mystical experience. It gives meditative discipline by which to approach it.

Meditation seems based on a principle of monotony. By repeating endlessly a single syllable (*om*) you grow numb to distinctions in the world. That a seemingly benumbing mystical experience actually comes from meditative techniques seems clear. Repeat *om* five hundred times. It ceases to be a word in English with a definite grammatical role; you cease to expect a *then* clause. The syllable *om* is your royal road to union with God, beyond the divisions of this world. Yet, though "mystical experience" is attainable, we can debate its meaning. Brahmanist philosophy maintains that the experience is not purely psychological or subjective. It argues that experience coming from meditation awakens the God within us.

Hindu and Buddhist temple architecture serve to symbolize the progress of meditation towards mystical experience. The fences with angular construction at ground level, and even before reaching the perfectly rounded pinnacle, symbolize the roughness of the world of illusion (*maya*) that comes to be smoothed out as one ascends into the mystical experience.



Scala/Art Resource, NY **Great Stupa** The Great Stupa is an ancient Buddhist temple located in Sanchi, a historic site in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Constructed between the 3rd century BC and the early 1st century AD, the temple is solid and enclosed by a stone outer fence with *toranas*, or gateways, on all four sides. Worshipers at the site pay their respects to Buddha by circling the dome, which represents the world mountain. Atop the dome, a square fence called the *harika* represents the heaven. The *harika* surrounds the *yasti*, a spire with three *chatras*, or disk shapes. The *yasti* represents the axis of the universe. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.



Scala/Art Resource, NY

The Hindu Temple The temple of Devi Jogadanta in Khajuraho, India, exemplifies the symbolic character of Hindu temple architecture. The symmetrical layout of the structure is a microcosm of the universe, with its four quarters and celestial roof. Similarly, the towering spire resembles a mountain and recalls the *axis mundi*, or cosmic pillar, which in archaic religious thought represents the center of the universe. The passage of the worshiper toward the image of the deity at the heart of the building symbolizes a spiritual journey toward *moksha*, or release from the cycle of death and rebirth. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.

Brahmanist philosophy promotes the awakening of the God within: it asserts the illusoriness of the world of suffering, and it promises an enlightenment beyond philosophical argumentation. Brahmanism leads the individual to "raise himself to his inner abstract unity" (Hegel, 1927xv, 326), hence above political patriarchy, above the insecurity, suffering, and bondage to despotic rule suppressing individual human rights. As viewed by Westerners convinced of the reality of the sensory world, Brahmanists take flight from the world. Hinduism leaves despotism intact on earth (Hegel, 1927xi, 219-20). Yet such flight shows an aspiration for freedom in the heart of despotism itself. Escape from institutions obstructing universal free interchange is an indictment of them. Human rights are not uniquely Western.



Walter S. Clark/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Yogi in Kerala Classical yoga is a *darsana*, or doctrine, that emphasizes purification through meditation. A **yogi**, or practitioner of yoga, meditates in order to achieve true bliss, which involves a complete withdrawal from the world and union with God. **Yogis** assume the bodily posture that affords them the most stability and the least effort, as shown here by this **yogi** from Kerala, India. Effective meditation relies on careful control of respiration and intense focus on a single object. The **yogi** strives to transcend body and matter through consistent meditation. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001

Yet religion in India preserves despotism even in fleeing it. Hegel viewed it as an opium of the people (Hegel, 1927xv, 395). Not surprisingly, Hindu philosophers often object to Hegel's description of Hinduism as a variation of "Oriental despotism." That Hinduism is escapist, fleeing from oppression in the world by dismissing the oppression as illusory, has indeed been a convenient Western prejudice. Such a view made India seem essentially passive, and thus ideally suited to external colonial rule. But Gandhi's concept of non-violence and passive resistance to British colonialism revealed a hidden strength in apparent passivity. This strength is deeply rooted in Hindu philosophy, and grounds a metaphysical concept of human rights. Human rights are a special application of the rights of all living things that can suffer, understood as all identical in God.

The Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Brahmanism explains the relation of reality to illusion on analogy with the relation of a cord in the dark to the serpent that it seems to be. If one sees that the cord as a cord and not a serpent, one no longer strikes out in fear against a serpent. British rule resembled such a serpent. A serpent survives by the fear it inspires. Not to fear it, and thus to avoid all injury of it while disengaging oneself from it, is to destroy its power. Its power was the power of an illusion dependent on active resistance to it.

"Advaita Vedanta, (Sanskrit advaita, "nondual (universal)"; vedanta, "the end of all knowledge."), a Hindu philosophy that teaches that this world is illusion, and that the truth is one and indivisible. In 9th-century India, Hindu philosopher Shankara developed this system of thought based on the Sanskrit scripture Vedanta Sutra, written by the mystic Vyasa." Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

It has often been remarked that Gandhi's method would not work against Hitler or Stalin. Are some serpents really serpents? Some serpents are fatal to your illusory bodily self, but even they are not necessarily feared if your bodily self is not your true self. Of course a cord as such is not reality to the Brahmanists. But meditation is guided by the thought that the cord is to the serpent as reality is to mere appearance.

The two major philosophical traditions of India, Hinduism and Buddhism, agree on certain principles and meditative techniques. They use similar methods of meditation. By meditation they seek depersonalization, and they define life as suffering. It is usual to take them in their historical order, looking first at the Hindu tradition that originated with Brahmanism. *Buddha* reformed Hinduism, separating from the Brahmanist-Hindu tradition in part by rejecting that system. He opened enlightenment to all, despite caste.



Kamakura Daibutsu Buddhism was introduced to Japan in AD 539, when a Korean ruler sought an alliance with the ruler of Yamato in Japan. To please the Japanese, the Korean ruler sent a statue of the Buddha and some Buddhist scriptures, which he described as the greatest treasures he could send. The *Daibutsu* (Great Buddha) figure at Kamakura, Japan, was cast in bronze in 1252. The figure depicts Amitabha (also known as Amida Buddha) in perfect repose and passionless calm. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

The Hindu world is one of fantasy and poetry (Hegel, 1927xv, 355). The prose world of

China is one of science and management. The often anonymous inventions of China cannot be belittled: gun powder, the printing press, and so on. Prose also includes historical narration. Ancient China achieved an historical consciousness of unrepeatable political and dynastic events. By contrast, we see India's past through a shroud of myth and imprecision (Hegel 1927xi, 221). This is partly due to viewing time in the illusory sensory realm as an eternal return of the wheel of fate endlessly turning. No need to cling exclusively to passing events that will repeat themselves indefinitely (Hegel, 1927xv, 378). The Ages of Reason and of the Enlightenment admired Confucianist morality in China (Baruzi, 1907, 92; Voltaire, 1760, ch 197). A more Romantic era preferred the softer tones of India's poetic sensibility. Friedrich Schlegel looked for a renewal of the West through India (Schlegel, 1808, 111) .

“Many consider his [Friedrich Schlegel's] most important work to be *On the Language and Wisdom of India*, 1808. It helped establish the modern science of comparative linguistics, a field of study that involves the comparison of different languages.”
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We know little of the origin of the Brahmins. Brahmanism grew out of a Vedism, a life-affirming religion introduced in India by invading Aryans in the second millennium B.C. The Aryans were semi-nomadic herders from the north who conquered pre-Vedic Indians by chariots and superior mobility. Yet after this conquest a loss of nerve seems to have struck the Aryan rulers. Apparently, a priestly portion of the ruling class forsook government, retreating from technology and administration into preoccupation with ritual and magic.



Indus Valley Civilization. Around 2500 BC, a civilization began to develop around the Indus River in what is now Pakistan and western India. [The Vedic Aryans invaded the Indus valley from 1500 B.C.].
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The priestly part of the Aryan governing class abdicated government service without falling into social insignificance. In fact, its prestige increased. The emergence of the reigning Brahman caste within the Aryan class suggests a disenchantment with political rule. Ruling princes, by accepting second-caste status, showed unease with their own despotism. A recurring theme of social philosophy, since Hegel, is lordship and bondage. Lordship is domestic, political, or divine. A political lord conquers a bondsperson, acquiring a right to his labor, only because the bondsperson prefers to live rather than to die (Hegel, 1927ii, 156). But is one free as a lord or despot? Or is one unhappily surrounded by servile masses with which one cannot identify?

