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IV. The Dualistic Extrinsic Nature of Brahman-God

1. Introduction

The limited human intellect cannot comprehend the infinite Divine Nature by a single conception that explains all of its many characteristics.¹ Consequently, Saguna Brahman-God is apprehended by a number of distinct attributes (qualities, properties) that form the Divine Nature. They are omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, omnipresence, and omnibliss, each being eternally and necessarily inseparable from Saguna Brahman-God. Following the logic of Divine Perfection, Saguna Brahman-God possesses every attribute in its most maximum extent (omni-). The Divine Nature is essentially these attributes and cannot be otherwise, unless an aspect of It such as an Avatara (Divine Incarnation) exercises its freedom by temporarily renouncing being all-powerful and all-knowing (kenosis). Ontologically, Saguna Brahman the Manifestations of God is knowable, complex, infinite with finite parts, eternal within time (omnitemporal), and mutable. These attributes tell us what Saguna Brahman-God is (Noun) rather than what It does (Verb) like create, preserve, and destroy the universe.

These Omni-attributes imply each other. Having perfect knowledge, goodness, presence, and bliss are four forms of power. An omnipotent Being has the intellectual power to know everything and the moral power to always be good. An omniscient Being has the knowledge to attain maximum power, goodness, presence, and bliss. Divine characteristics are characterized as relative (Saguna

Brahman in relation to heavenly existence, the universe, and humans), emanate (flowing out externally), transitive (attributes proceed from Saguna Brahman such as love), and communicable (shared with humans to limited degrees).²

In contrast to the intrinsic Nirguna Brahman characteristics that tell us “What Brahman-God is, the That,” the extrinsic Saguna Brahman operational attributes describe “What Brahman-God does, the What” Each attribute is an expression of what the Deity does, encompassing all power, knowledge, goodness, presence, and bliss. These communicable properties that are perfect in Brahman-God, manifest in imperfect and to a lesser degree in humans and worldly things. Every finite entity possesses a given virtue in a limited degree, pointing beyond itself to a source that manifests the same quality in all its fullness. Brahman-God's knowledge unlike ours is not caused by external things that It knows; rather Its knowledge is the cause of their existence (involving power); meaning knowledge and power are highly interconnected. If objects and ideas existed prior to Brahman-God creating them, then It would be subservient to them. Also, It knows all things by knowing Itself. Nirguna and Saguna Brahman are comparable as; Absolute-Relative, Being-Becoming, Essence-Existence, That-What, and the Unmanifested-Manifested.

While the Nirguna and Saguna forms of Brahman differ in many ways, both are Self-existent, necessary existence (they cannot not exist), eternal, perfect, one in number, transcendent, immanent, omnipresent, and omnipotent but in different ways. Conversely, the world is not self-existent, necessary existence, perfect, or transcendent. Brahman-God is absolute, independent, and the cause, while the world is relative, dependent, and an effect.

What is the link between the Nirguna and Saguna nature of Brahman-God? According to Advaita Vedanta the Nirguna enjoys a higher status than the Saguna and thus ontologically precedes It. The Nirguna cannot create the Saguna chronologically since both are pre-eternal without beginning. Therefore, the causal process is ontological and not chronological which involves time. But how can a spaceless, timeless, and causeless Nirguna nature of Brahman-God manifest a Saguna nature with opposite characteristics? The process is unknown to us.

Concerning the Christian Trinity, Thomas Aquinas associated power with the Father, wisdom with the Son, and goodness with the Holy Spirit. Following this logical sequence, first Brahman-God exists as power and then comes the manifestation of wisdom (knowledge), and goodness. Here, the operational attributes are ordered in the sequence of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence.

Following the logic of Divine Perfection, Brahman-God possesses every attribute in its most maximum sense. Omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence are properties (attributes) that apply to the Divine Nature of Saguna Brahman (Ishvara)-God. Each is an expression of what the Deity does, encompassing all presence, power, knowledge, and goodness. They describe the Divine's excellence and eminence in all things. These communicable properties that are perfect in Brahman-God, manifest in an imperfect and to a lesser degree in humans and worldly things. Every finite entity possesses a given virtue in a limited degree, pointing beyond itself to a source that manifests the same quality in all its fullness.

Through two separate acts of the Divine Will, It creates states of affairs in the Brahmaloaka-Kingdom of Heaven and in the physical universe.

In the creation of the world, the spiritual externalizes and objectifies into the substances of subtle space, time, and causation, and name and form and next on the gross physical plane. Because Saguna Brahman-God creates the world through a process of externalization (the interior becomes external) He/She is to be found within ourself. Space is described by location and distance and time by simultaneity and succession. Name is objective in its written and spoken form and subjective when denoting an object or a concept. Forms are objective as objects and subjective as ideas.

The relation between Saguna Brahman-God and the universe is comparable to: Perfect-Imperfect, Greater-Lesser, Primary-Secondary; Whole-Part, One-Many, Universal-Particular (particularization); Unity-Diversity, Homogeneous-Heterogeneous; Subtle-Gross, Subject-Object (objectification), Idea-Object, Abstract-Concrete, Internal-External (externalization); Archetype-Ectype, Source-Image, Source-Reflection, Source-Representation, Source-Participation; Source-Transformation, Source-Emanation; Independent-Dependent, Free-Determined, Cause-Effect; Necessary-Contingent; and Transcendent-Immanent.

2. Omnipresence (Ubiquity/Sarvagata, Vibhu)

Indian: "He [Mitra-Varuna] who hath measured with His ray the boundaries of heaven and earth, and with His majesty hath filled the two worlds full" (RV 8:25.18). "A thousand heads hath Purusha, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth" (RV 10:90.1; AV 19:6.1). "When two men whisper as they sit together, King Varuna knows: He as the third is present" (AV 4:16.2). "If

one should flee afar beyond the heaven, King Varuna would still be round about him. Proceeding hither from the sky his envoys look, thousand-eyed, over the earth beneath them” (AV 4:16.4). “He, the all-pervasive pervades all beings within and without” (Yajur Veda 32:8). “His hands and feet are everywhere; His eyes, heads and faces are everywhere; His ears are everywhere; He exists compassing all” (Svet. Up. 3:16; BG 13:13; cf. Man. Up. 3:2; Mun. Up. 2:1.4; Svet. Up. 3:3; BG* 5:15, p. 73; 11:40). “That yogi sees me [Sri Krishna] in all things, and all things within me” (BG* 6:30, p. 84; cf. 15:13). “This entire universe is pervaded by me ... all creatures exist within me. I do not mean they exist within me physically” (BG* 9:4, p. 101; cf. 11:20).

Old Testament: “The Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other” (Deut. 4:39). “Whither should I go from the Spirit? Or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there” (Ps. 139:7-8)! New Testament: “I am with you always” (Mt. 28:20; cf. 18:20). “Yet He is not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:27-28). “The fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23). “One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6).

Spaceless, timeless, and unchanging Nirguna Brahman (Essence of God, Divine Substance) is omnipresent as the foundational ground of existence. Remove Nirguna Brahman and all existence immediately ceases to be. From the Nondualistic standpoint, Shankara described Brahman as all-pervading, omnipresent, boundless without an end, and not confined to a single locality. It is the seer of sight, the thinker of thought, and the knower of knowledge. This is confirmed by the religious scriptures that tell us, “He is omnipresent like space and eternal” and “This one is eternal, omnipresent, steady and unchanging” (BG 2:24). In view of the fact that Brahman is infinite, there is nothing outside of It. Brahman is the substratum of space, the ground of existence. All things are rooted in Brahman while It is rooted in-Itself. Finite things are contingent having only a dependent and participating existence, which they receive from Brahman, the omnipresent substrative cause of the universe.³

Vivekananda indicates that Nirguna Brahman is “omnipresent, because He has no form. That which has no form or shape that which is not limited by space or time, cannot live in a certain place. How can it? It is everywhere, omnipresent, equally present through all of us.”⁴ “Form is confined to time and space and is

bound by the law of causation. All time is in us, we are not in time. As the Soul [Atman] is not in time and space, all time and space are within the Soul. The Soul is therefore omnipresent.”⁵ “This glass is limited; it is not omnipresent, because the surrounding matter forces it to take that form, does not allow it to expand. It is conditioned by everything around it and is therefore, limited. But that which is beyond law, where there is nothing to act upon It, how can It be limited? It must be omnipresent.”⁶ One infinite omnipresent Brahman-God transcends the law of causality and is not limited by any constraining external forces. He is not restricted by space, time, and causality or by name and form or the primary categories of finite existence and is thus, infinite and omnipresent.

