

find ourselves led to a greater and greater emphasis on communalised and State ownership, while retaining the full concept of personal ownership.

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This article is a question rather than a thesis, written not spontaneously but at request, and I could not argue fully about many points it raises. But I think it contains an idea on which Catholics with more time than a missionary might well be working.

FINBAR SYNNOT, O.P.

GRADATION, EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION

The following essay by Dr Coomaraswamy is offered to BLACK-FRIARS readers for the very high degree of interest which attaches to the approach from an unfamiliar standpoint to the familiar problem of the relation of science to religion.

The metaphysical focus of the essay may perhaps be best obtained from the brilliant paragraph on the *Cogito* of Descartes. Here the startling character of the thought is due to the contrast of the respective ways in which the imagination of East and West lends support to the concept of being. If the West, especially in that caricature of itself which is called modern philosophy, has tended to imagine reality in terms of visible solids, thus colouring the concept of being with an externality and a rigidity of outline not wholly its own, the imagination of the East has generally been more suggestive of a conception of being as an *act*, personal or impersonal as the point of view changes.

For St Thomas also, being is an 'act' to which, ultimately, even substance among the categories is potential, and, to that extent, relative. From no other position available to the West can fruitful contact be made with the tradition Dr Coomaraswamy represents.

From a deepened understanding of the principles of St Thomas's metaphysics, it may be possible, now that Eastern writers are more readily available to explain their own thought to us, to carry the understanding of Eastern tradition further than the position outlined in the *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averrhoistas*. In any case it is certain that the unity, or rather the non-duality, of consciousness of which Dr Coomaraswamy speaks, has nothing to do with the evolutionary and sentimental conceptions of theological modernism.

BERNARD KELLY

GRADATION, EVOLUTION, AND REINCARNATION

THE so-called conflicts of religion and science are, for the most part, the result of a mutual misunderstanding of their respective terms and range. As to range: one deals with the why of things, the other with their how. one with intangibles, the other with things that can be measured, whether directly or indirectly. The question of terms is important. At first sight the notion of a creation completed 'in the beginning' seems to conflict with the observed origin of species in temporal succession. But *en arche*, *in principio*, *agre* do not mean only 'in the beginning' with respect to a period of time, but also 'in principle', that is, in an ultimate source logically rather than temporally prior to all secondary causes, and no more before than after the supposed beginning of their operation. So, as Dante says, 'neither before nor after was God's moving on the face of the waters'; and Philo, 'at that time, indeed, all things took place simultaneously . . . but a sequence was necessarily written into the narrative because of their subsequent generation from one another'; and Behmen, 'it was an everlasting beginning'.

As Aristotle says, 'eternal beings are not in time'. God's existence is, therefore, *now*—the eternal now that separates past from future durations but is not itself a duration, however short. Therefore, in Meister Eckhart's words, 'God is creating the whole world *now*, this instant'. Again, no sooner has some time elapsed, however little, but everything is changed; *panta rhei*, 'you cannot dip your feet twice in the same waters'. So, then, as for Jalalu'd-Din Rumi, 'every instant thou art dying, and returning; Muhammad hath said that this world is but a moment. . . . Every moment the world is renewed, life is ever arriving anew, like the stream. . . . The beginning, which is thought, eventuates in action; know that in such wise was the construction of the world in eternity'.

In all this there is nothing to which the natural scientist can object; he may, indeed, reply that his interest is confined to the operation of mediate causes, and that it does not extend to questions of a first cause or of the whatness of life; but that is simply a definition of his self-chosen field. The Ego is the only content of the Self that can be known objectively, and therefore the only one that he is willing to consider. His concern is only with behaviour.

Empirical observation is always of things that change, that is, of individual things or classes of individual things; of which, as all philosophers are agreed, it cannot be said that they *are*, but only that they become or evolve. The physiologist, for example, investigates the body, and the psychologist the soul or individuality. The latter is perfectly aware that the continued being of individualities is only a

postulate, convenient and even necessary for practical purposes, but intellectually untenable; and in this respect is in complete agreement with the Buddhist, who is never tired of insisting that body and soul—composite and changeable, and therefore wholly mortal—‘are not my Self’, not the Reality that must be known if we are to ‘become what we are’. In the same way St Augustine points out that those who saw that both of these, body and soul, are mutable, have sought for what is immutable, and so found God—that One, of which or whom the Upanishads declare that ‘that art thou’. Theology, accordingly, coinciding with autology, prescind from all that is emotional, to consider only that which does *not* move—‘change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changest not’. It finds him in that eternal *now* that always separates the past from the future and without these paired terms would have no meaning whatever, just as space would have no meaning were it not for the point that distinguishes here from there. Moment without duration, point without extension—these are the Golden Mean, and inconceivably Strait Way leading out of time into eternity, from death to immortality.