A lord depends on bondspersons to freely sing his or her praises. But since death for a bondsperson is the only alternative to forced praises, the lord is rightly suspicious of the recognition received. Brahmans detaching themselves from our ordinary sensory world may have been Aryans freeing themselves from an oppressive lordship. Brahmans originally pursued ritual. Their divinity depended on it. Brahmans had an inborn eligibility for union with God that others lacked except by reincarnation as Brahmans. Brahmanist philosophy is based on the *Upanishads*, early Hindu texts written to justify Brahmanist magic ritual philosophically in an era when belief in magic was declining.

“Atman, in Hinduism, term for the breath or the soul and principle of life. The atman, or individual soul, however, is believed to be identical with Brahman, the universal world soul, or godhead.” Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

In the Hegelian story of freedom as the heroic epic of the West, India presents itself as Oriental despotism as it flees from itself. In India life is suffering, and religion the remedy. It is a means of eluding the insecurity of life in conditions of arbitrary rule where individual rights are not respected. For the West, the self is limited by an environment which bears down upon it from the outside. But the *Upanishads* teach that this external restriction is illusory. The finite self is ultimate reality, the infinite substance and might of the universe: atman = Brahman.

Since Brahman is without external limitation, to realize your identity with Brahman is to escape limitations of ordinary life. All Hindus seek oneness with Brahman. Yet only Brahmans realize the goal; others depend on reincarnation. You are born in a higher caste in a next life if you perform duties of your caste in this life. The deeply conservative impact of this belief on society is apparent. There is a non-Hindu sense of "reincarnation" in which it is an ever-present option. Thus some philosophers reincarnate Socrates: they identify with him and recreate his essential project, devoting their lives to bringing it closer to realization. Anyone may decide to reincarnate a past role-model. But, according to the Hindu doctrine, the life you have is decided through natural law (*karma*) by the good or bad acts of your prior lives. The apparent injustice of a world in which the guilty often prosper and in which the innocent suffer is due to forgotten acts in past lives. In Hindu reincarnation the past decides the present.

Karma (Sanskrit for “action”), in Indian philosophy, the sum total of one's actions, good or bad. These actions are attached to the soul as it transmigrates and each new body (and each event experienced by that body) is determined by previous karma. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

2. Substance: Pantheistic and Panentheistic Conceptions

In the larger realm of world history, Indian mysticism, escaping and even defeating despotism, shows a yearning for freedom. Brahmanist mysticism emancipation implies a concern for human rights based on the metaphysical identity of all persons with one reality, Brahman. This was illustrated by Gandhi's concern for untouchables.



Porterfield-Chickering/Photo Researchers, Inc.
Untouchables in Vârânasi, India

The caste system of India is a rigid hierarchy of social classes that evolved from Hindu religious law. Untouchables, people considered to have no caste, often live in urban slums and have little access to health care, clean water, and other basic resources. Although the Indian government has worked to improve their status, Untouchables continue to suffer discrimination and exploitation by the higher castes. Microsoft ® Encarta ® Encyclopedia 2002.

The violators of human rights are illusory serpents, to be disempowered and even defeated by our sympathy with them as inwardly identical with us. Gandhi's victory over the British cast doubt on the traditional Western view of Hinduism as a renunciation of worldly power, as a detachment from the world excluding any external realization of freedom. An abstract consciousness arises that can identify with everything, even with the entire cosmos, because it is the consciousness of nothing in particular. Special powers (*Siddhi*), by which anyone seeking union with God becomes a natural object or crosses the farthest reaches of the universe, illustrate sympathetic cosmic openness.

Hindu thought approaches pure imageless thought, and then passes beyond thought to experience a Brahman that is both unthinkable and unimaginable. But identification with Brahman in everything embraced Gandhi's destiny of disarming the British enemy by identifying with the Brahman in the British themselves.

What the Hindus call "Brahma" is very close to what Parmenides called *Being*. The essence of Parmenides philosophy lies in the statement "Being is." Being necessarily is, since if it were not it would not be being. Further, being never came into being, since other than being there is only non-being. If being came into being the cause of its coming into being would be nothing, but nothing cannot cause anything to happen. Whatever really happens must have a real cause. Finally, being is changeless, so that the world of change and motion which we sense is the world of non-being, it is nothing. For if being changed, acquiring any new characteristic, it could not itself cause the change, since it existed before the change. Any effects of eternal being must themselves be eternal. So a change in being cannot be caused by being itself. And since, apart from being, there is only non-being, non-being would have to cause the change in being. But, as we have seen, non-being can cause nothing.



Parmenides, born circa 515 b.c.

Something like Parmenides' Being appears in Spinoza's all-encompassing Substance. Substance here is not a collection of things and persons. It is the inner oneness and power expressed in all things and persons. Whether Spinoza is fully Brahmanist or Parmenidean is debatable. In his time and after, the public viewed Spinoza as a pantheist. Yet Spinoza's own distinction between "substance" and "finite things" suggests pantheism: the finite is not God, but is *in* God (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, prop 1-8).



Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza's fullest expression is his great work (*Ethics Demonstrated with Geometrical Order*, 1677). According to this treatise the universe is identical with God, who is the uncaused "substance" of all things. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

"Sense is lost in contemplation, what I call mine does vanish,
and unto the Boundless do I myself abandon.
I am in it, am everything, am only it." G.W.F. Hegel, *The Letters* (Bloomington: I.U. Press, 1984), p.46
In this poem pantheism passes into pantheism

Orthodox Christians rejected Spinoza as a pantheist in the eighteenth century, but later Romantics like Friedrich Schlegel found in his philosophy a pantheistic concept of the one in different things (Hegel, 1984, 46). Hegel himself ended up as a pantheist.

Spinoza's reputation as a pantheist leads to a comparison of his Substance to Brahman. Is the one merely the one? Must not an individual consciousness exist as something distinct from changeless Brahman, a consciousness that is first deluded and then changes into being enlightened? Brahmanists may have to admit a distinct deluded individual consciousness. Spinoza seems to admit one, as does the Brahmanist school of Ramanuja (Dasgupta, 1949iii, 100-330).

Aristotle's individual *primary substance* is the historical starting point for conceiving all concepts of substance, including Spinoza's. My plan in the following pages is first to explain Aristotle's concept; second, to criticize Aristotle's doctrine of many substances; thirdly, to present the concept of a one-substance world close to Hinduism; fourthly, to critique this concept; and, fifthly, to present and defend an event theory of reality close to Buddhism. We will conclude by sketching a Western critique of Buddhism.



Popperfoto/Archive Photos
Aristotle

A student of ancient Greek philosopher Plato, Aristotle shared his teacher's reverence for human knowledge but revised many of Plato's ideas by emphasizing methods rooted in observation and experience. Aristotle surveyed and systematized nearly all the extant branches of knowledge and provided the first ordered accounts of biology, psychology, physics, and literary theory. In addition, Aristotle invented the field known as formal logic, pioneered zoology, and addressed virtually every major philosophical problem known during his time. Known to medieval intellectuals as simply "the Philosopher," Aristotle is possibly the greatest thinker in Western history, and historically, perhaps the single greatest influence on Western intellectual development.
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An individual substance is essentially independent of any other individual substance apart from it: it is not *present in* another such substance (Aristotle, *Categories*, 5, 2a11). It is not 1. essentially a part of any larger individual whole. And, since it is individual or undivided (*Categories*, 5, 3a10), it is not 2. a collection of essentially independent wholes. Rather, it is itself an essentially independent and undivided individual. A collection, such as the oxygen in a room, is fully intelligible only through analysis into its substantial members. The parts of a substance (such as a functioning hand) are intelligible only through the substance of which they are parts. Substances are self-intelligible by virtue of their scientifically knowable species essences, while they also lend intelligibility to 1.) their parts, and to 2.) the collections they form. If there were no primary substances, nothing else could exist; such substances underlie all things (*Categories*, 5, 2b5, 15).