Concerning Saguna Brahman-Personal God the Divine attribute of omnipresence is the property of being present in every location both beyond (Transcendental) and within (Immanent) the universe concurrently, yet being contained in neither. Qualified Nondualists hold that Brahman-God is everywhere, and that we and the laws of nature are a fragment of Brahman-God. Vivekananda explains omnipresence this way, “The whole universe comprising all nature, and an infinite number of souls, is, as it were, the infinite body of God. He is interpenetrating the whole of it.”⁷ “The whole world is a body, and behind that is the universal mind, and behind that is the universal Soul. Just as this body is a portion of the universal body, so this mind is a portion of the universal mind, and the soul of man a portion of the universal Soul.”⁸ “The Personal God is only the sum total of all, and yet It is an individual by Itself, just as you are the individual body of which each cell is an individual part itself.”⁹ This is omnipresence in the total and most unlimited sense since the universe is the universal body of God.

A more moderate form is the doctrine of Panentheism (all-in-God) that the universe is contained within Brahman-God, and that It is within all things (Theoenpanism (God-in-all)).¹⁰ This coinherence is possible because It is omnipresent. Referring to Brahman-God as “It,” means that It combines He, She, and non-personal aspects. Maximum external omnipresence indicates that all things reside within Brahman-God. Maximum internal (immanent) omnipresence means that Brahman-God resides in all things. Brahman-God without limits is omnipresent: being external and internal (immanent) pervading the phenomenal world, and existing beyond its boundaries (transcendent). Of utmost importance is to realize that omnipresent Brahman-God is within us and if can realize this Reality it will transform our life.

As Swami Vivekananda states, “The God of the Qualified Nondualists is also a Personal God, the repository of an infinite number of blessed qualities, only He is interpenetrating everything in the universe. He is immanent in everything and everywhere; and when the scriptures say that God is everything, it means that God is interpenetrating everything, not that God has become the wall, but that God is in the wall. There is not a particle, not an atom in the universe where He is not.”¹¹ “He is near and He is far. He is inside everything. He is outside everything, interpenetrating everything.” “Therefore there is a metaphysical necessity ... one Soul which covers and interpenetrates all the infinite number of souls in the world, in and through which they live, in and through which they sympathize, and love, and work for one another. And this universal Soul is Paramatman, the Lord God of the universe.” “This highest Energy-Love-Beauty is a person, an individual, the Infinite Mother of this universe--the God of gods--the Lord of lords, omnipresent yet separate from the universe--the Soul of souls, yet separate from every soul.”¹²

Swami Abhedananda emphasized, “If we say that matter exists separate from and outside of God, we have made Him limited by matter, we have made Him finite and perishable.... if He is infinite and one, our bodies and everything in the universe from the minutest atom to the largest planetary system, from the lowest animalcule to the highest Being, exist in and through that Infinite Existence.... The whole universe is in God and God is in it; it is inseparable from God. I am in Him and He is in me.... this infinite Being pervades the universe and interpenetrates every particle of matter, giving existence to everything.” “Our body is a part of God’s body, our mind is a part of the Divine or Universal Mind, our will is a part of the Universal or Cosmic Will.”¹³ God is the “Supreme Lord of the universe, who dwells in all beings and who is the life and soul of all animate and inanimate objects of the world.... He is the one stupendous whole of which the manifested phenomena are but parts. The gross material universe is His physical body. He sees through all eyes, hears through all ears, eats through all mouths, feels through all hearts, thinks through all minds, and reasons through all intellects.”¹⁴ “God is not merely the Ruler of the universe standing outside of nature, but He dwells in nature. He is immanent and resident in nature. He is not only, therefore, extra-cosmic, but also intra-cosmic. He is the internal Ruler of the universe. His creation is constantly manifesting His powers. The physical body of this Being is the gross material universe.... His mind is the sum total of all the individual minds, and, therefore, it can be said that there is one ocean of mind or mental force which pervades the universe, and that is neither yours, nor mine, but belongs to God.”¹⁵

God not being a physical object is not contained in any location. Augustine (354-430) the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa who also lived in Rome made the point that God “knows how to be wholly everywhere without being confined to any place.” God is wholly present wherever He is. Moreover, God is not contained in or confined by any of the places at which He exists. “Although in speaking of Him we say that God is everywhere present, we must resist carnal ideas and withdraw our mind from our bodily senses, and not imagine that God is distributed through all things by a sort of extension of size, as earth or water or air or light are distributed.”¹⁶ The Lutheran theologian Abraham Calov (1612-86) mentioned that God “comprehends all places, not as one who is contained and circumscribed, but as the One who contains all things, according to a presence which is illocal and not local. This is what the scholars meant when they said: God is everywhere and God is nowhere—everywhere inasmuch as His presence comprehends all things, nowhere inasmuch as He is enclosed in nothing.... It is not possible for Him not to be present everywhere.”¹⁷

Stephen Charnock (1628-80) the British Puritan Presbyterian clergyman put it this way, “God preserves all, and therefore is in all ... He works in everything, everything lives and works in Him; therefore He is present with all, or rather if things live, they are in God, who gives them life. If things live, God is in them, and gives them life; if things move, God is in and gives them motion; if things have any being, God is in and gives them being; if God withdraws Himself, they presently lose their being.”¹⁸

The American Baptist Augustus Strong (1836-1921) noted that, “God’s nature is without extension; is subject to no limitations of space; and contains in itself the cause of space.... God is not in space and therefore not subject to the laws of space.... God in the totality of His Essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts.... God’s omnipresence is not the presence of a part but the whole of God in every place. This follows from the conception of God as incorporeal.... God is immanent in the universe, not by compulsion, but by the free act of His own will.”¹⁹

Most religious philosophers believe that Brahman-God pervades the universe but is not fully identified with defiled objects. For example, when a light is present throughout a room, it remains separate from the objects that are there. Brahman-God remains distinct as a cause from its effect. That Brahman-God is present at every point in the universe, but Its manifestation and presence is greater in for

example a human being than in a rock. For example, the power of the Lord is more actively, sacredly, and mystically manifested in a great soul, in a Holy place, and in a religious ceremony. By analogy, it is like light being present to a greater degree near the sun than in a dim room.²⁰ This is different from Brahman-God becoming or transforming into the universe (panentheism).

Sri Ramakrishna supports omnipresence when stating, “One who thinks of God, day and night, beholds Him everywhere.” “But on attaining Perfect Knowledge he sees only one Consciousness everywhere. The same Perfect Knowledge, again, makes him realize that the one Consciousness has become the universe and its living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. But the manifestations of Divine Power are different in different beings. It is He, undoubtedly, who has become everything; but in some cases there is a greater manifestation than in others.” “God is everywhere. But then you must remember that there are different manifestations of His power.” “What is knowledge and what is ignorance? A man is ignorant so long as he feels that God is far away. He has knowledge when he knows that God is here and everywhere.”²¹

Under the rubric “Degrees of Manifestation” Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan upheld the idea that, “The different kinds of being are higher and lower manifestations of the one Absolute Spirit.... While the Absolute is in all finite things and permeates them, the things differ in the degree of their permeability, in the fullness of their reflections.... The rank of the categories as higher and lower is determined by the adequacy of their expression of reality. Life is a higher category than matter.”²²

The omnipresent God’s varying manifestations is discussed by the Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921):

The soul is present in the entire body and in all of its several parts, yet in a different manner in each of these parts: it does not dwell in the mind in the same manner as in the heart, neither is it present in the hand in the same manner as in the foot.... God's immanence is not an unconscious emanence, but a conscious presence of His being in all His creatures. That is the reason why the nature of this Divine presence varies in accordance with the nature of these creatures. To be sure, even the most insignificant creature owes its origin and preservation to God's power, to His being: God dwells in every creature; but this does not mean that He dwells equally in every creature. All things are indeed "in Him" but all things are not "with Him." God does not dwell on earth as He dwells in heaven, in animals as in man, in the inorganic as in the organic creation, in the wicked as in

the pious, in the church as in Christ. Creatures differ according to the different manner in which God dwells in them. A creature's nature and essence is determined by its relation to God. Hence, though all creatures reveal God, they do so in different ways and along different lines.... In all creatures God is present "by means of His essence," but in Christ alone dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily. God dwells in Christ in a very special sense, "by means of union." In other creatures His immanence varies with the character of their essence; in some he dwells "by means of His nature"; in others "by means of His justice"; in others "by means of His grace"; in others "by means of His glory." There is endless variety, in order that all may reveal God's glory.²³

Omnipresent Brahman-God is not divided into separate parts that are present everywhere in the universe, but is fully existent everywhere. Brahman-God is in all things like universal space is within a jar. Brahman-God is spatially omnipresent but is more hidden in one location than another. Similarly It is temporally omnipresent, equally located in what is for us the past, present, and future. What is past or future for us is in the present for It. Changes can occur from cause to effect or effect to cause. Brahman-God when manifesting as a concept is omnipresent existing in both the general and the specific and in the premise and in the conclusion.

