



DEVADATTA KĪRTIDEVA AŚVAMĪTRA

## THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE KNOWLEDGE: *MITHYĀ VINAŚANA*

### 1 - PRESUMED PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE AND REAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING

We must remember in this premise that *Advaita* doctrine is not at all a mere theoretical speculation, since those who follow the teachings from a qualified guru, utilize it as a method of realization (*sādhana*)<sup>1</sup>. It is incredible how Orientalists, theoretical esoterists and even initiates into various branches of *karma khaṇḍa* cannot understand such a simple assumption. Therefore, with this study we shall try to illustrate this evident fact in the best way possible. The basis of the *advitīya* doctrine consists in the ascertainment of the irrefutable existence of the *Brahmātman*. The other *darśanas* of Hinduism, as well as the dualistic Vedāntic doctrines, the Tantrism and the Semitic religions<sup>2</sup> have tried to elaborate some evidence to have the certainty of the existence of their God. Such alleged attempts, however, start from a fideistic assumption. Thus, those who have developed and shared them are forced to make the results coincide with the initial dogmatic approach. In fact, the afore mentioned *Hindū* schools, as well as, Western religions, provide more or less total probative authority to the observation of the manifested world as it appears. From this they derive an aprioristically accepted theory as a revealed datum. This is the obtuse logical flaw that *Hindū* doctrines define *anyonyāśraya*, mutual dependency or vicious circle. To understand how such a dogmatic *a priori* acceptance leads fatally to the already anticipated conclusion, it will suffice to consider the case of *anātmakavāda* Buddhism. This Buddhist current starts *a priori* from the conception of the non-existence of the *Brahmatman*. Therefore, at the end of a perceptive and deductive investigation path, they conclude that what is deduced from the observation of the world as it appears, with its objects and beings, demonstrates that it has the nothingness (*śūnya*) as its basis.

Even if this is not the main purpose of the present study, we will briefly explain the reason why these "proofs of the existence of God" are inconsistent and fallacious. The primary error consists in wanting to demonstrate the existence of the absolute using only empirical means. This might seem obvious and easily recognizable by everyone. However, it is far from being like that. It is sufficient to consider the ideological approach forming the substratum of all modern science to realize that even scientists with the most penetrating intellects fall foolishly into this mental trap that they themselves have produced. The tools (*pramāṇa*) of perceptual observation of logic and of artificial reproducibility of phenomena -the so called "scientific method"- by which they dissect, classify and define infinity, without understanding or wanting to understand that what is dissectionable, classifiable and definable cannot be infinite, are by their nature completely inappropriate for obtaining true knowledge (*jñāna*). Let us therefore leave out the beliefs and dogmatic credences of profane ideologies to pay more attention to the most intriguing case of religions and *darśanas*, which have a reason to be somewhat superior to the profane dimension. In short, we will recall some of these "proofs" which, from Aristotle on, have attracted the attention of philosophers and theologians of Western religions. These, are similar to those of many *darśanas* of Hinduism. For the sake of

<sup>1</sup> In this first chapter we assume that the reader has already a sufficient preparation on *Advaita Vedānta* from the careful reading of the writings of *Svāmī Satchidanandendra Mahārāja*, of Maitreyī, of Prof. Filippi and others published on *VedaVyāsaMaṇḍala.com*.