Metaphysics, as a search for the intelligibility of reality, is a search for what is substantial. Essentially self-related, a substance exists by its essence in and through no other individual substance than itself. Philosophers have generally agreed on this concept of substance, yet argued over what fits the concept. Yet while it is essentially independent, an Aristotelean substance exists by its species essence in general dependence on its environment. Thus human animals must live in some environment or other. Aristotle's individual substance thus falls short of complete self-intelligibility merely by itself. For such a substance is "present in"—essentially dependent on—a general context. By its species essence it refers indefinitely to a larger whole (*Categories*, 7, 8b17-23). Ultimately this larger whole is nature. The individual substance is fully self-intelligible only by expanding to encompass nature as a whole.

This marks a conceptual transition from Aristotle to the Stoics and to Spinoza's monistic theory of one substance. Though no substance is by its species essence definitely relative to anything else (*Categories*, 7b23), every substance has indefinitely known variable relations to other things (*Categories*, 8). For Aristotle, these relations and the things to which the original substance are related are *accidental* to the essential nature of that substance.

Merely to be a parent is to be indefinitely related to some child or other. Yet each parent is, just as such, definitely but "accidentally" (Aristotle) related to another individual substance, to some definite child. The relation is accidental rather than essential because one might have been a parent by having some other child than the one has. A parent is related to this particular child only as a matter of *contingent fact*. To exist in general is necessarily to exist in particular, though what a thing is in particular cannot be deduced from its existence in general. Thus a hand or head

as such is, according to Aristotle, only indefinitely related to some person of whom it is a hand or head. The hand and head are said to be primary substances because, in knowing something to be a hand, we do not definitely know, merely by the concept of a hand, whose hand it is (*Categories* 7, 8b17-23). The substantial appearance of a hand depends on the indefiniteness of our knowledge. If we had a more definite concept of a individual hand, a less abstract concept of the hand including more of the particular characteristics it must have to be a hand in general, the hand would cease to appear to be substantial.

Any concept of your hand that does not include its relation to you as its owner is abstract and hence not fully faithful to your hand as it really is. We cannot deduce you from an abstract concept of your hand. But that is not because your hand is not essentially related to you. It is because the concept of your hand that we are using is abstract. It fails to be a concrete concept of your hand. Your hand appears to be substantial to Aristotle because his concept of it is abstract and hence false. False definitions of what is substantial are due to abstract thinking. Aristotle is considered to be a common sense realist with regard to material things. He supposes them to exist in essential independence of one another and of us. Yet if he fully considered the abstract nature of all thinking, he would have to admit that, as they exist in themselves beyond what they are for abstract thinking, they and we are interdependent.

As the text box below suggests, philosophers as diverse as Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Berkeley, Whitehead, and the Roman atomist Lucretius are all attempting to answer Aristotle's question as to what is substantial in the sense of being an essentially independent individual. To be an *individual* meant for Aristotle to be *undivided*, though also divisible, thus potentially divided. For the human organism to actually divide is to die, to cease to exist. But to be individual also means, for Aristotle, to be an ultimate subject of predication. This means that, as a subject of predication, it is has properties or predicates, but it is not a property or predicate belonging to anything else.

The color green is a subject of predication, since being a color is predicable of it, but is it not an ultimate subject of predication because it is itself a predicate that is predicable of the grass. Thus the color green cannot be a substance for Aristotle. Plato thought greenness could subsist by itself without being the greenness of anything. Plato worked with a different concept of substance from Aristotle's. For Plato to make reality intelligible was to

**WHAT IS
SUBSTANTIAL?
(WHAT EXISTS AS AN
UNDIVIDED
INDIVIDUAL IN
ESSENTIAL
INDEPENDENCE OF
ANYTHING ELSE?)**

- 1. Material bodies
(Aristotle)?**
- 2. Atoms (Lucretius)?**
- 3. Minds and bodies
(Descartes)?**
- 4. Minds alone (Leibniz,
Berkeley)?**
- 4. Sense impressions
(Hume)?**
- 5. momentary events
(Whitehead)**
- 6. The divine cosmos as a
whole (Pythagoreans,
Parmenides, Stoicism)**

contemplate objects of pure thought, and thought objects such as greenness or justice were self-intelligible only because they do not essentially belong to any ultimate subjects of predication (or holders of properties) in this world. But several of the greatest modern philosophers, such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Berkeley and Whitehead, are principally concerned to implement the Aristotelian program in metaphysics.



Descartes



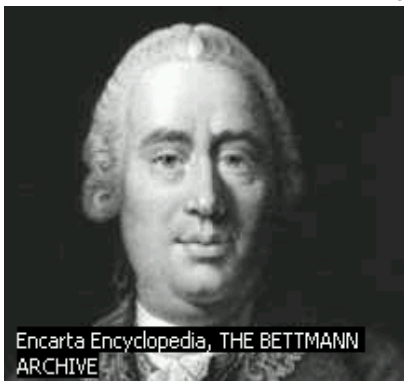
Spinoza



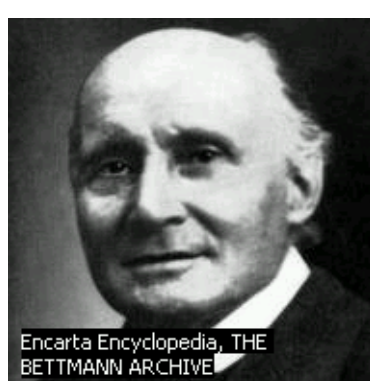
Leibniz



Berkeley



Hume



Whitehead

A collection or aggregate cannot be substantial because it is not conceivable through itself alone. It is essentially a collection or aggregate of substantial members. A part or aspect is not a substance because it is a part or aspect of a larger substantial whole. Everything that is either a substance, a part of a substance, or a collection of substances. Substances are each self-intelligible, conceivable through themselves alone (as Spinoza would say), while everything else—parts and collections—become conceivable and intelligible through substances alone. The search for intelligibility is therefore the search for substances. The concept of substance we have been considering from Aristotle's *Categories* is thus the most important concept in the entire history of philosophy, and more particularly metaphysics. (We shall return to it later.)

A second concept of primary substance also occurs in Aristotle. Unlike the first concept just discussed, it refers explicitly to time and change. A substance is essentially self-subsistent, but is also accidentally related to other substances that now or again act upon it. A substance has essential properties that cannot change without a change in its species identity. It also has accidental properties that come and go without affecting the substance's essential identity. The leaf is accidentally green in the Spring, and brown in the Fall (*Categories*, 5, 4a10). To be accidental, for Aristotle, does not mean to be without cause. Rather, it simply means not to be essential to the leaf as an enduring substance. The Aristotelian world is a collection of interacting substances non-arbitrarily classified into natural kinds by their very nature. A substance's accidental properties depend not on it alone, but on its relations to other substances. Relational properties are themselves a type of accidental property that is essential in general to any individual substance without ever being essential in particular.

The view that the world consists in many *species* of substance (human beings, *kinds* of animals or of natural things) is close to common sense. Yet we are just as interested in knowing individual specimens of humanity as the species. Theoretical knowledge classifies *species essences* and distinguishes them from *species accidents*. Thus biology distinguishes cats from dogs as two species, and it then distinguishes male and female with each species as species accidents.

We also distinguish each person by his or individual essence. You inherit your *species essence*, but your *individual essence* depends partly on your choice of a vocation in life. Your nationality is a species accident, quite unnecessary to your species essence. But it may be necessary to your individual essence. This distinction between properties essential to you as an individual and properties accidental to you as an individual (say, having hair of a precise length) is necessary to institutions of praise and blame, punishment and reward. These institutions suppose continuing *personal identity* through change. If a student receives a grade, the student must be essentially the same individual who did the work, despite accidental changes.

Of course not everyone who chooses to be a ballet dancer is a ballet dancer. Yet, you in part create yourself as an individual by choosing aspects of your individual essence. Other aspects of your individual essence are given independently of your choice. How do we tell objectively whether a characteristic belongs to your individual essence or not? Is a person who undergoes a genuine moral conversion after committing a heinous crime essentially the same person as before, deserving punishment as before?