Omnipresence in Relation to Omnipotence and Omniscience

Traditionally more attention has been placed on Divine omnipotence and omniscience, yet it follows that Brahman-God possesses these two attributes because It is omnipresent. Being omnipresent in all location allows Brahman-God to act everywhere with direct control over every part of the universe (omnipotence) and to know everything that is occurring (omniscience). There is no place to which Brahman-God's power and knowledge do not extend. One caveat, there are action and knowledge at a distance. For example, in the modern technological world one can shoot a missile that has long distant powerful effects, or with a large telescope can have knowledge of a far off planet without being there.

Following this line of thinking, the Italian Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) reasoned that according to His Essence, God's dimensions are infinite and not limited by matter or form, or by anything outside of Himself. Since God is undivided and of infinite power, His entire being is everywhere and He cannot be circumscribed.²⁴

“God moves all things to their operations, as we have shown. Therefore, He is in all things.... An incorporeal thing is related to its presence in something by its power, in the same way that a corporeal thing is related to its presence in something by dimensive quantity. Now, if there were any body possessed of infinite dimensive quantity, it would have to be everywhere. So, if there is an incorporeal being possessed of infinite power, it must be everywhere.... God is of infinite power. Therefore, He is everywhere.... God is the universal cause of the whole of being ... wherever being is found, the Divine presence is also there.... God is immediately present, not only in the celestial body, but also in the lowest things. But we must not think that God is everywhere in such a way that He is divided in various areas of place, as if one part of Him were here and another part there. Rather, His entire being is everywhere.” “God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power. He is by His presence in all things, inasmuch as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His Essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being.”²⁵

The German Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) stressed, “The almighty power of God ... must be essentially present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf. The reason is this: It is God who creates, effects, and preserves all things through His almighty power ... He must be present and must make and preserve His creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects.” “God in His Essence is present everywhere ... but is at the same time beyond and above the whole creation.” As the efficient cause, God is “completely and entirely present in every single body.” God’s “Divine nature can be wholly and entirely in all creatures and in every single individual being, more deeply, more inwardly, more present than the creature is to itself, and yet on the other hand may and can be circumscribed nowhere.”²⁶ Omnipresence is necessary for God to continually create and preserve all things, every moment with His almighty power. God is the primary causal agent, while the personal and impersonal forces of the world are secondary or instrumental causes.²⁷

Post-Reformation Lutheran theologians like Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) emphasized that, “God is present not only according to His power and efficacy, not only by His seeing and knowing all things; but also His total and undivided Essence is present to all things. For not only His power and knowledge are immense and infinite, but His Essence as well.”²⁸ Other 17th century Lutheran writers emphasize that wherever God is present He is not passive, but is operationally active by continually maintaining His creation. His presence is not merely “thereness” but an

active dynamic creativity according to different modes of operation.²⁹

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* explains, “Omnipresence is an attribute of God, the infinite and first cause of all, who is actually present in all existing places and things. This presence is not to be interpreted as dimensional or spatial, since God is utterly simple and infinite and thus free of all spatial limitations. Rather He is present as an agent to His effects. So God is everywhere, for He is the source of the being and action in all places and things. Moreover, since in God power and action are one, He is substantially present in all existing things through His power and operation.”³⁰

The idea of immanent omnipresence emphasizes the nearness of Brahman-God. Meditators are told to think of themselves as being bathed in the bliss of Brahman-God. Since Brahman-God is omnipresent, It is within us and that constitutes the immanent divinity at the root and ground of our being. From a practical standpoint, omnipresence means since Brahman-God is present everywhere, we can make contact with the Lord from any location, and at any time under all circumstances no matter where we are. As we lead our daily lives the gracious omnipresence of Brahman-God is a source of strength and comfort and conviction for us.³¹

Religion and Science

In the moment-to-moment continuous creation, omnipresent Brahman-God operates at every level simultaneously affecting all entities, structures, and processes. Therefore the “causal joint” of Divine action between Brahman-God and the world is everywhere, both internally from inside and externally from outside. Brahman-God works through complex higher-level systems that acts on lower-level systems (downward causation) and vice versa (upward causation), employing a transfer of energy and a flow of active information. Divine action being omnipresent operates through the laws and regularities of nature on the various interconnected and interdependent component systems: cosmological, biological, physical, and quantum.³² Brahman-God’s action works through a causal chain of secondary causes, which constitute the laws of nature that are studied by the physical, social, and behavioral scientists. Does Brahman-God ever work directly as a primary cause that ignores secondary causes? Is the momentum of Divine action limited to the speed of light or like a quantum event nonlocal, or instant without a time sequence?

In a finite world “omni” (signifying “all”) means, that Brahman-God is present

everywhere and has all power and knowledge, yet these three would be of a limited magnitude. Only in an infinite world could presence, knowledge, and power be unlimited. For example, according to Albert Einstein (1879-1955) our space-time continuum is of a limited size, and thus If Brahman-God is everywhere in the world then that omnipresence is finite. There is a graded hierarchy and “omni” is the terminal point, the maximum limit that might be infinite or finite.

Brahman-God perceives, knows, and empowers everything immediately and directly being omnipresent. Therefore, Brahman-God is causally present everywhere at the same time, at both the macro and micro quantum world as well. Not located only at a single point in space and time, It has instant access to every event. Since Brahman-God is spatially and temporally omnipresent even in the quantum world, Divine actions are local, and not based on non-local causation as specified by quantum physics. Brahman-God is already in all temporal locations and certainly not limited by the speed of light as material objects are. Brahman-God operates on the events of the quantum world from the deepest ontological foundational level, which quantum physicists are not able to grasp.

Our perception operates in a specific vibrational range. Outside of that range there are other worlds that exist in this location. As Vivekananda stated, “Suppose I develop an electric sense--all will change. Suppose my senses grow finer--you will all appear changed. If I change, you change. If I go beyond the power of the senses, you will appear as spirit and God.”³³ Brahman-God is omnipresent at each one of these vibrational levels. The fourth spatial dimension is the vibrational level that determines what spatial objects we will perceive.

Luco Johan van den Brom from the Netherlands explained God’s transcendence this way, “God, by existing in a higher dimensional system, is also present in the places of all the objects in the three-dimensional space of created cosmos without being contained by that three-dimensional space.” “Three-dimensional space is included in the higher dimensional one.” Similarly, a three-dimensional cube transcends a two-dimensional surface that is present within the cube. Our space does not bisect His. Three-dimensional limitations do not apply to God’s higher dimensional existence.³⁴

Omnipresent Brahman-God is not bound by place or limited to a specific time. Being a unity, Brahman-God is present as a whole, in Its entirety, at every spatial and temporal region (spatial and temporal omnipresence) including each individual person, and in every perception (perceptual omnipresence), concept and idea (conceptual omnipresence) and every feeling (feeling omnipresence). In Its entirety,

Brahman-God is everywhere, and everywhen meaning there is no instance of time, past or future from which It is absent. From this standpoint, it is not the case that one temporal part or stage of God is present at one moment of time and not at another as we are. Being temporally omnipresent Brahman-God has direct experience of the past and is in no needs of memory that works indirectly. As Infinite It is not contained within any limited space or time. In his Patanjali commentary Vivekananda wrote, “The idea is that existence never comes out of non-existence. The past and future, though not existing in a manifested form, yet exist in a fine form.”³⁵ The temporally omnipresent Brahman-God also exists in the realm of fine form and therefore has perfect understanding of what for us is a future event.

There is the “Theory of the Block Universe,” held in a nonreligious way by some scientists and philosophers that rejects the flow of time concept believing that past, present and future events exist concurrently. Future events are already there just as other places are already there, meaning there is no objective flow of time. According to the block universe theory, all temporal events are located in a different spatial location. Temporal location is determined by where we are in space. Time appears to flow and change because our location changes. A block universe supports the idea of Eternalism that the past, present, and future co-exist at the same time, each occupying a different location in space-time. Wherever we are now located appears to be the present.³⁶ This does not mean we should not try to change things because this effort is a sign that things will change when we proceed to another location in space-time that is the future for us.³⁷ By analogy we might think of the needle of a record that is playing the music at a certain location, though all of the music already exists. Another way of looking at it is that the entire past, present, and future exist within the omniscient Brahman-God, but that the Divine Being is manifesting in the phenomenal universe only in the present (that differs from one location to another) at this very moment. Brahman-God knows future events because they are part of Its nature, not from the standpoint of the phenomenal world where they have not yet materialized. According to Augustine and Aquinas, God is outside of time viewing the entire temporal sequence all at once. In which case all events are equally contemporaneous.³⁸ It is not said whether the Block Universe is infinite or finite. We can think of movie where the past, present, and future are on the film, but only the present is on the screen that we are observing.

