

A WESTERN SAINT'S DIALOGUE WITH INDIAN THEOLOGIAN

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INTRODUCTION

The religious philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas is compared with the ideas of twenty Indian thinkers who cover the period from the third century to modern times. The areas studied are: 1) God's five essential attributes which include a discussion of God as: simple and not a compound of substance and attributes; necessary being; having an existence identical with His essence; not composed of matter and form; immutable; pure act and never in a state of potency; infinite in His magnitude and power, eternal and omnipresent; one without a second; and absolutely perfected in goodness and love at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of existence. 2) Negative theology and the unknowability of the Divine substance; knowing God through negation; and analogical predication. 3) God's operational attributes of omniscience, a free and immutable will, and omnipotence; and His Divine providence. The Trinity, angels and the Divine Incarnation. 4) Proofs for the existence of God as an unmoved mover, first efficient cause and rational designer. 5) Creative activity through the Divine Mind and exemplary ideas and the Word of God; the image of God; the reason for the creation prime matter, substantial form and substance; and the principal of individualization.

The metaphysical system of Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) and many Indian philosophers share a common pattern of thought in emphasizing: religious philosophy and not knowledge of the empirical sciences; attributes of the Divine Reality and man's relation to them; an ontological hierarchy of beings; a synthetic and systematic world-view; infallible revealed scriptural authority; the goal of salvation and liberation; a tradition based on continuity with the past; and absolute and everlasting moral values.¹ In view of these similarities, the congruencies between the ideas of Thomas Aquinas and the Indian philosophers concerning the nature of God will be analyzed. God's five essential attributes, negative theology and predication, God's operational

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¹Raimundo Panikkar, "Common Pattern of Eastern and Western Scholasticism", Diogenes, 83 (1973), pp. 103-13 makes these comparisons in a more general framework.

attributes, the proofs for the existence of God, and the Divine creative activity are the main areas of study. For each separate topic, the opening statements is made by Thomas Aquinas, followed by the Indian teachings of Ishvarakrishna (250/300-325/375), Vyasa (c. 400-500), Prashastapada (550-600), Shankara (688/788-720/820), Somananda (fl. 850), Vachaspati Mishra (820/900-900/80), Jayanta Bhatta (840-900), Abhinavagupta (975-1025), Ramanuja (1017-1137), Udayana (1050-1100), Madhva (1190/1238-1276/1317), Jiva Goswami (d. 1566), Vijnanabhikshu (fl. 1550/75), Baladeva Vidyabhusana (1684/1720-1775/1800), Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Swami Saradananda (1865-1927), Swami Abhedananda (1866-1939), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and Henry Heras S.J. (1888-1955).

GOD'S FIVE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

Thomas Aquinas: Simplicity, immutability, infinity, oneness and perfection are God's five essential characteristics pertaining to His essence. The Divine Being is a simple (i.e., nondual) and undivided whole without constitutive factors or parts. God is not a composite being since pure actuality without potentiality, and the uncaused first cause that is not the effect to anything else. Though we conceive of them as separate, the knower, the process of knowing and the object that is known are one in God. Consequently, God is apprehended by the human intellect not as He is in Himself without composition, but according to the modes of the mind in a composite manner.²

Shankara: *Brahman* is undifferentiated and undivided without internal differentiations (*nirvishesa*) of external relations, being a non-composite nondual unity. It is partless and precedes the subject-object threefold distinction of knower, known and knowing.³

2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter CG), ed., Vernon Bourke (5 vols., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); *Basic Writing of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (hereafter ST), ed. Anton Pegis (2 vols., New York: Random House, 1945), CG, IV, 11,18; ST 1,3, Prol., 3,7.

³ Shankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhasya* (hereafter BSB), tr. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1996), Section 2.1.26; S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (2 vols., Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), ii, pp. 502, 534-35.

Swami Vivekananda: If the infinite *Brahman* could be divided, each part would be infinite. The idea of two infinities is a logical contradiction, since they would limit each other, and both would be finite. *Brahman* is partless, without composition or extension, timeless, not a compound of matter and energy, or an effect of something else and therefore is indestructible and not subject to any laws.⁴

Thomas Aquinas: God is simple (i.e., nondual), since His attributes are identical with His substance or essence though we conceptually distinguish between the two. God's existence is not caused by an act that is other than itself. His essence is His being; whatever belongs accidentally to other things belong to Him essentially. If the Divine intellect were an attribute and not God's essence it would be an accident in God. He would participate in an attribute that is more noble than Himself, and would exist in a mutable state of potentiality.⁵

Jiva Goswami: God's essential inherent attributes are internal aspects of the Divine substance. His form is identical with His essence (*svayam-rupa*). These attributes are infinite and immutable, not subject to origination, preservation or destruction. The relation between God's substance and the essential attribute of power (*shakti*) is so intimate, that one cannot be conceived of without the other. It is like the relationship between the substratum of fire and its manifestation as the power to burn. They are ontologically inseparable but not logically indistinguishable from each another.⁶

⁴Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (hereafter CW), ed. Advaita Asharama (9 vols, Calcutta: Advaita Asharama, 1962), ii, pp. 233-34, 431, 462; iii, p. 7; vi, p. 25.

⁵CG, I, 45; II, 8; ST, I, 6.3.

⁶Sushil Kumar De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961), pp. 286-88; Sudhindra Chakravarti, *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaishnavism* (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1969), pp. 64-65.