Suppose you agree to buy a table. Suppose further that when you pick it up you find a nick that was not there before. You seek to reclaim your deposit, arguing that the table is not the one you agreed to buy: the nick is an essential difference. How do you answer a salesperson who insists that it is the same table, since the change is only accidental? Does classification of a property as essential really depend on shifting subjective interests, with no objective standard? Is it arbitrary?

The following reply is possible: objectively all the properties of a thing are essential to its identity. A thing is what it is by its properties. Which properties? All of them! Its identity is its complete essence, excluding no characteristic. Things or persons are the same if, and only if, they have exactly the same properties. Suppose the definite nature of an individual substance

includes all properties (even so-called accidental ones asserted due to the indefiniteness of our knowledge). In that case, its indefinite species identity survives "accidental" change (say, losing weight), but its complete identity does not (Leibniz, 1686, 8). Aristotle's alleged "accidental" properties are actual Leibnizian "essential" properties. Such complete identity is that by which identical things are indiscernible (Leibniz).

The *identity of indiscernible* things implies that all properties are essential. An accidental property by definition can be lost without a loss of its limited species identity. But the identity of indiscernibles means that any property lost entails a loss of complete identity. Thus all properties are essential. Of course concepts of limited identity exist, such as personal identity or bodily identity; and they imply accidental properties. But then the problem of the objective classification of properties, whether as essential or accidental, returns, clamouring for solution. Aristotle allows two human beings to be essentially identical and self-intelligible by the same species essence though, like Plato and Socrates, they vary in accidental properties. But he also allows a single individual substance to be the same individual substance at different times with different accidental properties, such as the green leaf and the same leaf as brown in the fall.

An Aristotelian essence is for Leibniz a partial essence, including only some of the thing's or person's properties. Leibniz's things are essentially different if they differ in any respect. The individual is an essence unto itself. Your partial individual identity or essence survives accidental change, but your complete identity does not. Your complete identity continues only if all your properties continue. Such is the price for avoiding an arbitrary line of demarcation between essential and accidental properties which Aristotle has difficulty avoiding. For Leibniz, the green leaf in the Spring is the brown leaf in the Fall only if it already in the Spring has the property of being the brown leaf in the Fall. The properties that make up a thing's or person's complete essence or nature include relational properties connecting it to one or more other things.

Aristotle, we noted, held relational properties to be accidental. A serious problem arises for Aristotle if definite relational properties are essential. A substance with definite essential relational properties cannot be essentially independent of other particular individuals. But the problem has arisen. A cow has the accidental property of being north of the equator. It has the essential property only of having some position or other. Aristotle's substances essentially have indefinitely designated accidental relational properties to other individual substances. They are essentially related to something or other, if not to any one individual thing. Yet implied by every indefinite relation, we noted, is a definite relation to a definite thing. Being married is not just being married to someone or other; the spouse has a name. The essential self-intelligibility of an individual substance apart from any other collapses.

This critique of Aristotle's many essentially independent substances serves to introduce Spinoza's (or Brahmanism's) one-substance monism. For Aristotle a substance has accidental characteristics essentially, by its nature. A blade of grass that is neither moist nor not moist, standing in no relation of interaction with other things, is inconceivable. A world of one essentially independent Aristotelian substance which has accidental states is impossible. Either a thing is essentially related through accidental states in general to other things and is not substantial, or it is substantial and is not essentially related through such states to anything. A substance is essentially independent, self-intelligible, conceivable through itself alone (Spinoza, *Ethics* 1677, Pt. 1, def).

Spinoza in effect solves the above paradox of Aristotelian substances by holding that only one substance exists, and that it has no accidental states or "affects" (Spinoza, 1677, Pt. 2, lemme 3, ax 1). Yet if we try to conceive this single all-embracing substance of Spinoza, clearly it is no modest blade of grass. The blade of grass is only a one manifestation of a truly sublime substance. The awe-inspiring idea of this substance exceeds anything accessible to the senses or imagination. Yet the cosmic substance is not so extraordinary as to never appear. Each sensory object is such an appearance. The substantial reality cannot hide. If it hid, what hid it would lie outside it, condemning it to being limited, not all-encompassing. But no imaginable finite set of manifestations can exhaust its infinite power of expression. You no sooner think an infinite substance than you see it cannot remain a separate object of thought and mystical intuition, but must be open to being intuited in all sense objects.

An illusory sense object exists within the all-embracing infinite substance. An illusory object really exists, but viewed as something changing it appears under a false description. An infinite substance independent of illusory appearances of itself is absurd: it would not be infinite. An infinite substance thus essentially includes all the properties by which it appears to the senses. When Brahman experienced during meditation is again hidden after meditation, illusory sensory objects reappear. A blade of grass as such is nothing as we lose ourselves through it in the supersensory magnificence of Brahman. Still, given the impossible contradiction of an unlimited substance that is nonetheless limited by a blade of grass, the blade in part reveals Brahma.

An infinite substance's concealment behind a sensory screen would be impossible to understand. Anything on the sensory screen, if properly meditated, can reveal Brahman. But the blade of grass is hurled back into oblivion as illusory when again seen as a blade. A revelation of Brahma is created, preserved for a time, and destroyed, making way for a the destruction of new ignorance and the creation of a new revelation.

This description of Hindu experience as a process of emergence, temporary preservation, and annihilation is contained in the so-called Hindu trinity (*trimurti*) of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. These gods are sensory *avatars* of Brahman. We distinguish *Brahman*, the impersonal ground of all of which we can form no image, and *Brahma*, the creator, who is a personal incarnation of Brahman. *Siva* is non-progressive, repetitive becoming, an alternate arising and vanishing. *Shakti*, Siva's mate, is destructive power, requiring ever renewed creation (*Brahm*) and temporary survival (*Vishnu*) for destruction to continue. Siva thus could be seen as most inclusive god appearing in the sensory world.



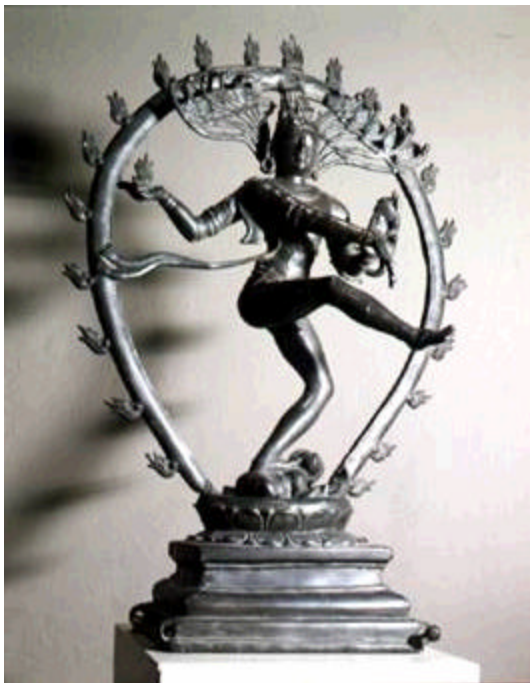
The Hindu idea of one cosmic substance is expressed in Hindu art. This art has a symbolic function, with in finite sensory symbols anticipating an infinite object of thought and meditation. Multi-headed figures (e.g., Brahm, to the left), sensory things not seen in the ordinary world, symbolize gods. Art here seems to hint at a truth that neither the artist nor public states in clear prose. Artists imbued with the idea of one substance take the ordinary human body and, through multiplying limbs, create an image through which what is extraordinary shimmers.



Victoria and Albert Museum

The Ten Incarnations of Vishnu

The Hindu god Vishnu appears on Earth in ten incarnations, called avatars, to destroy injustice and save humankind. Sacred Hindu writings called the *Puranas* describe these incarnations. Vishnu is always depicted in dark blue or black and usually with four arms, though his avatars may take other forms, such as the golden fish (top left panel) and the man lion (panel below the fish). In his tenth avatar, still to come, Vishnu will appear with a white horse (bottom right panel) to destroy the universe. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.



Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York
Shiva as Nataraja (Lord of the Dance)

This bronze sculpture, entitled *Shiva as Nataraja (Lord of the Dance)* (about AD 1000), is one of a number of sculptures of the Hindu god Shiva made during India's Chola dynasty (10th century to 13th century). The sculpture shows Shiva dancing within a circle of fire. One of the god's hands holds a flame, while the other beats on a drum. His foot rests on the demon of ignorance. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002

If Brahma, the cosmic substance, is infinite, it cannot assume accidental states by interacting with another substance. There is no other substance. Apparent accidental states are stages of its essential, self-caused development or unfolding. In what is probably its most prestigious form, articulated by Shankara (788-820), Hinduism asserts a changeless infinite substance that nonetheless accidentally changes or changelessly "unfolds." Ceasing to see a rope as a serpent to see it as a rope is a change. Or, if it is not a change, then Brahman has empirically or temporally discovered eternal properties, each in part defined by the time in which it begins to be exemplified. But only the eternal, not the temporal, is real. Each beginning at a certain time is a eternal property of substance.

*Shankara (788-820), Indian philosopher and religious thinker who developed Advaita Vedanta, a system of philosophical thought within Hinduism.... Shankara's philosophical thought is preserved in his commentaries on Hindu religious texts such as the **Upanishads**, the **Bhagavad-Gita**, and the **Vedanta Sutra**. He sought to revive what he believed to be the central message of the Upanishads, expressed in the statement *tat tvam asi* (Sanskrit for "thou art that"). In Shankara's view, this meant that the individual soul or self (atman) is fundamentally identical with universal being (Brahman). The perception that human beings are separate entities is consequently a distortion arising from spiritual ignorance. Further, Shankara believed that since Brahman is absolute and undifferentiated from the self (hence the term *advaita*, or *nondual*), the entire familiar world of experience (*samsara*) has no independent reality. Rather, it is a dreamlike appearance projected by ignorance onto the pure consciousness of Brahman. All creatures are tied to *samsara* by the bonds of karma, the accumulated consequences of actions in previous lives. The key to achieving release from *samsara* is right knowledge (*jñana*), which through a spontaneous mystical illumination reveals the fundamental oneness of reality. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. ©*

A pantheist mystic experiences the same substance over and over again, experiencing its repeated collapse into illusory accidental appearance, with the same resultant contradiction of accidents caused by interaction with no other substance (there are no other substances), and of real ignorance falling outside reality. The essentially Independent and infinite substance annihilates unessential accidents with one swing of the pendulum. Yet accidents of a single all-embracing substance become contradictorily essential with the other swing of the pendulum. This circular process of becoming lacks progressive development except through escape from the illusory sensory world and its endless cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*). This world is non-historical, except for the progress toward knowledge of its illusoriness which it contains.

Sankara seems forced to alternate inconsistently between 1. asserting an infinite reality that is beyond an illusory sensory world and that condemns the sensory world to being nothing and 2. admitting the reality of ordinary sense perception generating illusion. His substance is void. Yet nothing exists outside it, since otherwise it would not be absolute; everything is an appearance (*avatar*) of Brahman. But if the experience of illusion is not itself illusory, the infinite substance is after all not void. This conclusion is close to the panentheistic *Ramanuja*: Brahman is a substance which manifests itself diversely in us and in the world.

Ramanuja [10th-11th centuries A.D.] broke from the monistic tradition of Shankara, which holds that the soul is inseparable from the supreme deity, Brahman, and that the world is illusion. For Shankara, redemption is achieved through acceptance and knowledge of the world as illusory. Ramanuja rejected Shankara's monism and established a qualified monism in which Brahman is a loving and personal god distinct from the individual soul. He stated that absolute devotion to Vishnu guarantees salvation regardless of one's caste. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

It may be thought that we rely too much on Sankara in presenting Hindu philosophy. Their idea of an absolute substance, whether excluding or including definite states, does not mark all Hinduism. Worship of a personal theistic God is also present, accompanied by a dualistic insistence on the self as irreducible to God, or to a passing manifestation of God. We have stressed an alternation in Hindu thought between a pantheistic denial of accidental properties (Shankara), and a pantheistic assertion of "accidents" as essential (Ramanuja). But pantheism and panentheism are prevalent in Hindu philosophy, if less so in popular conceptions. Not relying on supernaturally revealed authority (e.g., Moses, Mohammed), Hinduism places greater value than traditional Christianity on the tolerance of different paths and levels of enlightenment. Yet the orthodox Hindu *holy revelation* includes the pantheistic, but not the later more theistic epics. These epics, the *Mahabahrata* with the more philosophical *Ramayana* including the *Bhavagad-Gita*, are part of the *holy tradition* but not of the *holy revelation*.

The central theme of the Mahabharata is the contest between two noble families, the Pandavas and their blood relatives the Kauravas, for possession of a kingdom in northern India. The most important segment of the poem is the Bhagavad-Gita, a dialogue between Krishna, the eighth incarnation of the god Vishnu, and the Pandava hero Arjuna on the meaning of life, [the duties of each caste, and reincarnation]. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

The Ramayana tells of the birth and education of Rama, a prince and the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu, and recounts his winning of the hand of Sita in marriage. Displaced as rightful heir to his father's throne, Rama goes into exile, accompanied by Sita and by his brother Lakshmana. Sita is carried off by the demon king Ravana. With the aid of the monkey general Hanuman and an army of monkeys and bears, Rama, after a long search, slays Ravana and rescues Sita. Rama regains his throne and rules wisely. In the probable addition, Sita is accused in rumors of adultery during her captivity. Although innocent, she bears Rama's twin sons in exile, sheltered by the hermit Valmiki, said to be the author of the poem. After many years Rama and Sita are reunited.... the Ramayana incorporates much of the sacred Vedic material (see Veda). Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman are widely revered as ideal embodiments of princely heroism, wifely and brotherly devotion, and loyal service, respectively. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

3. Buddhist Philosophy

Buddhism is a reform movement in Hinduism. Hinduism has many gods but reduces them Brahman, which for Sankara is an impersonal absolute. Main strands of Buddhism are Mahayana and Hinyana. Hinyana is closer to Buddha. Buddha did not interpret nirvana as God. Nor did he consider himself God. He was a teacher. According to Buddhism in traditional Hinyana form, Nirvana is a state of blessed nothingness, not union with God; an answer to suffering (*duhkha*), not a metaphysical principle. Mahayana philosophies do view Buddha as God. Yet some justify this divinity by its fruit, not as fact. Belief in it empowers the ordinary Buddhist with an otherwise difficult teaching. The Buddhist is not limited to his or her own meager resources. The divinity of Buddha becomes a prop for meditation.

Mahayana Buddhism denies many gods. Only the one absolute is real. Yet it does not equate God with substance viewed pantheistically or pantheistically. Unlike monistic Hinduism, the divine absolute is not a substance. It is the void in the midst of impermanent events. Mahayana Zen Buddhism holds that the illusory appearances are identical with the absolute reality. Nirvana is lodged in their midst.

Buddhism has largely disappeared in India. Mahayana Buddhism is found in the Far East and Tibet, while Hinyana Buddhism is present in Sri Lanka. They are known as *big boat* and *little boat* Buddhism. The distinction depends on a decision by one ready for nirvana. In big boat Buddhism the saint (*bodhisattva*) holds back from nirvana out of selfless compassion for the rest of suffering humanity, so that the saint may share enlightenment with others. In little boat Buddhism the saint ready for nirvana leaves the rest behind. Some see a similarity between Christian love and Mahayana self-sacrifice. Yet the Mahayana goal is depersonalisation (*anatman*) and impermanence (*anitya*) in nirvana.

In Christianity the goal is a personal relationship with other persons and God. Buddha rejected speculation about God. It posed insoluble problems on top of the suffering that already exists in life. The problematic Hindu substance out of which all phenomena arise and into which they return was foreign to Buddha. The purpose of Nirvana was not to explain events in the world. It was practical: to point one toward enlightenment. Nirvana is not oneness with the force and might of the cosmos. It is a mental state of total detachment. Suffering is caused by attachment, by clinging (*trishna*). You attach yourself to a new car, and it rusts out. You attach yourself to others, and they disappoint you. You attach yourself to a nation, which falls into decline. You attach yourself to yourself, and suffer glances in the mirror. This suffering assumes continuing things and persons, which Buddha denied: the world is illusory without being an accidental manifestation of any substantial reality.