3. Omnipotence (Ananta-virya, Sarvakartriva, Sarvasakti)

Indian: “He [Indra] who alone by wondrous deeds is Mighty, strong by holy works” (RV 8:1.27). “Nothing is done, even far away, without thee [Indra]” (RV 10:112.9). “The twinklings of men’s eyelids hath he [Varuna] counted. As one who plays throws dice he settles all things” (AV 4:16.5). “Ishvara omniscient and omnipotent” (Svet. Up. 1:9). “I continue to work.... If I should cease to work, these worlds would perish” (BG 3:22, 24). “I [Lord Krishna] am the birth of this cosmos: Its dissolution also. I am he who causes: No other besides me. Upon me, these worlds are held like pearls strung on a thread” (BG* 7:6-7, p. 89). “Whatever in this world is powerful, beautiful or glorious, that you may know to have come forth from a fraction of my [Sri Krishna] power and glory.... one atom of myself sustains the universe” (BG* 10:41-42, p. 117). “Infinite in might and immeasurable in strength, Thou pervadest all” (BG 11:40; cf. 4:6; 7:7; 9:8; 10:7). “The Lord dwells in the heart of every creature. He turns them round and round upon the wheel of His Maya” (BG* 18:61, p. 172).

Old and New Testament: “Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth” (Ps. 135:6; cf. 103:19). “I will accomplish all my purpose ... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it” (Is. 46:10-11; cf. Mt. 10:29-30; Lk. 12:7; Eph. 1:11). “I know that thou canst do all things” (Job 42:2). “Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power ... Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?” (Jer. 32:17, 27).
 New Testament: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever” (Mt. 6:13). “With God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26; cf. Mk. 10:27; 14:36; Lk. 1:37; 18:27). “All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made” (Jn. 1:3). “Christ the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). The Son “upholding the universe by His word of power” (Heb. 1:3).

Brahman-God is Both the Totality and First Cause of All Event

According to Ramanuja (c. 1017-1137), Brahman (God) is omnipotent being the only creator, maintainer, and destroyer of the universe. Divine providence rules the world because we are all modes of Brahman. “All sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by Him for His own ends, and are absolutely

subordinate to Him.” “The Divine Supreme Person, whose wishes are eternally fulfilled, who is all-knowing and the ruler of all ... having Himself entered into those souls as their inner Self abides within them, controlling them as an animating and cheering principle.”³⁹ “The entire universe, composed of spiritual and non-spiritual entities, is pervaded by God who is its inner ruler.... and He does so in order to reign and maintain them, although they themselves are unable to see Him. In this way all beings depend on God because they constitute His body. But God does not depend on them for they serve no purpose in maintaining His being; nor does God contain these beings like a jug contains water. How, then, does God pervade them? In virtue of His will. Behold His yoga, miraculous and peculiar to Him alone: God supports all beings, but no being is of use to Him. It is His will which originates, sustains and rules the beings.”⁴⁰ The world and individual souls are completely dependent on Brahman (God) who is their supporter and controller.⁴¹ Spiritual progress involves the realization that we are all modes of Brahman, always under His control and absolutely dependent on Him. In time the soul realizes its likeness to Brahman and is no longer bound by universal ignorance (avidya) and its karmic consequences.

Vivekananda expresses a religious philosophical interpretation of science. “She [Divine Mother] is the power of all causation. She energizes every cause unmistakably to produce the effect. Her will is the only law, and as She cannot make a mistake, Nature’s laws—Her will—can never be changed.... She is the fructifier of every action.”⁴² “God is the omnipotent supporter of the universe. What is called ‘law’ is the manifestation of His Will. He rules the universe by His laws.”⁴³ “The totality of all souls, not the human alone, is the Personal God. The will of the Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as law.”⁴⁴ “Ishvara [Personal God] is the sum total of individuals, yet He is an Individual, as the human body is a unit, of which each cell is an individual.... Omnipotence and omniscience are obvious qualities and need no argument to prove from the very fact of totality.”⁴⁵ God is thus, both omnipotent and omniscient, the only free individual who is 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. We cannot desire something unless we first know the object and thus, there is no willing that is not preceded by knowing. Divine Intellect modifies into the Divine Will, which manifests as desires that combine to produce the cosmos.⁴⁶ In one quote Vivekananda uses the pronoun “She” and in another “He” for Brahman-God. At a higher level, It transcends gender, but manifests in both female and male form. Each manifestation is equal in status

and power, each providing a different path to Brahman-God.

Divine all-powerfulness is described by Swami Abhedananda as a whole-part relationship. “Each individual soul is related to God as a part is related to the whole. As a part cannot exist independently, so our souls cannot exist independent of the Soul of the universe. Therefore we live and move and exist in and through the whole, or Ishvara [Personal God].⁴⁷ “The whole universe may be considered as one universal whole, and each separate individual is like a cell in the Cosmic Body. Each individual has consciousness, has life of its own, but the sum total of these make up the consciousness of the Universal Being.” Worship the “supreme Lord of the universe, who dwells in all beings and who is the life and soul of all animate and inanimate objects of the world.... His will is the Cosmic Will of which our individual will is but a fractional part. He is called in Vedanta Ishvara, which means the Creator i.e., projector of the phenomenal universe and the governor of all.”⁴⁸ “Our individual will which we have so long thought to be ours, is not ours, but a part and parcel of that one Cosmic Will, which is moving the universe from the minutest atom to the biggest solar system, and our bodies are nothing but so many small instruments through which that all-pervading Cosmic Will is expressing or manifesting Itself.”⁴⁹

Ishvara is the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal Universal Mind and Body, of which our mind and body are a fragment. Every individual is a quantum of the universe, with its individual characteristics. Ishvara manifests Its nature in the system of its parts, expressing Itself in a particular way thereby determining the characteristics of each of its components. Some lesser unities (individual minds and physical objects) reveal more of the characteristics of Ishvara to which they belong than others. There are no completely isolated independent causes and effects in the universe, each component of the system is completely determined by its connections with all other events and entities. Being complete in Itself, Ishvara forms a single and direct experience, while Its component experiences are fragmentary and less immediate. The magnitude of saintliness and goodness of an individual is proportionate to the degree of correspondence between the individual mind and the Cosmic Mind.⁵⁰

All things are a part of the totality Ishvara (God), which is the ultimate source of all forms of existence. It is essentially omnipotent and omniscient, while Its fragments participate in Ishvara to varying degrees. A plant participates in Ishvara’s power and knowledge to a lesser degree than a human, which varies from one

person to the next. Everything is through another except for Ishvara that exists through Itself. By analogy, fire is hot by its nature, while water becomes hot by participating in the fire's heat. Ontologically, Brahman-God's power is first subtle and subjective and then manifested and objective. Physical energy is an imperfect copy of the Shakti power of Brahman-God. When a cue ball makes contact with an object ball, the kinetic energy that is transferred is the Shakti power in a lesser form. Similarly, this Shakti power energizes the human will.

The relationship between Ishvara's omnipotence and the power of humans is not univocal (having the same meaning) or equivocal (having different meanings). It is analogical because there must be some similarity between the power of Ishvara the cause, and Its effects in the universe.⁵¹

Because of the whole-part relationship between the omnipotent and omniscient Ishvara and humans, a fundamental psychological drive is an innate desire to express power, energy, and force (prana); and to acquire knowledge. The desire for power is an important source of psychological motivation in all phases of life. The "Will to Manifest Prana" (power, energy) is expressed in humans physically through the body, mentally through the mind, spiritually through the Spirit, socially, and in other ways. It provides motivation for every kind of success in every area of endeavor along with an accompanying feeling of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence. The opposing psychological state is Sigmund Freud's Death Drive(Thanatos), the desire to return to the tamasic powerless inert and inorganic state found in alcoholism, drug addiction, and depression.⁵²

Western Thinkers: Omnipotent God is the First Cause of All Events

Indian thinkers emphasize a whole-part causal relationship between Ishvara and humanity. This relationship covers both the gross body in physical space and the subtle body (mind body, thought body) of Ishvara and humans in mental space. Power exists in both realms. Western writers focus in on a temporal causal relationship between God the first cause and humanity. According to various interpretations creation proceeds from the whole (totality) to the part, first cause to secondary causes, and from unity to diversity, perfect to imperfect, original to copy, and Existence to participation in It.