Baladeva Vidyabhusana: There is an identity without differences between God's attributes and substance, analogous to water and its wave. All of the Divine attributes are without internal difference and are identical with his essence. This integral unity corresponds to the inseparable relationship between a substance and its attributes.⁷

Thomas Aquinas: Since God is simple and not a composite, His existence (thatness) is identical with his essence or quiddity (whatness), though they are logically distinct from the standpoint of human understanding. The Divine Being's essence and existence are not separate, since God does not participate in anything else, is pure act without potentiality, is not a composite being and is immutable. For all infinite entities their existence and essence differ and consequently their being is due to another, because contingent existence cannot be its own cause. They may or may not exist since they begin to exist only through something else. God as necessary being is the pure act of existing as being-itself (*ipsum esse*). While a contingent being exists only if it is preceded by a cause and is not destroyed, God exists eternally without a cause. In Exodus 3.14 the Lord states "I am who am," because His essential substance is not other than his existential being. Creatures exist only in as far as they participate in God's being, while God is the self-existent (*a se*) first cause. God is His own being, belonging to itself through itself, and is not derived by participating in something else. There is nothing outside of God or prior to him on which His existence depends. He does not participate in existence, which would be a supplementary quality added to His being.⁸

Shankara: *Brahman* is self-existent, self-caused (*svabhava*) of its own being, conceived through itself and eternally existing. Since *Brahman* is infinite and one without a second, there is nothing external to it that could be its cause. It is a necessary being, as the ultimate uncaused, unconditioned, indeterminate, immutable, indestructible, formless, partless, substratum

⁷Jadunath Sinha, *The Philosophy an Religion of Chaitanya and His Followers* (Calcutta: Jadunath Sinha Foundation, 1976), pp. 95-96.

⁸CG, 1,2,15,16,18; II, 52; St, I, 3.4,2.3, 104.1.

(*ashraya*) of finite existence and the ontological principle of unity. As absolute existence-itself (*sat*) and consciousness-itself (*chit*), *Brahman* is not an attribute or action or a combination of material elements. Necessary being abides in-itself as the ground of existence, the one self-sufficient essence and background of pure existence from which all else proceeds. All things are rooted in *Brahman* while it is rooted in-itself. It is the substantial cause of the universe, of which all contingent and determinate objects are diverse manifestations. God is the seer of sight, the hearer of hearing, the thinker of thought and the knower of knowledge. Finite existence is contingent being having only a dependent and participating existence, which receives its being from another.⁹

Thomas Aquinas: God is the most noble of all beings and is not composed of matter and form since He does not possess a material body and is partless without any internal differences.¹⁰

Udayana: God (*Ishvara*) is nonmaterial and therefore does not have a body with extended parts. Yet, he may create a body to carry out a specific task.¹¹

Thomas Aquinas: God is immutable because He is pure act that does not transform from potentially to actuality, which characterizes an imperfect unfulfilled being. He is not composed of matter and form which are in a state of potency. Whatever changes is a composite, part remaining as it was and part becoming something different, but God is altogether simple. He exists eternally, subsisting in a timeless realm.¹²

⁹Shankara, *Bhādaranyaka Upanishad* (hereafter BU), tr. Swami Madhavananda (Almora: *Advaita Ashrama*, 1934, 1993), Section 3.4.2; BSB Section 2.3.9; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, ii, pp. 534-35; William Indich, "Can the Advaita Vedantin Provide a Meaningful Definition of Absolute Consciousness?," *Philosophy East and West* 30 (1980), p. 487.

¹⁰ST, 1, 3.2; CG, 1, 20.

¹¹George Chemparathy, "saint Thomas Aquinas and Udayana on God," *Studies in the History of Religion* 32 (1975), pp. 189-90..

¹²ST, 1,9,3.1.2; CG, 1, 16, 20.

Swami Vivekananda: All movements and change are in the phenomenal world and thus, an immutable (*kutastha*) God is not effected by the change in nature. If God changes, then He would be a compound that eventually would disintegrate and die and return to the prior causal state of existence. There are no external or internal forces that can alter the Absolute and therefore, *Brahman* is unchangeable similar to an unmovable river bank in relation to a stream of water. There must be two limited things for change to occur, since one thing always moves in relation to something else.¹³

Thomas Aquinas: According to His essence God is infinite in His perfection, dimensions and power, not limited by matter or form. He cannot be subsumed under a genus, since nothing is prior to God conceptually or empirically. God is not caused or limited by anything exterior to and outside of Himself. Nothing can be superadded to the unrealized potentiality. As the cause of his own being and as the universal cause and mover of all existence, God has infinite power.¹⁴

Omnipresent God is spatially infinite since His entire being is immediately present in all of his effects. Being omnipresent in all things, he provides them with continued existence, power and activity. God had no temporal limits cannot begin or cease to be since He is immutable. He is motionless, without a before or an after and is consequently not measured by time. There are no corruptible contraries in God. If God was not eternal, something else would have brought Him into being, but this cannot be since he is the first cause.¹⁵

Shankara: *Brahman* is all-pervading, omnipresent, boundless without an end, omnipresent and not confined to a single locality. It is of infinite power, unlimited by anything. *Brahman* is birthless, indestructible and undecaying and therefore eternal.¹⁶

Ramanuja: Infinite God transcends both space and time. The religious

¹³CW, I, pp. 7, 378, 401-02, 417-18; viii, pp. 235-36.

¹⁴ST, I, 7.1-2, 3.5; CG, I, 43, 24; II, 52.

¹⁵CG, I, 15, 43; III, 68; II, 30; ST, I, 8.1-2, 10.1-2, 7.1-2.