Our experience of ‘life’ is evolutionary: *What* evolves? Evolution is reincarnation, the death of one and the rebirth of another in momentary continuity: *Who* reincarnates? Metaphysics prescind from the animistic proposition of Descartes, *Cogito ergo sum*, to say *Cogito ergo EST*; and to the question, *Quid est?* answers that this is an improper question, because its subject is not a what amongst others but the whatness of them all and of all that they are not. Reincarnation—as currently understood to mean the return of individual souls to other bodies here on earth—is not an orthodox Indian doctrine, but only a popular belief. So, for example, as Dr B. C. Law remarks, ‘it goes without saying that the Buddhist thinker repudiates the notion of the passing of an ego from one embodiment to another’. We take our stand with Sri Sankaracarya when he says, ‘In truth, there is no other transmigrant but the Lord’,—he who is both transcendently himself and the immanent Self in all beings, but never himself becomes anyone; for which there could be cited abundant authority from the Vedas and Upanishads. If, then, we find Krishna saying to Arjuna, and the Buddha to his Mendicants, ‘Long is the road that we have trodden, and many are the births that you and I have known’, the reference is not to plurality of essences, but to the Common Man in everyman, who in most men has forgotten himself, but in the reawakened has reached the end of the road, and, having done with all becoming, is no longer a personality in time, no longer anyone, no longer one of whom one can speak by a proper name.

The Lord is the only transmigrant. That art thou—the very Man in

everyman. So, as Blake says:

'Man looks out in tree, herb, fish, beast, collecting up the scattered portions of his immortal body . . .

Wherever a grass grows or a leaf buds, the Eternal Man is seen, is heard, is felt,

And all his sorrows, till he reassumes his ancient bliss',

like Manikka Vaçagar:

'Grass, shrub was I, worm, tree, full many a sort of beast, bird, snake, stone, man and demon . . .

In every species born, Great Lord! this day I've gained release',

Ovid:

'The spirit wanders, comes now here, now there, and occupies whatever frame it pleases. From beasts it passes into human bodies, and from our bodies into beasts, but never perishes'.

Taliesin:

I was in many a guise before I was disenchanted, I was the hero in trouble, I am old and I am young',

Jalalu'd Din Rumi:

'First came he from the realm of the inorganic, long years dwelt he in the vegetable state, passed into the animal condition, thence towards humanity: whence, again, there is another migration to b̄e made',

Aitareya Aranyaka:

'He who knows the Self more and more clearly is more and more fully manifested. In whatever plants and trees and animals there are, he knows the Self more and more fully manifested. For in plants and trees only the plasm is seen, but in animals intelligence. In them the Self becomes more and more evident. In man the Self is yet more and more evident; for he is most endowed with providence, he says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows the morrow, he knows what is and is not mundane, and by the mortal seeks the immortal. But as for the others, animals, hunger and thirst are the degree of their discrimination'.

In sum, in the words of Faridu'd Din Attar:

'Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road was but Myself toward Myself'.

This is the traditional doctrine, not of 'reincarnation' in the popular and animistic sense, but of the transmigration and evolution of 'the ever-productive Nature'; it is one that in no way conflicts with or excludes the actuality of the process of evolution as envisaged by the modern naturalist. On the contrary, it is precisely the conclusion to which, for example, Erwin Schrödinger is led by his enquiry into the facts of heredity in his book entitled *What is Life?* In his concluding chapter on 'Determinism and Freewill', his 'only possible inference' is that 'I in the widest meaning of the word—that is to say every conscious mind that has ever said or felt "I"—am the person, if any, who

controls "the motion of the atoms" according to the Laws of Nature . . . Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown'.

Schrödinger is perfectly aware that this is the position enunciated in the Upanishads, and most succinctly in the formulæ, That art thou . . . other than Whom there is no other seer, hearer, thinker or agent'.

I cite him here not because I hold that the truth of traditional doctrines can be proved by laboratory methods, but because his position so well illustrates the main point I am making, namely that there are no necessary conflicts of science with religion, but only the possibility of a confusion of their respective fields; and the fact that for the whole man, in whom the integration of the Ego with the Self has been effected, there is no impassable barrier between the fields of science and religion. Natural scientist and metaphysician: one and the same man can be both; there need be no betrayal of either scientific objectivity on the one hand or of principles on the other.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

O B I T E R

CERTUM EST QUIA IMPOSSIBILE. Tertullian's extreme statement of the hard demands that Faith makes on the proud of mind is at least a point of departure for the apologist. Père Charles, in an article on *Le Scandale de la Foi* in the August issue of the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (Louvain) reveals his rare appreciation of the difficulty:

'The analysis of the act of faith, for four centuries dealt with so elaborately by our theologians, cannot explain, still less can it remove, the "scandal" of faith, that is to say the difficulty which many experience in accepting it. That difficulty must be looked for in the object of faith itself, and not in the analysis, with varying degrees of success, of the component parts of the act of faith'.

There follows a brilliant description of what that object is; disconcerting, challenging our pre-established categories. ('A straight line, wherever we come across one in the world, is a sure sign that man has been at work'!) But:

'Faith compels us to grow all the time, to go beyond our precarious limits, our mediocre little systems. It puts us in trim for eternity, it adjusts us for infinity'.

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THE ROAD TO INDIAN AUTONOMY is explored by H. C. E. Zacharias, a familiar name to readers of BLACKFRIARS, in *The Review of Politics* published by the University of Notre Dame. He does well to remind his American readers that 'no Indian (or Asiatic) had any concept of political liberty until the British endowed him with it'.