<sup>2</sup> The Semitic religions - defined by some as monotheistic and by others as Abrahamic – maintain, due to their structure, that the regularity of their esoteric aspect depends on the observance of exoteric dogmas, reversing in this way their normal hierarchical relations. This explains the reason why even in the initiatic sphere they maintain a rigid exclusiveness also towards other religions, which, in principle, should also be recognized as divine revelations. Indeed, the Jews do not recognize any religion other than their own. Christians recognize Judaism as a divine revelation, but abrogated by the new revelation preached by Jesus. Muslims recognize as revealed religions both Judaism and Christianity, abrogated however by the Muhammadan preaching. As we can see, the demon of evolutionism is always immanent in Western traditions.





brevity, we will omit to specify in detail those who have theorized them and the context in which this happened. The most followed “proofs”, affirm that:

- 1 - Everyone has an *a priori* concept of God without which neither the individual nor the Universe could exist.
  - 2 - Everyone can see that the Universe is ordered, so in retrospect we deduce that there is an Ordering Being.
  - 3- Everyone can observe that the Universe is in motion, so in retrospect we deduce that there is an Unmoved Mover.
- 1- Everyone can observe that the Universe is entangled in a chain of causes and effects, so in retrospect we deduce that there is a first Cause.

To these and other philosophical and theological arguments, countless secondary proofs are added based on revelations of various kinds, on the authority of the personalities sent to reveal such “truths”, on wonders and miracles, on historical facts, on celestial signs and on other secondary “evidences”, different from religion to religion and from *darśana* to *darśana*. Let us omit these last not “enumerated” proofs, which can be considered valid only by strongly limited minds, unable to overcome a gross dogmatic fideism quite comparable to the fanatic fideism of political and ideological matrix. The “philosophical and theological proofs”, even though suitable for more mature minds, are nevertheless easily recognizable as illusory. If we consider, for example, the first proof, it is easy to declare it erroneous, as demonstrated by the already mentioned case of Buddhism *anātmakavāda*. In fact, the followers of that current proceeded from the “*a priori*” concept (it would be more correct to call it “prejudicial” concept) of the nonexistence of a Principle. So, the existence of the world would be nothing but a mere appearance hiding the nothingness. The defect of this “proof” consists in taking for *a priori* a conception, that is to say a “thought” or “idea” (*saṃkalpa*), that by its nature cannot really be *a priori*, being just a simple product of the mind. Therefore, being a product, also this “proof” must be counted among those “*a posteriori*”, as the mind precedes it logically and temporally. Nor could it be considered a “*priori*” in a relative sense since it precedes the perceptual investigation, as this conception of God is born in the mind and remains there without any possibility of a sensitive verification directed outwards.

The arguments of the other proofs are demolished by the following *Vedānta vicāra*: the individual as the knower (*jñātṛ*)<sup>1</sup> knows the external world and its constituents as knowable objects (*jñeya*) thanks to a knowledge (*jñāpti*)<sup>2</sup> obtainable only through the mediation of the senses (*jñānendriya*). The *jñātṛ*, therefore, has no direct experience of the external world. For this reason, the mind has no certainty of receiving correct information from the senses. The example of the snake and the rope is sufficient to explain this dependence of the mind on the senses and the cognitive limitation that follows. The eyes see the rope in the dim light, but the mind equivocates on the information received from the sight and takes the rope for a snake. Thus, similarly, the mental elaboration of sensorial informations on the cosmic order, on the movement and on the causal concatenation of the external world gives no guarantee of being a veridical interpretation such as to constitute a proof of the manifestation as it appears. *A fortiori*, this indirect mental elaboration of the cosmos has no title to be considered a proof of the existence of God who, in addition, is also beyond the reach of sensory perception. Be that as it may, if the existence of God could be proved (*pramā*) by instruments of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) limited to the gross mind and body, it would mean that God could be the object of knowledge (*prameya*), like any

<sup>1</sup> In fact, this knower is only a “thinker” who starts from a state of ignorance (*ajñāna*) to accomplish with his intellectual faculty (*buddhi*) an investigative activity directed outwards through the senses.