¹⁶BU, Sections 2.4.12; 4.4.25; 5.1.1; BSB, Section 3.2.37.

scriptures declare that Brahman is all-pervading and omnipresent. Finite existence is dependent on the infinite, unlike God who is the foundation of everything else. God is eternal, not in the sense of existing for all moments of time, but in being timeless.¹⁷

Jiva Goswami: A material body can only be in one place at one time, but the Lord's (*Bhagavat*) ultimated and ubiquitous spiritual body can be in all place at one time. With innumerable configurations or the same form, omnipresent and all-pervasive (*sarvagatatva*) God, can manifest Himself in many different locations at the same time.¹⁸

Swami Vivekananda: One infinite omnipresent God is beyond the law of causality, not limited by any constraining external force. He transcends space, time and causality, name and form and is thus infinite. Since He has no component parts, *Brahman* is indestructible and cannot disintegrate. He is omnipresent, without form, unlimited by space or time.¹⁹

Thomas Aquinas: God is one; for if there were two Gods they would differ and at least one would be imperfect and lack a virtue the other possessed. Two absolutely perfect beings could only be distinguished by something added to them, which would make them composite. All things are fulfilled by reduction to a single principle; therefore in every genus plurality is proceed by a unity. God is the one principle, the one cause, from which all things have their being.²⁰

Vachaspathi Mishra: There could not be a second omniscient and omnipotent being, lest they conflict and clash producing chaos in the world. If they disagreed and had contradictory wishes neither could predominate since they are equally omnipotent. Only one God is necessary to bring about the

¹⁷Ramanuja, *The Vedanta Sutras*, ed. George Thibaut (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), Section 3.2.36; Krishna Bharadwaj; *The Philosophy of Ramanuja* (New Delhi: Sir Shankar Lall Charitable Trust Society, 1958), p. 123.

¹⁸De, *Vaisnava*, p. 287; Chakravarti, *Vaishnavism*, pp. 69, 142.

¹⁹CW, I, pp. 7, 400-03; ii. Pp. 234, 413; iii, p. 6.

²⁰CG, 1, 42; ST, I, 11, 65.1.

creation and to maintain the world.²¹

Jayanta Bhatta: One omniscient God is sufficient for the purpose of creating the cosmos. If the world was created by many deities they would have conflicting purposes and could not produce a world that is unified, orderly and harmonious.²²

Swami Vivekananda: God is One (*advaita, aikya*), the creator of all the ruler of all, the internal soul of every being. There can be only one infinite, since if there were two, one would limit the other. In the reasoning process the particular is explained by the general, until we come to the universal principle which is only one. God is the highest generalization, the single universal principle, the primal cause out of which everything comes.²³

Thomas Aquinas: God is absolutely perfect through His essence which is goodness-itself, while other things are perfect to the degree they participate in His perfection. While creatures embody a particular good proportionate to their nature, God encompasses the universal good of the entire cosmos. The perfection of the creation which is an effect, preexists in God the first producing cause of all things. There is a hierarchical grade found in things in relation to their level of goodness and truth. Degrees of perfection imply the existence of the best, of a being that is absolutely perfect.²⁴

Vyasa: According to the principle of continuity, whatever has degrees has a lower and upper limit. As there are grades of manifestation of intelligence, so God is the highest limit of omniscience. If God were surpassed by another being, it itself would be God.²⁵

²¹Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, tr. Rama Prasada (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1912, 1988), Section 1.24.

²²Aruna Goel, *Indian Philosophy Nyaya-Vaisesika and Modern Science* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1984), pp. 159-60.

²³CW, I, pp. 369-72, 385; ii, pp. 78, 136-37, 249, 413, 430-31; iii, p. 6; vi, p. 25.

²⁴ST, I,4; CG,I,28.

²⁵Prasada, *Yoga Sutras*, Section 1.25; Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology* (3 vols.; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), I,PP.367-68.

Shankara: Manifestations of knowledge and glory decrease in the scale of being from humans down to a clump of grass. Similarly, knowledge and glory increase in unfoldment in the ascending series from humans to God. Perfection (*siddha*) is a Divine attribute free of all evil.²⁶

Ramanuja: The highest *Brahman*, comprises within itself all auspicious qualities, being totally free of all imperfections. Just as the sun is not influenced by the water it shines upon, so also *Brahman* is unaffected by earthly imperfections.²⁷

NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND PREDICATION

Thomas Aquinas: We have no adequate conception of Divinity, since human reasoning powers are imperfect and are based on modes of knowledge derived from the senses. God is not known by any predicates, by any created likeness or by His effects, which He infinitely exceeds. The Supreme Being cannot be defined by a genus of species that would logically precede Him. Our ideas of the Divine are not of the same genus as the Divine, thus we cannot understand the nature of God. Since spiritual essence is not a corporeal or a sensible object, it cannot be known through the senses.²⁸

Shankara: *Brahman* is not discerned through speech or discursive reasoning, since it is unconditioned and indeterminate; without attributes, relations, activity, form or internal variation. All finite categories of understanding fail to grasp it, since it is not comprehended by the intellect or described by words that signify a quality, activity or a genus. Since knowledge is based on making comparison between similar or different entities, it is indescribable (*acintya*). *Brahman* as the knower exists prior to all possible human experience and is not an object of knowledge, since it is

²⁶BSB,Section 1.3.30; S.N.L. Shrivstava, "Samakara on God, Religion and Morality", Philosophy East and West 7 (1957-58),p.96.

²⁷Ramanuja, Vedanta Sutra, Section 1.1.1,p.88;3.2.20.