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) the Jewish thinker born in Spain who migrated to Egypt in 1160 wrote, "Everything that passes from potentiality to actuality has something other than itself that causes it to pass, and this cause is of

necessity outside the thing.” “This series of cause or factors cannot continue on to infinity. There is no doubt that, in the last resort, one must come to something that causes the passage from potentiality to actuality, that is perpetually existent in one and the same state, and in which there is no potentiality at all. I mean to say that in it, in its essence, there is nothing in potentia.... Now the being that is separate from matter, in which there is no possibility whatever, but that exists in virtue of its Essence, is the Deity.”⁵³ The causal series begins with God the first mover who is unmoving, unchanging, one, eternal, undivided, and incorporeal. He exists necessarily while everything else is only possible and requires an external cause in order to come into being. “This first cause does not fall under time because it is impossible that there should be movement with regard to It ... the first cause to which its being set in motion is due, is not a body or a force in a body; and that this first cause is one and unchangeable because its existence is not conjoined with time.”⁵⁴ Since God is the first cause of all existence, if He came to an end, all things would immediately cease to exist. On the other hand, if the created world terminated, God would remain and would not be diminished one iota.⁵⁵

Thomas Aquinas emphasized, “It is possible for an effect to happen outside the order of some particular cause, but not outside the order of the universal cause.... As God is the first universal cause not of one genus only, but of all being, it is impossible for anything to occur outside the order of Divine government.”⁵⁶ “Something may escape the order of any particular agent cause, but not the order of the universal cause under which all particular causes are included ... since then the will of God is the universal cause of all things, it is impossible that the Divine Will should not produce its effects.”⁵⁷ He also stresses that God is omnipotent because He is the first cause that controls all secondary causes. “All things are subject to Divine providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual being.... The causality of God, who is the first agent, extends to all beings not only as to the constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles.” “His effect is always less than His power.”⁵⁸ Nothing except God could be “the efficient cause of itself: for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible.”⁵⁹ “It is impossible to go [back] on to infinity, there must exist a Necessary Being which is the cause of all things that can be and not-be.”⁶⁰ Creatures exist only in as far as they participate in God’s Being, while God is the Self-Existent first cause. There is no force that exists prior to God who is First Being, which can determine or limit His actions. There is nothing outside of God or

anterior to Him on which His existence depends. Thus, God is the first uncaused efficient cause of a finite series of world events. Due to His omnipresence, God's potency and providence extends to all people and all events, while a less formidable power controls fewer things. His potency is boundless and unlimited and is not acted upon by any other entity. God can produce miracles because, "If we consider the order of things according as it depends on any secondary cause, thus God can do something outside such order. For He is not subject to the order of secondary causes, but, on the contrary, this order is subject to Him, as proceeding from Him, not by natural necessity, but by the choice of His own will; for He could have created another order of things. Therefore God can do something outside the order created by Him, when he chooses."⁶¹

Aquinas adds, natural agents are secondary causes that act through God's power as the instrument of the first cause. They participate to some degree in the power of the first cause. By analogy it is like an axe that operates not by its own power, but from the power of the artisan who moves it. God is the cause of every action inasmuch as every agent is the instrument of the Divine powers operating through it. As he explains it, "Since we hold that God is the immediate cause of every single thing inasmuch as He works in all secondary causes and inasmuch as all secondary effects originate from His predefinition." Thus, both God and the natural agent are causes of the same effect in its entirety, just as a work of art is said to be the result of both the artisan and his instrument but in different ways.⁶²

It appears that Aquinas believes God's actions are not limited by the law of causation and the history of an event, as we are. In the psychology of Aquinas, "Power implies the notion of a principle putting into execution what the will commands and what knowledge directs ... the knowledge and will of God precedes the consideration of His power as the cause precedes operation and the effect."⁶³ If a person wants to make a change first the will commands and knowledge directs, but this is to no avail unless there is power to initiate the event.

Following the idea of Occasionalism developed by the French Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), God is the only true efficient cause of every event. "God wills without cessation, but without change, succession or necessity, all that will take place in the course of time." It is God who moves my arm on the occasion that I will to do it. No power can place the arm "where God does not place it." Concerning the laws of physics that follow a natural order, on the occurrence of event x, God always causes event y to follow, but x is only the occasion not the true cause of y. Similarly the soul (mind) and body of a person cannot directly act

on each other. Natural causes are only occasional causes brought on by the power of God's will.⁶⁴

The Omnipotence of Brahman-God

The argument has been presented that there cannot be two omnipotent Beings due to the potential for conflicts of will between them. But this is not possible since omnipotence entails omniscience (maximum mental power) and two omniscient Beings could not disagree with one another. Disagreement would be due to a lack of mental power (mental omnipotence) by one or both of them.

If omniscience, omnibenevolence, and omnibliss are forms of power, then Brahman-God is omnipotent. According to the doctrine of omnipotence, there are absolutely no independent external restraints on Divine power, the internal nature of Brahman-God must be capable of maximum power, and It is the only source of all power in the universe. Thus, no person can possibly exemplify or exercise any ability, capacity, or power; whose existence is not ultimately derived from Brahman-God.⁶⁵ Omnipotence involves the ability to perform an action even if it is not carried out. Brahman-God is sovereign having complete control over everything; there is nothing that can prevent Him/Her from executing its purpose.

Madhva (1199/1238-1278/1317) designated, "All imperfection is absent in the all-powerful God. He is said to be 'endowed with all powers, always and at all times.'" "There is no difference between the powerful and His powers. Though His power is one and immediate it takes additional different forms like will, intelligence and effort so necessary for His creative activity."⁶⁶ Brahman (God) alone is the supreme all-powerful determining cause, and inner mover of all entities and events. "There is no independent potency anywhere in the Universe (in Prakriti [Primal Nature], Purushas [Individual Souls], etc.). It is Ishvara [Personal God] Himself that directs properly, the various potencies of Nature and of the souls for production, growth, development, etc., which are always dependent on Him. The Prakriti, Purushas and their respective capacities, their very presence, cognizability and functioning, all these are controlled by Ishvara, eternally, through His eternal power."⁶⁷ "The Supreme Being, possessed of infinite powers, enters into various stages of evolution of matter and brings about each and every stage of such manifestation of things, Himself.... The supremacy of God should not be compromised."⁶⁸ Through His cosmic power and will Brahman (God) creates, preserves, and dissolves the universe. The Lord is the independent all-doer

(sarvakarttva), while the world is a dependent (paratantra) derived reality. Brahman (God) voluntarily places a limitation on His omnipotence, which allows for the expression of free will by all people, in accordance with their accumulated karmas. All sentient and insentient entities depend on Brahman (God) for their existence, and may cease to exist if He so wills it. To egotistically think that we are an independent doer is a root source of human misery. Spiritual awareness requires that we realize that we are totally dependent on the Lord's will.⁶⁹

For Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), Brahman the Absolute is pure freedom that creates the universe and is not determined by anything else. There is nothing outside of the Absolute that can limit Its omnipotence. "The Absolute has an infinite number of possibilities to choose from [when creating the world], which are all determined by Its nature. It has the power of saying yes or no to any of them. While the possible is determined by the nature of the Absolute, the actual is selected from out of the total amount of the possible, by the free activity of the Absolute without any determination whatsoever. It could have created a different world in every detail from that which is actual."⁷⁰

In the West the German Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) stressed, "The almighty power of God ... must be essentially present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf. The reason is this: It is God who creates, effects, and preserves all things through His almighty power ... He must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects."⁷¹ God is the primary causal agent who determines all events. Personal and impersonal forces are the secondary causes, the tools through which God works in the world. He is not subject to another authority that is above Him, and consequently is not governed by any form of law. "All creatures are God's masks and disguises; He permits them to work with Him and help Him create all sorts of things-even though He could and does create without their cooperation." He is His only authority. Whatever He wills must be good since He wills it out of His Own being and holy nature.⁷²

The property of being all-powerful according to Augustus Strong implies that morality is grounded in the nature of God and is not something apart from Him. Consequently, "He is subject to no law but the law of his own nature." "The ground of moral obligation is the holiness of God, or the moral perfection of the Divine nature, conformity to which is the law of our moral being."⁷³ "By the decrees of God we mean that eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of

the universe, past, present, and future.” “Providence is that continuous agency of God by which He makes all the events [group and individual] of the physical and moral universe fulfill the original design [decrees] with which he created it. As creation explains the existence of the universe, and as preservation explains its continuance, so providence explains its evolution and progress.”⁷⁴

General Providence refers Brahman-God’s continuous upholding of the existence and natural order of the universe and Special Providence to Brahman-God’s occasional intervention in the events of the world.