Buddha opposed any abiding or substantial reality, whether a material object, a soul or God. But his reason differed from those of Hinduism. Hindu monism absorbs the things of the world into the one substance. Hinyana Buddhism dissolves them into momentary events. In monism the blade of grass is insubstantial because it is essentially related to other things. In Buddhism it is because it is the mere succession of events making up what we call the blade. Buddha did not speculate about reality. Yet he was not sceptical about world views. He denied the commonsense world view of physical bodies and persons, holding the cosmos to consist in momentary events. We encounter a world, not of changing things or persons, but of static fleeting happenings, of occurrences essentially free-floating despite their basis in the past. If we

adopt this event theory of the universe suffering subsides. If we realize that there are no continuing persons or things, we deprive ourselves of illusory objects of attachment.

The Buddhist belief in the impermanence (*anitya*) of the world is close to the so-called quantum theory in twentieth-century physics. This theory goes back to Max Planck in 1900; Louis de Broglie later generalized it to all matter. Quantum theory holds that the cosmos is a jerky, jumpy place, shot through with discontinuous pulsations of energy which may yet all have a common beat. The dullness of our senses blurs these discrete pulsations and creates the illusion of continuous objects.



Culver Pictures

Max Planck. In a radical departure from classical ideas, theoretical physicist Max Planck proposed that energy travels in discrete packets called quanta. Prior to Planck's work with black body radiation, energy was thought to be continuous, but this theory left many phenomena unexplained. While working out the mathematics for the radiation phenomena he had observed, Planck realized that quantized energy could explain the behavior of light. His revolutionary work laid the foundation for much of modern physics. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.

Quantum theory is pluralistic like classical atomism. Yet it goes beyond traditional atomism in postulating successive as well as simultaneous quanta or units of reality. An atom was, for the original atomists, everlasting. A physical quantum of energy is momentary. The quantum point of view shows up in an electron quantum jump from one orbit to another in the atom. By physics equations, there is zero probability that the electron might be between two possible orbits. Creation and annihilation are at work. One electron vanishes in one orbit, and a second emerges in another orbit, without any electron passing by continuous motion between orbits. Quantum theory belongs to physics, not philosophy. Yet it gives a view of the cosmos close to that of Buddha.

In the quantum view, an apparently enduring blade of grass is a series of blade events. Each such event is a collection of smaller events, which give rise to the illusion of grass. The past event is essentially independent of the future event: by the dominant non-deterministic view of physicists, the new event emerges without being deduced from the previous event and its laws. Buddhist destiny is itself non-deterministic within a single lifetime. In the age of cinema, the event view might be called a motion-picture view of reality. Continuous existence and motion on the model of the motion picture are illusions due to the rapid succession of motionless occurrences. Motion on a motion picture screen is a series of static slides.

The cosmos is, so-to-speak, a vast screen on which our senses fail to discriminate static occurrences. Because each of these momentary occurrences, being what it is through all its properties, ceases to exist as soon any characteristic is lost, is totally unlike the changing individual substances of the commonsense world. The physicist Erwin Schrödinger preferred to believe that the pattern, dance, or wave behavior of quantum events was more real than the events themselves because, like commonsense objects, waves stood up to observation and behaved like enduring subjects of change. Yet he may have shown a greater partiality to

commonsense than is necessary:

The theory of quantum jumps is becoming more and more unacceptable, at least to me personally, as the years go on. Its abandonment has, however, far-reaching consequences. It means that one must give up entirely the idea of the exchange of energy in well-defined quanta and replace it with the concept of resonance between vibrational frequencies. Yet... because of the identity of mass and energy, we must consider the particles themselves as Planck's energy quanta. This is at first frightening. For the substituted theory implies that we can no longer consider the individual particle as a well-defined permanent entity.

That it is, in fact, no such thing can be reasoned in other ways. For one thing, there is Werner Heisenberg's famous uncertainty principle, according to which a particle cannot simultaneously have a well-defined position and a sharply defined velocity. This uncertainty implies that we cannot be sure that the same particle could ever be observed twice. Another conclusive reason for not attributing identifiable sameness to individual particles is that we must obliterate their individualities whenever we consider two or more interacting particles of the same kind, e.g., the two electrons of a helium atom. Two situations which are distinguished only by the interchange of the two electrons must be counted as one and the same; if they are counted as two equal situations, nonsense obtains. This circumstance holds for any kind of particle in arbitrary numbers without exception.

Most theoreticians will probably accept the foregoing reasoning and admit that the individual particle is not a well-defined permanent entity of detectable identity or sameness. Nevertheless this inadmissible concept of the individual particle continues to play a large role in their ideas and discussions. Even deeper rooted is the belief in "quantum jumps," which is now surrounded with a highly abstruse terminology whose common-sense meaning is often difficult to grasp. For instance, an important word in the standing vocabulary of quantum theory is "probability," referring to transition from one level to another. But, after all, one can speak of the probability of an event only assuming that, occasionally, it actually occurs. If it does occur, the transition must indeed be sudden, since intermediate stages are disclaimed. Moreover, if it takes time, it might conceivably be interrupted halfway by an unforeseen disturbance. This possibility leaves one completely at sea.

The wave v. corpuscle dilemma is supposed to be resolved by asserting that the wave field merely serves for the computation of the probability of finding a particle of given properties at a given position if one looks for it there. But once one deprives the waves of reality and assigns them only a kind of informative role, it becomes very difficult to understand the phenomena of interference and diffraction on the basis of the combined action of discrete single particles. It certainly seems easier to explain particle tracks in terms of waves than to explain the wave phenomenon in terms of corpuscles.

...I spoke of a corpuscle's not being an individual. Properly speaking, one never observes the same particle a second time—very much as Heraclitus says of the river. You cannot mark an electron, you cannot paint it red. Indeed, you must not even think of it as marked; if you do, your "counting" will be false and you will get wrong results at every step—for the structure of line spectra, in thermodynamics and elsewhere. A wave, on the other hand, can easily be imprinted with an individual structure by which it can be recognized [again] beyond doubt. Think of the beacon fires that guide ships at sea. The light shines according to a definite code; for example: three seconds light, five seconds dark, one second light, another pause of five seconds, and again light for three seconds—the skipper knows that is San Sebastian. Or you talk by wireless telephone with a friend across the Atlantic; as soon as he says, "Hello there, Edward Meier speaking," you know that his voice has imprinted on the radio wave a structure which can be distinguished from any other. But one does not have to go that far. If your wife calls, "Francis!" from the garden, it is exactly the same thing, except that the structure is printed on sound waves and the trip is shorter... All our verbal communication is based on imprinted individual wave structures. And, according to the same principle, what a wealth of details is transmitted to us in rapid succession by the movie or the television picture!

This characteristic, the individuality of the wave phenomenon, has already been found to a remarkable extent in the very much finer waves of particles. One example must suffice. A limited volume of gas, say helium, can be thought of either as a collection of many helium atoms or as a superposition of elementary wave trains of matter waves.... If you treat the gas as consisting of particles, then no individuality must be ascribed to them, as I said. If, however, you concentrate on the matter wave trains instead of on the particles, every one of the wave trains has a well-defined structure which is different from that of any other...

In spite of everything we cannot completely banish the concepts of quantum jump and individual corpuscle from the

vocabulary of physics. We still require them to describe many details of the structure of matter. How can one ever determine the weight of a carbon nucleus and of a hydrogen nucleus, each to the precision of several decimals, and detect that the former is somewhat lighter than the 12 hydrogen nuclei combined in it, without accepting for the time being the view that these particles are something quite concrete and real? ...

If you finally ask me: "Well, what are these corpuscles, really?" ... At the most, it may be permissible to say that one can think of particles as more or less temporary entities within the wave field whose form and general behavior are nevertheless so clearly and sharply determined by the laws of waves that many processes take place as if these temporary entities were substantial permanent beings. The mass and the charge of particles, defined with such precision, must then be counted among the structural elements determined by the wave laws. The conservation of charge and mass in the large must be considered as a statistical effect, based on the "law of large numbers." Source: Reprinted with permission. Copyright © September 1953 by Scientific American, Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002-20.