²⁸CG.I,3,14;III,49,55.

the foundation of all logical proofs, it is not a spatially located empirical object perceivable by any of the five senses.²⁹

Swami Vivekananda: *Brahman* which lies beyond space, time and causation, cannot be grasped by words or human reason. Knowledge is a limitation that involves objectifying things by projecting them outside of the mind. When *Brahman* is restricted by the human mind, it becomes conceptually finite and therefore, to know *Brahman* is a contradiction in terms. If *Brahman* were knowable, it would be finite. *Brahman* is the eternal subject, the essence of our soul, the unknowable knower.³⁰

Thomas Aquinas: Since the Divine substance surpasses all capacities of the human intellect, God cannot be apprehended by reason. We can attain a partial knowledge of what God is not by a process of negation. For example, God is without composition, matter and form or whole and parts and is eternal and infinite.³¹

Shankara: *Brahman* can only be described negatively since it is beyond speech and mind, undifferentiated and devoid of attributes. By employing a discriminative process of "not this, not this" ("*neti neti*") all distinctions in *Brahman* are negated and only It remains.³²

Thomas Aquinas: God is not known univocally since He and man differ radically, nor equivocally since these statements would tell us nothing

²⁹Shankara, *Bhagavat Gita Commentary of Sri Shanakaracharya*, trans. A. Mahadeva Sastri (hereafter BG) (Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu, 1961), Section 13.13; BSB, Sections 3.2.14, 22-23; Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, ii, pp. 484, 534-35; Ram Lal Singh, *An Inquiry Concerning Reason in Kant and Samkara* (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1978), pp. 241-45; Gopal Stavig, "The Supreme Atman of Shankara's Advaita and the Absolute Essence in the Philosophy of *Ibn Al-'Arabi*" *Journal of Dharma* 23 (1998), p. 305.

³⁰CW, ii, pp. 82, 133-34; v, p. 206.

³¹CG, I, 14, 30.

³²BG, Section 13.12; BU, Section 2.3.6; BSB, Section 3.2.22.

about the Divine nature. Analogical predication implies that God is essentially different from man and nature, yet there is an imperfect likeness. With more adequate definitions the descriptive term is predicated primarily to God and secondarily to creatures.³³

Madhva: Though God's attributes are transcendental and transempirical, they are specified by the same terms that are applied to empirical qualities. Terms and categories that reflect the powers of human understanding are symbolic and enable us to comprehend the Divine nature to a limited extent.³⁴

GOD'S OPERATIONAL ATTRIBUTES

Thomas Aquinas: Knowledge, will and power are the three fundamental attributes related to the operation of God. Knowledge and will are internal and power is an external manifestation of the Divine essence. The exercise of power involves putting into action, what the will commands and what knowledge directs.³⁵

Udayana: God's creation of the world requires direct knowledge (*jnana*) of the material cause, the will (*iccha*) and the desire to realize certain aims, and the power (*prayatna*) to accomplish these goals.³⁶

Somananda: The potency (*shakti*) of Shiva manifests as the will to create the relative objectified state of existence. All things come into being through an act of will (*iccha*) which manifests as desire, followed by knowledge (*jnana*) of the means and then the creative power (*kriya*) to bring

³³ST, I, 13.

³⁴B.N.K. Sharma, *Philosophy of Sri Madhavacarya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 340-45, 348; B.N.K. Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings in His Own Words* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1979), p. 123.

³⁵ST, I, 14. Prol, 25.1.

³⁶Swami Hiranmayananda, "Indian Theism", in *The Cultural Heritage of Indian ed.*, Haridas Bhattacharyya (5 vols.: Calcutta: The Ramakrishana Mission Institute of Culture, 1937, 1953), ii, pp. 542-43.

about the universe. These three functions are the beginning, middle and end of all things.³⁷

Madhva: The Supreme *Brahman* is a person endowed with the faculties of cognition (knowledge), conation (will) and activity (power), by which He creates and controls the universe. Since these attributes are an expression of His being, they are a part of the Divine essence.³⁸

Thomas Aquinas: Knowledge in God is one and undivided without multiplicity and is identical with the Divine essence. By knowing His own essence, God knows all things that proceed from him. God sees other things not in themselves, but in Himself, because His essence contains the likeness of things other than Himself. God is simple, His act of understanding and the object understood are identical. As an omniscient being He has a nontemporal immutable knowledge of the past and future. He knows and perceives all things simultaneously in the present and not in succession from all eternity. Divine knowledge extends to both the universal character that is common to all and the special character that distinguishes one thing from another.³⁹

Jayanta Bhatta: All objects of the universe, past, present and future are grasped by God in a single all-embracing intuition, through his omniscient, eternal and infinite knowledge. Divine cognition cannot be discrete, since if there were gaps in His consciousness even for a moment, the entire universe that is sustained by the Divine will and knowledge would collapse.⁴⁰

Madhva: God's self-luminous omniscience is like the sun's luster, which does not depend on something external to itself and is independent of the objects it shines upon. Divine knowledge is eternal, all-embracing and presupposes full knowledge of the future. God is present in all creatures as

³⁷Mark Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), pp. 89-92; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, ii, p. 733.

³⁸Sharma, *Madhvacharya*, pp. 344-45.

³⁹ST, I, 14; CG, I, 45-50, 65-71.

⁴⁰Sinha, *Psychology*, I, pp. 368-70.

the knower that witness all objects and events.⁴¹

Thomas Aquinas: Through Divine knowledge, a thing is first comprehended and then it is desired through the will. Since God's immutable will is identical with His eternal Essence, it is not moved by another, but by its own goodness. The perfect first agent is the universal cause of all things though His freewill and not from any necessity. Though the Divine will is immutable, He wills that certain things should change. God wills that some human actions are done necessarily which cannot fail and that others are subject to contingency and are thereby subject to freewill.⁴²

Abhinavagupta: The creation of the universe is an external manifestation of Shiva's inscrutable will. He creates the world in perfect freedom through His will without relying on any external instrument. The omnipotent Lord is perfectly free to transgress the laws of nature.⁴³

Swami Vivekananda: There is no willing without knowing since we cannot desire something unless we first know the object. God is the only free being, the first cause in the chain of events. He creates the world because he desires too and is not bound by any law or necessity. Law is a manifestation of God's will by which he rules the universe. Divine intellect modifies into the Divine will which manifests as desires, and then they combine to produce the cosmos.⁴⁴

Thomas Aquinas: Not limited by anything, God's power is infinite extending to all things. His power acts on other things, but is not acted upon

⁴¹Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings*, pp. 114, 118-19; Sharma, *Madhvacarya*, pp. 346-47.