Are There Limitations to Brahman-God’s Omnipotence?

It is generally believed that an omnipotent Being cannot perform acts that are logically impossible, such as creating a seven-sided triangle on a two-dimensional surface or creating a spherical cube, erase the past after it has occurred, or creating something so heavy It could not lift it. It cannot bring about a state of affairs that is incompatible with Its own nature. For example, if it is morally perfect It cannot perform an evil act though it may possess the power to do so. Does this place a limit on Brahman-God’s omnipotence? Is the Law of Non-contradiction part of Brahman-God’s nature? Or is the act of creation and all laws Brahman-God in another non-personal form?

Thomas Aquinas adds that God’s omnipotence is incapable of certain things, such as acts that involve a logical contradiction. Yet, He is not subservient to the Law of Non-contradiction, but rather it is derived from God’s internal nature. God does not perform acts that are contrary to His own nature such as making: “one and the same thing to be and not to be ... opposites exist in the same subject at the same time and in the same respect ... a thing to lack any of its essential principles while the thing itself remains in being ... a man to be without a soul ... three angles of a rectilinear triangle not to be equal to two right angles ... the past not to have been ... [God] make a thing equal to Himself ... [God] make a thing be preserved in being without Himself ... [God] make Himself not to be, or not to be good or happy ... [or to] will any evil.”⁷⁵

Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinistic) Scholastics (primarily of the 16-17th century) affirmed that God’s omnipotence, “refers to the Divine activity *ad extra* [externally] and never to a change or a potential for change in the Divine Essence, which is by definition, both perfect and immutably so.” God “can do all things that are not contrary either to His will or His knowledge.” His all-powerfulness “is limited

only by the Essence or Nature of God Himself and by nothing external to God. Thus, the fact that God cannot do evil, cannot die and cannot cease to be Father, Son, and Spirit is not a limit on or a contradiction of His omnipotence.”⁷⁶ There is “a concurrence of Divine primary and creaturely secondary causality ... a continuous inflowing or influence of God upon creatures.”⁷⁷ God’s Divine providence and His regenerative activity, generally function within the framework of the laws of nature and the decrees that He has established. Conversely, God’s power is absolute and unlimited when He acts apart from the causal laws He has created. Examples occur when He creates something new like a human soul, or performs a miracle like raising the dead or bringing about a virgin birth. These acts are possible because, “He who has freely established the laws of nature does not bind Himself by the laws and order of nature.”⁷⁸

That Brahman-God can do anything that does not involve a contradiction, does not mean that It does everything It is capable of doing. There are two forms of omnipotence: The potential power to perform every logically possible form of action and what is actually done.

Though Brahman-God is omnipotent, as an Avatara-Divine Incarnation It possesses the ability to take on a human nature and consciousness with its limitations. Motivated by compassion for suffering humanity, an Avatara temporarily renounces much of its power and the bliss of heavenly existence in order to face the hardships of earthly life. Accepting the self-imposed limitations of human birth and suffering, they are able to temporary renounce their omnipotence and omniscience. They conceal much of their divinity during their sojourn on earth. Many believe that the Avatara retains their Divine transcendence even during their life period as an Incarnation on earth. Western writers state that God being omniscient cannot think of something new, or being incorporeal cannot scratch his ear. But Brahman-God as an Avatara-Divine Incarnation can do these things.

Augustus Strong the American Baptist theologian emphasized that God possesses the power to restrict His own activity. “His power is under the control of a wise and holy will. God can do all He wills, but He will not do all He can. Else His power is mere force acting necessarily, and God is the slave of His own omnipotence. All-powerfulness in God does not exclude, but implies, the power of self-limitation.” By means of His “permissive will,” God voluntarily renounces some of His power, providing humans with free choice that allows (permits) them to sin. This freedom allows some people to fall into sin and God works within the world for its redemption.⁷⁹ Today, some American evangelical Protestant theologians believe

in “Open Theism,” where God does not fully know the future because He has granted free will to people whose choices cannot be known ahead of time.⁸⁰

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) the French mathematician and founder of modern philosophy held the extreme view of God’s unlimited omnipotence. For him the laws of logic, arithmetic, and geometry are true only because God willed them so. All-powerful God was entirely free to create any logical or mathematical truths He so desires (referred to as "Universal Possibilism"). He can radically alter the rules of thinking and the ways of knowing. Descartes stated, “It is because he willed the three angles of a triangle to be necessarily equal to two right angles that this is true and cannot be otherwise.” God could have willed differently.⁸¹ In a letter sent to Mersenne in 1630 Descartes wrote, “The metaphysical truths which you call eternal have been established by God and depend entirely upon Him just as all the rest of creation.... we can be well assured that God can do what we can understand, but not that he can do what we cannot understand, for it would be rash to suppose that our imagination has as wide an extension as His power.”⁸² “They could never say without blasphemy that the truth about something is antecedent to God’s knowledge of it; for in God knowing and willing are but one thing; so that from the very fact of His willing something, He knows it, and for this reason alone is such a thing true.” Fourteen years later He wrote to Father Mesland, “God’s power cannot have any limits; and also by considering that our mind is finite, and was created of such a nature that it can conceive the possibility of the things that God chose should actually be possible, but not of things that God could have made possible, but in fact chose to make impossible.... Although God has chosen that some truths should be necessary, that is not to say that he chose them necessarily; for it is one thing for Him to choose that they should be necessary and quite another for Him to choose this necessarily, or be necessitated to choose this.”⁸³

This means that God if He so desires has the infinite power to alter anything including the eternal truths and necessary truths of logic and mathematics. Descartes probably believed that these truths exist apart from God. If these truths are part of God’s nature, He would have to change in order for them to change. God’s existence and omnipotence would have to be permanent unless He created a whole new way of thinking.

As the infinite first cause Brahman-God ontologically precedes and transcends all of the limitations of human reason including the laws of logic and mathematics. Since our minds are bound by the limitations of the principles of human reason, we

assume that Brahman-God is also. According to Universal Possibilism, every logical and empirical occurrence is possible even if it involves a contradiction. Thus, Brahman-God is able to perform acts that run counter to the principles of logic and of non-contradiction or any other mathematical or empirical law. In other words, according to this idea Brahman-God transcends the intellect and is not bound by any of its principles or limitations. An omnipotent God determines what will be a necessary truth and existent since It creates not only physical objects, but also abstract entities such as the principles of reason, laws of logic and mathematics, numbers, propositions, relations, goodness, etc.

This implies that for Descartes, God's Divine Will and omnipotence ontologically precedes His intellect. All forms of intelligibility and the logical restraints of understanding are a creation of God's free will. Since there is no objective standard external to God, not only truths but ideas of goodness as well are created by God's will. We might add, If God can freely create any logical structure He so desires then there could be other realms existing at this very moment, each with people with radically different forms of thinking that consider valid what we regard as logical contradictions. Even if they spoke our language, their modes of thinking would be totally unintelligible to us.

Opponents of Descartes who hold that God's understanding is prior to will (not vice versa), believe that there cannot be a will without an intellect to direct it. As the German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) wrote, "Every act of willing supposes some reason for the willing and this reason, of course, must precede the act."⁸⁴ Contra Descartes, most religious philosophers believe that Brahman-God cannot perform an act that violates the law of non-contradiction or goes against the necessary truths of logic and mathematics, e.g., Brahman-God cannot make a false proposition true, change the past after it has occurred, or create a two-dimensional round square. An omnipotent Brahman-God cannot violate Its own essential nature by ceasing to exist, making mistakes, permanently doing away with Its omnipotence, or creating a being more omnipotent or omniscient than Itself. Reason is part of Brahman-God's nature and cannot be changed, since It is one with Its nature.

Since Brahman-God is Existence-Itself (Sat), It cannot begin to or cease to exist. Leibniz indicated, "The truths of reasoning are necessary, and their opposites are impossible. Truths of fact are contingent, and their opposites are possible."⁸⁵ "We are not to suppose as some philosophers have imagined, that since the eternal truths are dependent on God, they are therefore arbitrary and dependent on his

will.... It is contingent truths alone which can be said to depend on God's will for the principle of these is fitness, they imply power to choose the best. Necessary truths depend solely on God's understanding of which they are the internal objects."⁸⁶ Brahman-God's acts are free in the sense that no external force can work on the Divine Will without Its consent. Yet, Brahman-God's actions are determined by Its rational internal nature.