In the past century, a Buddhist-like view has appeared in the views of A.N. Whitehead. The view agrees with arguments by the fifth century B.C. philosopher Zeno against the possibility of motion. Even better, we can accept these arguments without accepting the conclusion (for which Zeno thought he was arguing) that the world in which things "move" does not exist. Events in the world, emerging momentarily in steady formations make it seem that things move. If an object moves between two points how many positions must it occupy? Most will reply: an infinite number. Then the question arises: how much time must it pass in each of these infinite positions? Could it occupy a position for no time at all? No. The finite duration of motion is of course as infinitely divisible as the finite line of motion. Yet the infinitely many instants contained in any duration cannot each be matched with a single geometrical point in the line. For this would mean that no time at all is passed by the moving object at any given point of its furthest advance. Yet no event occurs without duration. If you were on Mars last night, we may ask: for how long? If you reply you were on Mars for no time at all, we retort that you were not on Mars at all. Every event takes time. You cannot be happy without being so for some duration, and a moving object cannot occupy a position without doing so for at least a brief period.

The apparent conclusion is that motion between any two points would, contrary to what our senses tell us, take an infinite duration of time. In the present context two interpretations of this result arise. On the Brahmanist-Hindu interpretation, the interpretation is that the illusory moving things of the world are absorbed into Brahma, the cosmic substance. The other interpretation, closer to Buddha, is that illusory moving objects each dissolve into momentary events. Ordinary events like moving or getting married happen to enduring persons or things. But no such persons or things exist to which Buddhist events happen. Things and persons dissolve into events that are flashes in the dark, without owners. The superiority of the Buddhist interpretation lies in the fact that it, and not the Hindu interpretation, allows us to explain the precise illusions that we are having. It allows an explanation as to why you are having the illusion of being in a classroom rather than on a south seas island. The illusion you are having has a basis in the reality of events independent of your mind. If only Brahman, exists it is not clear why Brahman, which is everywhere one and the same, should cause you to perceive yourself in a classroom surrounded by ice and snow rather than on a South Seas island.

Adopting the motion picture theory of reality as static events, it is easy to generalize it to all change. Consider the change in quality by which the sky darkens at night. It appears as continuous as ordinary motion. Between any two shades of darkness others are possible. Each of infinitely many shades of approaching darkness corresponds to a different position of a moving

object namely, the sun descending below the horizon. The apparent conclusion is that the sky can never get dark! The solution is to realize that experience is not really continuous. There is only a finite number of shades of darkness that, in succession, the sky exhibits. Yet events of seeing the sky in a certain shade of darkness follow with such speed that we cannot tell them apart.

Nirvana in Buddha's original thought is not a substantial ground of ordinary things, but a void beneath things that are groundless. If we seek solid ground, nirvana is the bottomless pit of our frustration. To attain nirvana, we must realize the groundlessness of the world in which we think we live. Life is suffering because of our attachment to false absolutes. We become fixated on what is relative, and suffer pain and disappointment when it passes away into something else by its very relativity. The Buddhist cosmology of momentary events (*dharmas*) detaches us from illusory enduring objects that pass away, from material possessions, friends and relatives, our family, job and nation, our body and mental faculties. Suffering is due to applying the idea of a substance (an individual, independent thing or person) to aggregates, shifting clouds of dispersed events. Human institutions impel us to do so. Personal property requires us to assume that the car left in the parking lot is the same car, your car, that you eventually find again afterwards. The court systems require us to believe that there are persons who commit crimes who are the same persons who receive sentences. Things and persons enduring through accidental change are institutionally required suppositions.

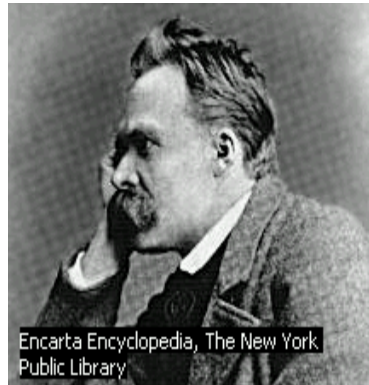
The goal of Buddhism includes depersonalization (*anatman*). Kierkegaard analyzed the idea of a person better than anyone (Kierkegaard, 1843, Pt 2, Section 2). To be a person is to suffer. It is to return to past commitments, but not to remain in the past. It is to be projected by the past back to the present, with an anguishing awareness of responsibilities for the future, responsibilities never fully met. Westerners, too, seek depersonalization, but for rest and relaxation prior to returning to the world of personal struggle. It is not, as in Buddhism, a final goal. Still, depersonalization and personal existence are compatible in Buddhism. No exclusive choice exists between Eastern depersonalization and Western personalization of existence. The saint (Bodhisattva) attains an incomplete type of nirvana prior to death. Integrating impersonal meditative experience into his or her personal life, the saint lives with the responsibilities and suffering inseparable from being a person, but also with the serenity of deliverance. There is a contradiction between a perfect state of nirvana and being a person, but that is neither possible nor sought in this life.

4. *Spirit*

If Buddhism is an event metaphysics, it cannot be pantheist. Nagarjuna is not a pantheist. He is a metaphysical sceptic, asserting the existence of no entity. The emptiness identical according to him with the process of events ("the system of conditioned production") is so because events are ephemeral, constantly passing away. They are empty because they are not enduring or substantial. The "emptiness" of the world is a description which has sense only individuals with a frustrated thirst for Brahma, an absolute that is permanent and unchanging. If there is no desire for such absolute, the parade of human events with their passions, disappointments, and suffering may come to be appreciated positively.

They were appreciated in this way by the nineteenth century German philosophy Nietzsche. He celebrated the struggle for power in which few can win with the resolute *yea-saying* of men who know they are in that select few. The endless struggle for power itself

becomes the absolute. Suffering is character-building. It adds depth to speech and creates experience. Nothing great happens without passion.



Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

For Buddhists passionate attachment to a chosen vocation is the very first error. Nagarjuna claims that, of all the things that abstract thinking falsely isolates, nothing remains as an absolute reality. The left hand does not exist by itself, because it is what it is through the right hand. Each thing is insubstantial because it exists only through other things.

For Western philosophers from Pythagoreans to Teilhard de Chardin, what remains is an all-embracing process that, because it is all-embracing, is never deceptive or superseded as an object of attachment. This absolute process has been described differently by different philosophers. For ancient *Pythagoreans* it was a cosmic soul developing music on a constant scale. For *Heraclitus* and the *Stoics*, the cosmos alterned between opposite processes, one ending in inertia (the way down) and the other in flames and general conflagration (the way up). For *Hegel*, the cosmic absolute is a slumbering universal spirit that first succumbs to self-division and then rises self-aware from its ashes. For *Henri Bergson* it was a creative evolutionary struggle against the inertia of matter with an unpredictable outcome. For *Teilhard de Chardin* it was the universal Christ as evolution's future pole of attraction (de Chardin, 1957, 134-46). And for *Whitehead* it was a process of God gathering in the ever greater the diversity and harmony of experiences throughout the cosmos.

It is not necessary here to arbitrate between these different philosophers. They show a common strain of Western thought which has overcome nostalgia for static Parmenidean being (Bhrama), and which does not share Nagarjuna's disenchantment with process, a disenchantment arising from the fact that the process is not changelessly eternal. These Western philosophers do not give the impression of being disappointed pantheists. They are enthusiastic in their celebration of the adventures of change and process.

Probably the most important of these recent process philosophers is Hegel. His "spirit" has sources at once in theology (the Christian Holy Spirit), the comparison of national psychologies (the French have more sharp-edged wit or *esprit* than more methodical and earnest Germans), and the collective use of the term (the spirit of a people, team spirit). Spirit for him is not primarily an individual person. Nor is it a limited community or national spirit. Spirit defines the absolute (Hegel, 1927x, 35); it is an infinite, cosmic spirit. Even if it attains its highest manifestation and self-consciousness in the human spirit, it is broader than humanity. Viewing the cosmos as spirit requires a panpsychist philosophy of nature that attributes soul-life

throughout nature (Hegel, *Encyc*, §392).