⁴²ST, I, 1-8; CG, II, 30.

⁴³L.N. Sharma, *Kashmir Saivism* (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1972), pp. 209, 213, 220-22.

⁴⁴CW, I, p. 351; vi, pp. 55-56, 117-18; viii, pp. 362-63.

by any other entity. Divine providence rules the universe and is responsible for both the general sequences of events and the pattern of individual events that occur either necessarily or contingently. God's power operates through primary causes that extend to all things and secondary causes to fewer things. The same effect results from both God's Divine power and natural agent according to different processes. He has the power to override the laws of nature by His miraculous powers, acting directly and not through secondary causes. All acts are possible for the omnipotent God, if they do not involve a logical contradiction. He is not subservient to the principle of contradiction, but rather the principle of contradiction is derived from the nature of God's being.⁴⁵

Madhva: God alone is the supreme omnipotent determining cause and inner mover of all things and changes. The universe is created, preserved and dissolved by God. Through his comic power He controls, obscures and enlightens, binds and liberates all people. The Lord is the independent all-doer while the world is a dependent derived reality. The voluntary self-limitation of God's omnipotence allows for the freewill of humans according to their accumulated *karmas*. All sentient and insentient entities depend on God for their existence and may cease to exist if He wills it.⁴⁶

Vijnana Bhikshu: God is not bound by the barriers of form, place and time and consequently could grow a shoot of a plant from a stone. By His will poison can be changed into nectar and vice versa.⁴⁷

Thomas Aquinas: The intellect first apprehends being-itself, next it understands being and lastly it desires being. God is the most universal of all causes and the most universal effect is being-existence. Christ, is the wisdom and Word of God by which He understands Himself. The Holy Spirit

⁴⁵ST, I, 25.1-4, 22.2, 19.6, 103.5, 7; 105.6; CG, II, 22, 25.

⁴⁶Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings*, pp. 126-28; H.N. Raghavendrachar, "Madhva's Brahma-Mimamsa", in *Cultural Heritage* iii, pp. 316, 326.

⁴⁷Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* (London: Kennikat Press, 1924, 1970), p. 85.

proceeds from God's love of Himself and makes us lovers of Him.⁴⁸

B.Upadhyaya: *Satchitananda* (existence-consciousness-bliss) is an ontological unity that follows a logical progression. *Sat* is the self-existence Father, the necessary being or 'isness' of God, the "I am"; the root of existence. *Asat* (non-sat) is contingent being or *maya*. *Chit* is Jesus Christ the Son, the logos and word, God's self-knowledge, intelligence and wisdom (*sophia*) producing an image of Himself. *Ananda* is the bliss and love of self-knowledge, the sanctifier, life giver and comforter.⁴⁹

Swami Vivekananda: First comes the Father, the existence (*sat*) out of which everything comes. Second is the Son, the knowledge (*chit*) by which we become conscious of God. Third is the Holy Spirit, the bliss (*ananda*) that unifies the three. *Sat* the Father is the creating principle, *chit* the Son the guiding principle and *ananda* the Holy Spirit is the realizing principle that joins a person to God.⁵⁰

Thomas Aquinas: Angels exist as part of the hierarchic characteristic of the scale of being. In the ascending order of ranks of forms, they represent the highest grade of created perfection. There is a continuous transition from the highest angel whose nature is closest to God, to the lowest, according to the degrees of grace and glory. They are not simple or pure being like God but are finite and created. Unlike humans they are sinless spiritual intelligences, completely incorporeal without material bodies. Angels known as Virtue preside over the operation of the universe including the movement of heavenly bodies.⁵¹

Henry Heras S.J.: The Indian *devas* (often mistranslated as gods) like the Christian angels: were created before the material universe, are spiritual

⁴⁸ST, I, 16.4, 45.5; CG, IV, 12, 20, 22.

⁴⁹Mathew Vekathanam, *Christology in the Indian Anthropological Context* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 252-55; K.P. Aleaz, "The Theological Writings of Brahmandhav Upadhyaya", *Indian Journal of Theology* 28 (1979), pp. 61-65, 73-75.

⁵⁰CW, viii, pp. 11-12, 191.

⁵¹ST, I, 50.2; 62.6, 8; CG, III, 80.

substances with divine bodies, dwell in heaven, are subordinate to the Supreme Being, assist God in governing the world, preside over the natural force of the world, are messengers of God, have power and knowledge that is superior to humans, are worshiped through religious rites for intercession, occasionally appear to humans and can fall from grace through sin.⁵²

Thomas Aquinas: God the supreme good communicates Himself in the highest manner through the Divine Incarnation, who makes the goodness, wisdom, justice and power of the Divine known to humans. He established faith, increased hope, showed His love for humanity, set an example of righteousness and bestowed full participation of Divinity on humanity. Humans are best instructed by God Himself who becomes a man. In Christ there is a perfect human and Divine nature, related not as accidental modes but in a single hypostasis. God united the human nature with Himself and conversely, a human can be united to God and have a vision of Him. The Divine Incarnation demonstrates God's love for humanity by taking away the sins of mankind. As an example to others he lived a life of renunciation.⁵³

Swami Vivekananda: The Divine Incarnation is the supreme instructor (*guru*), the teacher of all teachers. They bring a tidal wave of spirituality to the world. Incarnations come with a mission and a message and are conscious of their divinity from birth. Being the highest manifestation of God through man, there is great power behind their words, which they speak directly without employing complicated reasoning. Experiencing and seeing the truth through direct spiritual perception, they show it to others. A Divine Incarnation gives a devotee something concrete to venerate. If they are worshiped properly, they will manifest in the soul and the devotee will become like them. Grasp the ideal principle (the Father) through an ideal person (the Son), understand the precepts through an example. They are far

⁵²Henry Heras, "The Devil in Indian Scriptures", Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 27 (1952), pp. 214-22.