<sup>2</sup> The Vedānta accurately distinguishes this analytical knowledge of the external world (*jñāpti*) from the true synthetic knowledge (*jñāna*) of metaphysical principles.





external object, be it mineral, vegetable or animal. Therefore, this God would be a limited object even available for empirical investigation. It is therefore necessary to reject altogether the idea that such proof could be conceived; because mentally illogical, perceptually unrealistical and, above all, contrary to the experience transmitted by the enlightened (*jñāni*) in the *śāstras*. The main limitation of this kind of argumentation, as already mentioned, consists in the fact that it is based on the use of tools of contingent knowledge (*pramāṇa*), mainly on sensory perception (*pratyakṣa*) through the corresponding body organs (*indriya golaka*) and on the relative deduction (*anumāna*) by the mind-intellect aggregate. That is, we pretend to grasp the infinite in space, the eternal in time and the unconditioned in the conditioning relations of cause and effect. In short, one acts with senses and mind to grasp what is beyond the reach of action.

What we have outlined so far does not however represent a purely *advitīya* approach. It is simply a Vedāntic correction made to the typical reasoning of *Nyāya* and *Sāṃkhya*, by means of a more correct and logical application of their own *pramāṇas* and *tattvas*. However, again in the *vyāvahārika* domain, the *Vedānta* does not consider the *tattvas* as separate realities, but recognizes in them a single substratum. For this reason, there are no formal limitations among *buddhi*, *manas* and *indriya*, merging them in what the *Upaniṣads* call the "internal organ" (*antaḥkāraṇa*). When the mind sees it becomes the sense of sight, when hears it becomes the sense of hearing, when appreciates what is perceived it becomes *manas*, when it understands it becomes *buddhi*. Therefore, the senses assume the shapes (*vikāras*) of external objects and the internal organ knows only their mental forms or modifications (*vṛttis*). The *Advaita*, however, goes further and broadens the field of observation of the manifested world (*prapañca*) with the doctrine of the three states (*avasthā traya*). The manifested world as a whole is in fact composed of both states of waking and dream. In the dream state the observer is in fact the very *Ātman* who witnesses the existence of internal objects. Such objects of the witness of the dream are nothing but the internal organ with its modifications. When one dreams, the internal organ seems to take the shapes of real external objects. However, when the dream ends and the waking consciousness reappears, one realizes that those objects were only forms of the inner organ of the dream and that they were entirely illusory. In fact, in the waking state nothing of what existed in the dream is really existing. However, when one is in the dream state, it is the waking state with all its objects that does not exist at all. From this it follows that both states are equal and incompatible with each other. Therefore, by turning the reasoning to the waking state about the unreality of the dream, one may ask: do the modifications of the mind in the waking state, which are the objects of our investigation of the outer world, actually correspond to really existing external objects, or are only imagined *vṛttis*? From here begins the discriminating investigation, the *neti neti* that will remove the false knowledge.

On this basis, *Vedānta* rejects the process of cognitive inquiry applied to a supposed real and external world, clearly distinguishing this analytical method from the intuitive experience (*anubhava*) of reality. Intuitive experience is shared by all beings (*sarvaloka prasiddha anubhava*), and among all beings, the human ones are particularly aware of it. Yet almost no one pauses to reflect to understand its essence. This fundamental intuition consists in the consciousness of existing. This is the only certainty that a being really has, independent of reasoning, inquiry, time, space and any relations, and that can be expressed as follows: "I am", "I am conscious", "I am conscious existence", "I am existing consciousness"; where consciousness and existence<sup>1</sup> are one.

<sup>1</sup> In lower spiritual ways (*aparavidyā*), it is quite normal and proper to distinguish "being" (*as*) from "existing" (*bhū*). In fact, 'Being' is the absolute, while 'existence' appears as the empirical production or the projection of the manifestation-creation outside the Being itself. Not for nothing does the Latin *existere* consist of *ex* and *sistere*, to stay outside. Therefore, 'Being' is considered something other than itself and this "self" is conceived as extrinsic to 'Being'. For this reason all monotheisms, including non *advitīya* *Vedāntas*, are actually dualistic. On the contrary, the *Advaita Vedānta* in its purely non-dual perspective makes no difference between being and existing.