It is possible in the next cosmic cycle of the universe that propositions based on empirical existence like the values of physical constants (e.g., possibly the speed of light) and the laws of nature could vary from the present ones. But we do not expect the analytical propositions such as the laws of logic, arithmetic, geometry, or conceptual laws of thought like "I think therefore I exist" to change. They appear to be necessary truths, since their denial involves a logical contradiction. It is an epistemological necessity due to the rational structure of the human mind to accept the law of non-contradiction, and that $2 + 2 = 4$. If they were to change, the principles of human reason would have to be radically altered.

There are at least three ways to view the relationship between Brahman-God and omnipotence (and also omniscience, omnibenevolence, and omnibliss). 1) From an anthropomorphic standpoint Brahman-God has maximum power and knowledge but is different from them. This would mean if power did not exist apart from Brahman-God, It would be without these qualities. Also if Brahman-God relies on and is dependent on external power and knowledge they are greater than It is.

2) Some believe that Brahman-God creates (not is) power and knowledge. This leaves us with the question what is the nature of a powerless and knowledgeless Brahman-God prior to creating these entities? What is the nature of Brahman-God apart from the creation? Another problem is how can Brahman-God create power, when "to create" requires pre-existing power that involves causation? This requires a mode of creating unknowable to us.

3) From another perspective Brahman-God and Its power are one and the same entity. That is, Brahman-God as Person, Intellect (Reason), Will (Power), and Feeling (Love) are four equal aspects or components of the same Being. They are part of Its internal nature. At a higher ontological level of Divine simplicity they are identical with one other, but in the creative process at a lower level they separate into diverse characteristics that the human intellect can comprehend. Like most Westerners, Descartes considers God to be a Personal being with a will that is separate from the laws of logic and mathematics and the moral law. This is a humanizing anthropomorphic conception of God. Vivekananda mentions, "Religions

that have held on to the idea of an extra-cosmic deity, that he is a very big man and nothing else, can no more stand on their feet.”⁸⁷ An alternative view is that Brahman-God is a Personal being and is also the laws of logic and mathematics and the moral law. They are different aspects of a single entity. In this way, Brahman-God does not alter the laws of logic since they are part of Its nature.

Even then the powers are relatively not absolutely different, being actively and conceptually interrelated one implies another. For example, Brahman-God’s omnipotence includes the power of knowledge, goodness, love, bliss, and location. To be omnipotent means one has the power to acquire all knowledge, to perform only moral acts, remain blissful not overcome by sadness, and to be located in any place. To be omniscient means to have the knowledge to acquire all power, to always be good, to know how to attain bliss, and to be situated in any location. Not only does Brahman-God have the power but also possesses the knowledge to perform an action. In order to lift a weight the person needs not only power, but also some rudimentary knowledge of how to accomplish this task.

How are Brahman-God and the law of non-contradiction related to each other? If they were separate (as Descartes and many people assume) or in opposition to each other, then Brahman-God would be subservient to this law. It would be limited and have to order Its thinking to comply with this law. It would not be all-powerful. Rather, Brahman-God is omnipotent because It is power Itself. Power, knowledge, goodness, and bliss are not entities separate from Brahman-God’s internal nature. As forms of knowledge, Brahman-God and the laws of the intellect (of logic, arithmetic, geometry, and non-contradiction) and the Divine Will are part of the nature of Brahman-God and cannot be altered. For Brahman-God to do away with these laws would be Self-destructive. Therefore, reason is not an external factor that impinges on the freedom of Brahman-God and limits Its all-powerfulness. Otherwise, Brahman-God would be dependent on and conditioned by the world. Leading to the absurd conclusion that if ideas did not exist, Brahman-God would have no ideas and obviously would not be omniscient nor have a Divine Intellect. These are necessary characteristics of Brahman-God, and not accidents that could or could not exist or could be different from what they are. Omnipotence applies to Brahman-God’s manifestation of power both in the Brahmaloaka-Heaven and in the entire universe. The employment of omnipotence in creating the universe is considered by many to be contingent and not necessary in the sense that Brahman-God might not have undertaken this act, yet to create is part of Its nature.

The fact that Brahman-God (Ultimate Reality) is the first cause implies that all events in the universe are determined by the will and power of the Supreme Being. All apparently random and chance events that occur in the natural world are the effects of secondary causes (the concern of the various sciences), which are ultimately determined by Brahman-God who is the first cause. All power is ultimately Brahman-God's power, empowering everything that exists as the potency of every action. Power might operate directly or indirectly in successive stages by actualizing a state of affairs that brings about the desired outcome. According to Thomas Aquinas, God the first cause is the power that moves the leg, but He is not the cause of the defect in the leg of a limping person. "The act of sin is both a being and an act; and in both respects it is from God. Because every being, whatever the modes of its being, must be derived from the First Being ... Therefore God is the cause of every action ... this defect is not reduced to God as its cause, but to free choice, even as the defect of limping is reduced to a crooked leg as its cause, but not to the moving power, which nevertheless causes whatever there is of movement in the limping. Accordingly God is the cause of the act of sin, and yet he is not the cause of sin, because he does not cause the act as a defect."⁸⁸ Brahman-God is sovereign acting on the free exercise of supreme authority that is guided by Omniscient Divine reason. It wills things because they are intrinsically right.

An atheist or agnostic writes a book but does not realize that his/her power of intellect comes from Brahman-God. If the Lord withdrew this power the atheist would be unable to think. This misunderstanding is due to the ego (not egotism), which we all have, the feeling that we are the first cause of our thoughts and actions. Actually, Brahman-God is the first cause who works through secondary causes. The physical, social, and behavioral science study secondary causes in order to control and predict events. What we think is our power is Brahman-God's power to a limited degree. The milder view is that Brahman-God is the source of our power of intellect, and the more extreme view is that Brahman-God is also the source of the content (form) of our thoughts. God's manifestation of all-powerfulness differs in degree from one person to the next and is subject to change.

Natural determinism involves initial conditions and a set of laws, by which one can predict future events that are investigated in the physical, social, and behavioral sciences. It includes an external aspect of the laws of the outer world and an internal aspect of the laws of the mind that regulate the thought process. Both are determined by the forces of nature. Natural determinism works through the law of karma. These two aspects interact as for example a change in the

weather might bring about a change in the thoughts of the mind. Another example is changes in society are determined by and determine changes in the minds of people.

There is also Divine (Theological) determinism that is studied by religious philosophy and theology. Divine determinism originates from the omnipotent Brahman-God at the heavenly transcendental level. It has two aspects. One is omnipotent Brahman-God as first cause determines the events of the natural world. The second is the grace of Brahman-God that Vivekananda states operates through a higher unknown law. All people are subject to natural determinism, but only a limited number to divine grace.

This raises the question, does Brahman-God act independent of or through the deterministic laws of nature, or in both ways? If Brahman-God always works through the laws of nature then Divine and Natural determinism are not separate entities.

In the free will vs. determinism debate there are four possible alternatives: (1) Determinism both originating at the Divine level and within nature. (2) Divine (Theological) determinism combined with free will within nature. Human events are determined only at the Divine level and not by the laws of nature. (3) Brahman-God does not determine our activities, yet we are still subject to the deterministic laws of nature. (4) Free will both at the Divine and natural level. For example, many Christians believe in God's "permissive will," that He willingly renounces some of His power allowing humans to make free choices.

Vivekananda supports natural determinism and an incompatibilist (free will as incompatible with determinism) position when in his notes he writes, "Internal and external nature, mind and matter, are in time and space, and are bound by the law of causation. The freedom of the mind is a delusion. How can the mind be free when it is controlled and bound by law?"⁸⁹ "When we speak of free will, we mean the will is not caused by anything. But that cannot be true, the will is caused; and since it is caused, it cannot be free--it is bound by law. That I am willing to talk to you and you come to listen to me, that is law. Everything that I do or think or feel, every part of my conduct or behaviour, my every movement--all is caused and therefore not free. This regulation of our life and mind--that is the law of Karma."⁹⁰ Events in the external world are determined by the law of karma and in the internal realm by the law of samskaras based on our prior actions and thoughts. As the Freudians point out many of our conscious thoughts are determined by the content of our unconscious mind which is not known to us.

Free will can be defined in more than one way. It can be interpreted in a limited sense, as the ability to make choices among various alternatives that are not externally constrained. For example, we are free to decide whether to perform or not perform a certain act. Some compatibilists believe an action is “free” if it is based on reason and deliberation rather than on external forces or emotional compulsion. More rigidly defined, free will is the capacity to make choices not caused by prior events. This is not the case if our decisions are the result of our karmas (external events) and samskaras (internal events), both of which are determined by preceding occurrences. We think we have free will because we do not know the causal factors that determine our behavior and are unaware of the effects of our unconscious mind on our conscious thoughts.