⁵³Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* ed. Mortimer Adler (2 vols.; Chicago: William Benton, Inc., 1952), ST, III, 1.1-2. This is the only citation in this article taken from this source; CG, IV, 39, 54-55.

greater than any conception of God we could ever formulate.⁵⁴

Swami Saradananda: The Divine and human nature coexist in the Divine Incarnation as God and man in one. When religion is in an impoverished state, motivated by loving compassion, the Divine Incarnation assumes a human body for the good of humanity. Being free from worldly desires, He is never bound by His actions. The Divine Incarnation remembers His past, is conscious of His own divinity, acts like a human and eventually realizes His mission as a spiritual teacher who establishes a new religion.⁵⁵

PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Thomas Aquinas: All motion has a beginning since all thing are moved by another, resulting in a finite series originating with the Divine Being. He is the unmoved mover, the first and final cause, the designer and governor of the world. The unmoved mover is the end and goal of all things the good which all things desire.⁵⁶

Shankara: Being an unmoved mover *Brahman* is the eternal unchanging perceiver and consciousness pervading all human cognition. *Brahman* is like a magnet that possesses no tendency to act by itself, yet still draws the iron to itself, or like the inactive color of an object that attracts the eye to it. All-pervasive God is the inactive Self of all, omniscient and omnipotent, the impeller of all though He is free from any tendency to act.⁵⁷

Sankhya: The Transcendental Reality (*Purusha*) is the spiritually

⁵⁴CW, iii, pp. 53-56; vii, p.4; viii, pp. 190-91.

⁵⁵Swami Saradanada, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Mylapore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1953), pp. 8-9, 92-94.

⁵⁶CG, I, 37, 13; III, 18; ST, I, 2.3.

⁵⁷BSB, Section 2.2.2; Shankara, *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (Viveka-Chudamani)*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1947), pp. 62-64, 81.

transcendent prime unmoved mover that exists outside of the natural world. Though immutable, *Purusha* the eternal unchanging consciousness is the catalyst that moves the world merely by its presence without active effort. It is the cause of all motion within the world and functions in the way a magnet attracts a piece of iron. Being immutable, it is not effected by the events within the world. As the basis of teleology, all desires and movements in the world are unconsciously motivated by a striving for *Purusha* the final cause.⁵⁸

Thomas Aquinas: Nothing can be its own efficient cause, since it would have to exist before itself in order to produce itself. Since everything but God has a cause, there cannot be a regression to infinity and there must exist a necessary being that is the cause of all thing. Thus, God is the first uncaused efficient cause in the limited finite series of events. The first term contains virtually the causality of the entire series, which works through secondary causes culminating in the final cause.⁵⁹

Shankara: *Brahman* is the first cause because it is not the effect of something else and is without origin (*asambhava*). It is uncaused since there is nothing superior to *Brahman* that could be its cause. *Brahman* which is the most universal being cannot originate from something particular, as clay does not originate from a pot or jar. Unless a primary first cause is admitted, the series will be an infinite regress without an origin. Something cannot be the efficient cause of itself, since it would have to be prior to itself.⁶⁰

Thomas Aquinas: God is the intelligent director who created the world to diffuse His goodness to creatures. The world is governed by providence not by chance, and this is why things most often happened for the best. Though astronomical bodies are not conscious of their end, they reach that goal in an orderly way moved by an omniscient God. All natural things are guided to their end by God, like an arrow that is directed by an intelligence

⁵⁸Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, ii, pp. 289-90; Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 252.

⁵⁹CG, II, 13, 15-16; ST, 1,2,3.

⁶⁰BSB, Section 2.3.9; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, ii, p. 546.

archer towards its goal.⁶¹

Shankara: The omnipotent, eternal and omnipresent Personal God (*Ishvara*) is the supreme intelligence and efficient cause of an ordered world. A conscious director is indicated by the regularity, symmetry and harmony of the world. Nature is alive and animated from within by an intelligent director. How could the insentient primal matter (*Pradhana*) create this universe by itself, which cannot be mentally envisioned of by the most intelligent architects? For heaven and earth to follow a fixed order, a conscious transcendent ruler is required.⁶²

Udayana: God is the efficient cause of the world, the source of order, design and coordination. The universe is an effect like a pot, it must have a volitional omniscient creator who is God. An omniscient and omnipotent God generates the laws that governed the universe.⁶³

THE DIVINE CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Thomas Aquinas: The exemplary forms, the archetypes of all things are in the Divine Mind. These ideas which are the thoughts of God are not distinct from His essence. Exemplary ideas which are the forms of things in the Divine intelligence are eternal, immutable and particular. All things are in the Divine mind as an effect is in its cause and exist only as far as they are known by God. All things were made by the word of the Supreme Being, since all created things pre-exist in the word. In the act of understanding Himself, the word is conceived by God, which allows Him to understand all else.⁶⁴

Shankara: At the beginning of each cosmic cycle, the *Vedic* words (*shabda*) in the mind of God are the archetypical ideas used to generate the

⁶¹ST, I, 2.3, 103.1, 47.1.

⁶²BSB, Section 2.2.1; BU, Section 3.8.9; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, pp. 546-47.

⁶³P.S. Ramanujam, *A Study of Vaisesika Philosophy* (Mysore: Prasaranga, University of Madras, 1979), p. 56; Hiranmayananda, "Theism", iii, pp. 542-43.