For panpsychism, nature is slumbering spirit. In human history this slumbering spirit awakens to self-consciousness. You are part of nature. You are, further, aware of yourself. Through you, the cosmos is aware of itself. You are truly aware of yourself when you are aware of yourself as inseparably bound with the cosmos of which you are but one agents.

The view that we act on behalf of the universe in our knowledge of it depends on sympathetic oneness with the universe. It also depends on the assumption that the universe exists as an absolute whole with which you can identify. Buddhism precludes this assumption. *Hinyana Buddhism* engulfs impermanent events in emptiness. *Mahayana Buddhism* sometimes equates this emptiness with the absolute, or with Buddha himself. Yet this absolute amidst impermanence is not a lasting self with which one can identify. One rather loses oneself in it.

Is it possible to identify with something under the description of being an infinite spirit? To talk of something as fitting a description when it is illusory under that description (like the description of being Santa Claus) can sometimes be defended. Such suppositions are practically unavoidable even for Buddhists. It is not easy to stop talking of persons and things to talk instead of momentary events. *Nagarjuna* expressed this difficulty in his distinction between *ultimate truth* and *apparent truth*. Physical scientists who holds that atoms are nothing but elementary particles nonetheless speak of atoms, molecules, cells, organisms, and the universe. We can hardly deny ourselves a right to talk of persons, things, or the cosmos. Our right to speak of the universe might still be challenged. It is one thing for common sense language or natural science to refer to the universe, and another for metaphysics to do so. It is the job of *metaphysics* to be more careful in its assumptions of what exists.

That it is metaphysically legitimate to speak of spirit means that it exists. Yet if spirit is an aggregate of causally unrelated events—simultaneous events are causally unrelated—is it an *entity*? Is it not a rather a *logical fiction*, convenient to refer to for commonsense or science, but not to be assumed by metaphysics? (An example of a logical fiction would be *the average American*.) What justifies talk of spirit?

We must not be too quick to deny the existence of aggregates (what Buddhists call *skanda*), though their permanence is deniable. An aggregate is a particular, divisible sum of substantial entities. Aggregates are not individual substances. Nor are they numbers. The *number* of ancient Greeks still exists, but the *aggregate* of ancient Greeks, located in time and space, is no more. Aggregates are not particular substances. The aggregate of players in a football team is not that of another team, although both teams have the same number of players. Aggregates are intelligible only in relation to the individual substances of which they are aggregates. A collection of oxygen molecules is conceivable only through these molecules. Yet the existence of the aggregate is not reducible to that of the molecules.

To exist is to have properties, to have a true description. (To be *individuated* is to have a distinguishing set of properties that nothing else has.) If the aggregate of molecules has properties not identical to those of its molecules, its existence is irreducible to molecules. The aggregate has the property of having substantial members, but that is a property that the substantial individual members themselves lack. Therefore, the no aggregate is identical to any of its members.

Now consider the universe as an aggregate. The infinite spirit an aggregate might well exist without existing as an individual substance. Consider the universe as spirit, a cosmic aggregate of mutually sympathetic but essentially independent individual centers of feeling. If the universe is an aggregate (*macrocosm*) of individual substances (*microcosms*), reference to such a spirit as a permanent individual seems inappropriate in a system developed from a cognitive or theoretical standpoint. However, philosophy as Pythagoras understood it was not purely theoretical. It promised enlightenment and deliverance. The Pythagorean term “theory” Thus belonged as much to religious as to metaphysical language. (In the seventeenth century Leibniz developed a famous version of the macrocosm/microcosm theory, calling each microcosm a *monad*.)

Viewing the universe as an individual cosmos or cosmic soul is necessary if one is to identify with it religiously. The cosmos is not an individual. Yet the false description or illusion of it being an individual may be well-founded practically. It is impossible to identify with an aggregate that is seen to lack any perspective of its own apart from those of its members. As patriots we may identify with George Washington (and not with individual cells and biographical moments). He bears the purpose that coordinates these cells and moments. We refer to the cosmos as an individual if we identify religiously with the purpose organizing its constituents.

The very need for overt communication with other persons, for deciphering their messages rather than directly reading them as by *telepathy*, argues for the privacy and essential independence of their experiences. If communication succeeds, one individual mind, without surrendering its privacy, approaches other individual minds empathetically. Interpreting their words and behavior, it internalizes their viewpoints, making each individual mind a reflection in miniature of the total community.

For example, team spirit is not an individual, not an extra member of the team. It is the raised consciousness of all members, each coordinating with the others. Each “I becomes a we.” Another example is national spirit. The individual citizen, expanding through communication to encompass the different viewpoints of compatriots, generates the spirit of the nation. Until the different viewpoints are internalised and related within an individual, national spirit does not exist. The expansion of your individual consciousness in exchanges with other viewpoints, in other walks of life, creates the spirit of the nation.

In the same way, an individual mind that, by cosmic empathy, expands to identify with the universe creates the beginnings of a cosmic spirit. The cosmic spirit in this way first attains actual existence, however fleeting. In and for the microcosmic individual, the cosmos comes to exist as it never existed as an aggregate without sympathetic understanding between the members. The non-individual cosmic aggregate may be so internalized in different human human members that these members each and reproduces and reflects in miniature this same total cosmic aggregate from its individual perspective.

The earth is not the physical center of the universe. Yet it is possible to believe that earth, because it cradles humanity, is a mental center of the universe. On the crust of the earth, through art, religion, science, and philosophy, the cosmos has awakened to self-awareness. Yet this does not exclude its equally doing so in another galaxy or cosmic epoch. And since empathetic identification with other human beings is problematic, identification with the universe is more so.

You are an individual, the universe is an aggregate. Suppose it is an aggregate of individual momentary centers of feeling. You may seek to contemplate those momentary events over their full cosmic range. The panentheistic event theory agrees with pantheism that ordinary things and persons are illusory. Its advantage over pantheism is that it explains why *this* illusion occurs and not *that* illusion. A pantheism that dismisses the things and persons as illusory manifestations of Brahman or Substance fails to explain why precisely these and not other illusions occur. If your life is an illusion, why is it an illusion of suffering rather than of being in paradise? This is explained in Hindu philosophy only by *karma*, other illusions in previous lives. The path of your reincarnations is the path in the world of illusion (*maya*) that, according to your performance of the duties of your cast in one,

The event theory of the universe explains that things and people appear as they do because of the limitations in their sensory discrimination: we see the patterns, not the discontinuous units. Whitehead's theory resembles Buddhism. He was likely talking of Buddhism when he wrote that his philosophy seems to approximate more to some strains of Indian, or Chinese, thought, than to Western Asiatic, or European, thought (Whitehead, 1978, Preface). He distinguishes his view from a Spinozistic-Brahmanist pantheist view.

Yet Buddhist cosmology is not chiefly motivated by a desire to explain appearances. The appearances that people present do not, in the Buddhist view, merely reflect a configuration of micro-events in the present world. According to the Buddhist theory of *conditioned production*, they reflect more basically one's intentions and consciousness in previous lives. Buddhism takes reincarnation as seriously as Hinduism. Of course, given the event theory, reincarnation cannot be of a continuously existing self as in Hinduism. The Buddhist idea of reincarnation is sometimes compared to a flame that survives from one candle to the next. One event lights up the next, or rather the present candle allows itself to be enlightened by previous events.

A thing or person, for Buddhism, is a series or succession of events. Buddhism does not narrate with Hegel how spirit has achieved self-realization in persons, ethical institutions, art, religion, and philosophy. It does not have a world-wide story of freedom. But the Buddhist *noble eightfold path* includes a perfect ideal of *good morals*, of *benevolent thoughts* toward all other persons, of *honest speech* to all, and of means of *subsistence not injurious to any living beings*. Thus four of the eight ideals presuppose other persons. They presupposes that all human beings have *ideal moral rights*. In practical life, persons, the suffering of persons, and human rights are taken most seriously by Buddhists, even if persons are viewed as insubstantial. So human rights can be respected even by Buddhists who do not believe that human beings exist as continuing individual substances. Persons as the holders of rights exist, but the existence of a person must ultimately be analysed as a series of discontinuous events, such as momentary states of consciousness.