⁶⁴ST, I, 15, 22.1, 44.3.

names and forms of the genus of all objects in the universe. The ideal form of the universe is embodied in the *Vedas*. For example, the word "bhuh" manifested in the mind of God, he uttered it and its corresponding object the earth, came into existence.⁶⁵

Abhinavagupta: The universe is potentially latent in the mind of the omniscient and omnipotent God. Ideas and thoughts in the Divine Mind objectify in a limited manner as the universe. God's creation is analogous to an aesthetic production which is an external manifestation of the ideas in the mind of the artist.⁶⁶

Swami Vivekananda: The creation of the universe proceeded from the eternal words, which are the external aspect of the thought and will of God. This world is the objectification of thought and can only express itself through words. No thought is possible without words. An idea is always accompanied by an inseparable corresponding word and a word by a corresponding idea. Internal thought waves manifest first as subtle external words which are inseparable, then as gross external forms.⁶⁷

Swami Abhedananda: All ideas generated since the beginning of creation are in the cosmic Divine Mind. A painter constructs the design of something in his mind and then projects the mental image onto the material form. Similarly, God first thinks of the manifold world in the cosmic mind and then externally projects the ideas into gross form. The Divine mind is a reservoir of potential ideas that are externally projected in gross form. We are thought forms in the mind of God.⁶⁸

Thomas Aquinas: All creatures preexist intelligibly in God the first being, after the mode of His own nature. Humanity is an image of the

⁶⁵BSB, Sections 1.3.28-30; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, ii, pp. 495-96, Satvig, "Shankara's", p. 315.

⁶⁶Kanti Pandey, *An Outline of Saiva Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 195-96; Sharma, *Saivism*, pp. 209-11.

⁶⁷CW, I, pp. 73-74, 217, 448, ii, pp. 41-42; iii, p. 57; vi, p. 498.

⁶⁸Swami Prajnanananda, *Thoughts on Yoga, Upanishads and Gita* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1970), pp. 158-59.

exemplary likeness in the Divine mind. Wherever the image of God exists there is also an imperfect likeness, something copied from something else. The ectypical image is always less potent than the original prototype.⁶⁹

Madhva: God is the archetype (*bimba*) and the soul (*jiva*) is an intrinsic, not extrinsic reflection (*pratibimba*) of the Divine. The intrinsic relationship is an indissoluble and perpetual relation of total dependence of the soul on God. There is no reflecting medium like a mirror since the soul is both the reflection and the conscious reflecting medium. Spiritual understanding of the idea that we are a reflection of the Divine, leads to an attraction and affection towards God and eventual liberation (*moksha*).⁷⁰

Swami Abhedananda: A person's soul was created in the image of God who is the universal Spirit. Just as an image is a reflection of the original so also a person's soul and ego are an image or reflection of God, the universal spirit. Due to the material limits of space, time and causation, Divine images unfold partially and imperfectly on the material plane of existence.

Thomas Aquinas: Natural things are inclined to diffuse their own good to others as much as possible. To a far greater extent, the Divine will desires to communicate its own good to others as much as possible. God created the world to diffuse His infinite goodness and share his perfection with other beings. Willing and loving His own essence and perfection, God wills the multitude of things to exist, which are ordered to Him as their end. In creating the universe the Lord does not enhance Himself or satisfy any unfilled need or desire, or acquire anything new. God creates and wills the world freely and is not motivated by any internal or external necessity that requires fulfillment. He seeks to bring about his effect in a plenitude of manifestations yielding an enormous variety of objects.⁷¹

Shankara: The eternal creation of the universe is the Lords play (*lila*), being an expression of the fullness and abundance of God's free and joyous

⁶⁹ST, I, 93.2, 105.3.

⁷⁰Sharma, Madhvacarya, pp. 306-15, 415, 417.

⁷¹ST, I, 19.2, 44.4; CG, I, 75.

nature. It is a spontaneous overflow of God's perfection, not due to an, unfulfilled need, external purpose or necessity. The act of creation is analogous to child playing a game for its own sake and as natural as the process of breathing is for humans.⁷²

Sri Aurobindo: Creative activity is an expression of God's joy and pure delight; a spontaneous happiness not caused by a need or an unfulfilled desire. All existence springs from bliss (*ananda*), a joyful play (*lila*) and Divine game. The perpetual creation results from the delight of God and the sheer bliss of Self-creation.⁷³

Thomas Aquinas: God the universal cause of all things is the creator of prime matter. It is an underlying indeterminate, imperceptible, attributesless, formless, ungenerated and uncorrupted substrate of substantial change. Prime matter is not a particular substance, but is pure potency, the capacity to take on form and to be actualized. Potency is that which can be and is not, while act is that which is. While prime matter is always in potency, God is act alone and all other entities combine potency and act. The final, efficient and formal causes are principles of action, while the material cause is the subject that receives the effect of action. Matter can receive a form only if it is suitably disposed to it. The resulting secondary matter gives rise to all the individual forms of the cosmos.⁷⁴

Ishvarakrishna: All material and mental effects exist potentially in *prakriti* (prime matter) in state of equilibrium, prior to its creative manifestation as the unlimited cause of the limited finite universe. *Prakriti* is the all-pervading, formless, indeterminate, undifferentiated, imperceptible,

⁷²BSB, Section 2.1.33; Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy*, pp. 550-51; A.L. Herman, "Indian Theodicy: Sankara and Ramanuja on Brahma Sutra II.1.32-36", *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971), pp. 266-69; Stavig, "Shankara's", p. 318.

⁷³Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955), p. 96; Basant Lal, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), p. 96.

⁷⁴ST, I, 44.2; CG, I, 43.

destructible, homogeneous, nonspatial, nontemporal, unconscious, unmanifested; primal stuff and substratum of existence. Causation is process of transformation and presupposes an ultimate unmoved cause that is not a transformation. All material and mental effects of the universe are modifications (*parinama*) of *prakriti*. It manifests as secondary matter, the material or substantial cause of existence, through internal modifications producing a series of differentiation. The effect preexists as unmanifested potentially in *prakriti*, the material cause, having an inherent tendency to self-actualize. If a specific cause did not have a limited number of potential effects, anything could be produced from anything.⁷⁵

Thomas Aquinas: Substantial form directly informs prime matter making the object a concrete and individual substance. It is the essence or nature of a thing that determines the properties and characteristics that place the object in a specific class. Each species has a different substantial form that is imperceptible and is known only by its effects. For humanity the substantial form is the rational soul, which informs prime matter resulting in a corporeal body. Substantial form is differentiated from accidental form, which determines the individual characteristics of an entity. When an accidental form is removed from an entity, it is corrupted relatively and when the substantial form is withdrawn it is corrupted absolutely. Through form, matter becomes an intelligible determined substance. The form of a substance makes knowledge possible and allows it to be classified into a species.⁷⁶

Madhva: Substance has the intrinsic capacity of integrating its attributes into homogeneous wholes and expressing itself through its essential

⁷⁵Ishvarakrishna, "Samkya Karika", in Nandalal Sinha, *The Sankhya Philosophy* (Allahabad: Bhuvaneshwari Asrama, 1915), Sections viii-ix, xv-xvi; Satkari Mookerjee, "The Samkhya-Yoga", in *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1952), pp. 243-44, 249-50.

⁷⁶ST, I, 44.2, 76.4; Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), pp. 31-33.

properties. *Vishesas* is the self-differentiating of substance that separates it into relative particulars. In sentient beings essential and accidental *vishesas* are identical with the substance. Essential *vishesas* like sentiency and thingness, persist in a sentient being as long as it exists. Accidental *vishesas* like eating, or doing this or that, are temporary produced effects. With insentient objects, essential *vishesas* like chairness are identical with the substance, while accidental *vishesas* are identical with their substance on one sense and different in another. *Vishesas* functions to maintain the unity and continuity of an object through its various modes and aspects. They enable one to distinguish between a particular and universal and a quality from its substance, but do not apply to the differences between one empirical object and another.⁷⁷

Thomas Aquinas: Substance is composed of prime matter and substantial form. It is self-sustained, subsisting in-itself and not in something else, without an extrinsic cause as the underlying sustainer of accidents. It is the foundation that underlies, sustains and is distinct from accidents. Substance is actualized by the nine generic accidents (Aristotelian categories) which create the quiddity (whatness) of an object. Several accidents that may be essential characteristics, inhere in an object being only in a concrete and individual substance.⁷⁸

Prashastapada: The nine fundamental kinds of substance are the five forms of matter, space, time, soul and mind. Primary substance is: the initial category since all other categories depend on it for their existence; in existence prior to all qualities; a substratum with a self-sufficient independent existence, subsisting apart from qualities and not dependent for its existence on anything else; the substratum where qualities and motion inhere; an identity that persists through change; the material cause and potential existence of all composite things; and the producer of lesser substances

⁷⁷Sharma, *Madhvacarya*, pp. 73-79, 86, 89-91.

⁷⁸CG, II, 2.54; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, pp. 29-34

similar to thread being the cause of the cloth.⁷⁹

Thomas Aquinas: Prime matter is in a state of potentiality to many forms, but is made finite by a particular form. Conversely, form is common to many things and is individualized by matter manifesting as a particular thing. Form that is not determined by matter owes its existence to an indeterminate and universal agent, while form determined by matter, exists because of a limited and particular agent. The materialization of form individualizes and particularizes an object, distinguishing one entity from another. Form on limiting matter perfects it, while matter does not perfect a form but limits its scope making it imperfect. Matter is responsible for individualizing and differentiating things, while form is the universal element that places an object into a specific class and species. As long as the form remains, the thing must exist since destruction occurs when the form is removed from matter.⁸⁰

Shankara: Name (*nama*) and form (*rupa*) and not matter, constitute the principle of individualization. Material substance is eternal, but the form continually changes, just as clay is molded into many forms with different names, yet remains as clay. Name is the internal aspect of the form in the mind of God and form is the external aspect of the name. An object is individualized by limiting adjuncts (*upadhi's*) of the mind, senses and physical body, which restrict it to particular location in space and time, as illustrated by the metaphor of universal space being enclosed in an individual object like a jar (*avaccheda-vada*). *Upadh's* are expressed through a mental mode taking a subjective form as internal cognition and an objective configuration as external perceptions.⁸¹

In conclusion, Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Indian *Advaita*

⁷⁹Goel, *Nyaya-Vaisesika*, pp. 72-75; Karl Potter, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* (8 vols; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), ii, pp. 283-87.

⁸⁰ST, I, 7.1, 75.6, 115.1; CG, II, 55.

⁸¹BSB, Sections 1.3.41; 2.1.13-14; Sinha, *Psychology*, I, pp. 372-74.

Vedantist's both stress the nonduality of God (*Advaita Brahman*). The Indians excel in their interpretation of the nonduality of God from the subjective standpoint as consciousness-itself (*chit*), bliss-itself (*ananda*), the Transcendental or Essential Self (*Atman*), the witness-Self (*saksin*) and the indwelling immanent inner guide and ruler (*antatyamin*). Thomas Aquinas' originality and genius was to describe the nonduality of God from the objective perspective as existence-itself or being-itself, in relation to Divine simplicity and the four other essential characteristics of the Supreme Being.