Spinoza taught that people, “believe themselves free, simply because they are conscious of their actions, and unconscious of the causes whereby those actions are determined.” Neuroscience supports determinism in that it studies states of the brain and its decision-making process that are governed by the physical laws of nature and the result of prior event conditions. There is also genetic determination, but it is questionable if heredity determines our thought process.

Humans intuitively discern that they have a free will and this is an important reason why the majority of people accept the idea. We feel that we are making the decision to act in a certain way often based on our personal desires and intentions. According to a survey conducted in 2007, 79% percent of evolutionary biologists said that they believe in free will, 14% did not, and 7% percent did not answer the question. But this depends on how you define free will. Pragmatically believing in free will is a useful idea that causes the agent to feel a moral responsibility for the actions they perform. Some anti-determinists cite quantum physics where future events are predicted on the bases of probabilities of occurring. But this takes place at the subatomic micro and not at the macro level that we experience. Even if our will is determined, we should exert effort to improve ourself and the moral aspects of religious scripture are of value in guiding us in the right direction.⁹¹

Can there be more than one coexistent omnipotent and omniscient Being? According to the Christian Trinity there are three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁹² The aspects of the one Brahman-God can be both omnipotent and omniscient and consequently more than one Hindu deity can possess these characteristics. Being omniscient the deities are likeminded, which is necessary so they work in complete harmony with each other. As aspects are the Deities (and Persons in the case of the Trinity) limited in that one possess characteristics the others lack?

Whether omnipotence (like omnipresence and omniscience) is infinite (unlimited), or finite of a limited maximal quantity or magnitude is debatable. Is power by its very nature limited and therefore finite? In an infinite world power must be unlimited, but in a finite world all-powerfulness would have a finite upper limit. Origen (c. 185-254) believed God's power is finite because, "If the Divine power were infinite, of necessity it could not even understand itself, since the infinite by its nature is incomprehensible."⁹³ Proceeding thorough the numbers there is no maximum upper limit, but we can never reach that number. If the universe is without limits or there are an infinite number of space-time continuums then Brahman-God's power and presence are infinite. If the universe is limited in size or the number of space-time continuums has an upper limit then Brahman-God's power and presence are finite.

Some believe Brahman-God creates space, time, and causality *ex nihilo* (from nothing). One asks what is the nature of Brahman-God before It creates or transforms into these three and how can It create if It precedes causality?⁹⁴

For more on the subject of this section see: *Sri Ramakrishna and Western Thought*, Ch. II. The Nature of Brahman-God, Section 7. Omnipotence (Ananta-virya, Sarva-kartriva) of Brahman-God.

4. Omniscience (Ananta-jnana, Kevala-jnana, Sarvajna, Sarvajnatva)

Indian: "The mighty ruler of these worlds beholds as though from close at hand. The man who thinks he acts by stealth: all this the Gods perceive and know. If a man stands or walks or moves in secret, goes to his lying-down or his uprising, What two men whisper as they sit together, King Varuna knows: he as the third is present.... All this the royal Varuna beholdeth, all between heaven and earth and all beyond them, The twinklings of men's eyelids hath he counted" (AV 4:16.1-2, 5). "Truly I [Varuna] am profound in wisdom, truly I know by nature all existing creatures.... None, self-dependent Varuna existeth wiser than thou or sager by His wisdom. Thou knowest well all these created beings" (AV 5:11.3-4). "Ishvara omniscient and omnipotent" (Svet. Up. 1:9; cf. Tait. Up. 2:1.3). "I [Sri Krishna], O Arjuna, know the beings that are of the past, that are of the present, and that are to come" (BG 7:26). "I am the wisdom" (BG 10:38).

Old Testament: "Wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16) "The Lord looks down from heaven, he sees all the sons of men ... and observes all of their deeds" (Ps. 33:13). "O Lord, thou hast searched me and

known Me!

Thou ... art acquainted with all my ways...Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, though knowest it altogether” (Ps. 139:1, 3-4). “His understanding is beyond measure” (Ps. 147:5). New Testament: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt. 6:8; cf. 4, 18). “Now we know you [Jesus Christ] know all things” (Jn. 16:30; cf. 2:25). “Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:24). “Before Him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him” (Heb. 4:13). “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 Jn. 3:20; cf. Acts 1:24

The Indian Viewpoint

The *Upanishadic* explanation of the omniscience (ananta-jnana, kevala-jnana, sarvajna, sarvajnatva) and omnipotence (ananta-virya, sarvakartriva, sarvasakti) of Brahman-God is unique, largely unknown to the rest of the world. “He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought of, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower” (Br. Up. 3:7.23; cf. 3:4.2). “It [Brahman-Atman] is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech, the Life of the life and the Eye of the eye” (Kena Up. 1:2; cf. Br. Up. 4:4.18). “That which is not comprehended by the mind but by which the mind comprehends, know that to be Brahman” (Kena Up. 1:6). “Knows the Self [Atman] to be indestructible, eternal, unborn, and immutable” (BG 2:21).

Nagasena (c. fl. 150 B.C.) the Indian Buddhist taught that Gautama the Buddha was potentially all-knowing. According to the concept of “Potential Omniscience,” though Buddha’s knowledge was limited, he possessed the capacity to know whatever he wanted to comprehend. “The insight of knowledge was not always and continually with him. The omniscience of the Blessed One [Buddha] was dependent on reflection. But if he did reflect, he knew whatever he wanted to know.”⁹⁵

Yoga commentator Vyasa (c. 400-500) clarified, “There must be the highest limit of the expansion of the seed of omniscience, inasmuch as there is a larger or smaller manifestation of intelligence, just as it is in the case of a dimension. Wherever knowledge reaches the highest limit that is the omniscient there is a distinct Purusha [Transcendental-Immanent Self].”⁹⁶

The Advaita Vedanta (Nondualistic) approach is expounded upon by the seer-philosopher Adi Shankara (c. 688/788-720/820), “That Reality is the knower in all states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep.... It gives

intelligence to the mind and the intellect, but no one gives It light.... By Its light, the universe is revealed.... The Atman reveals this entire universe of mind and matter.” “There is a Self-Existent Reality, which is the basis of our consciousness of ego. That Reality is the witness [Saksin], of the three states of our consciousness, and, is distinct from the five bodily coverings. That Reality is the knower in all states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions. It is the Atman.”⁹⁷ “That Reality [Atman] sees everything by Its own light. No one sees it. It gives intelligence to the mind and the intellect, but no one gives it light.... The universe shines with its reflected light. That Reality pervades the universe, but no one penetrates it. It alone shines. It is consciousness itself.”⁹⁸

According to Jadunath Sinha, Jayanta Bhatta (c. 9th century) of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika school from Kashmir developed this idea, “Herein lies the difference between the human knowledge and Divine omniscience; the former is produced, while the latter is eternal; the former is acquired, while the latter is natural and essential. Divine knowledge is not diversified by many cognitions; it grasps all objects of the universe, past, present, and future, subtle and remote, by a single all-embracing intuition. Were it not so, God [Brahman] would have many cognitions either successively or simultaneously. But He cannot have them in succession, for, in that case, He would have discrete, discontinuous cognitions, and consequently, He would be unconscious at intervals, and thus would bring about a collapse of the universe at intervals, which would make all human activities impossible.... Divine knowledge is perceptual in character as it consists in direct and immediate apprehension of the whole universe. Divine perception is not produced by the intercourse of the sense organs with their objects, as God has no sense organs at all. In fact, Divine perception is not produced at all; it is beginningless and endless; it is eternal. Divine perception, therefore, is not of the nature of sensuous perception, but of the nature of 'creative intuition.' God evolves the materials of His consciousness by the Divine Will, and perceives them all by a single all-embracing intuition, even as the sun illumines all objects of the universe, though it is not produced by them. Thus the knowledge of God is not determined by its objects; but the objects are determined by the knowledge of God.”⁹⁹

Indian Jain philosopher Prabhacandra (fl. 1040) realized (as explained by Jadunath Sinha) that omniscience “is a single intuition of the whole world. It does not depend upon the external sense organs or the mind; so it need not be diversified by many cognitions. Our perception is produced by the external organs

or the internal organ; so it cannot apprehend past, distant, future, and subtle objects. But the perception of the omniscient self is not produced by the external sense organs or the mind; hence it can apprehend all supersensible objects. The pure intuition of the omniscient self is not produced successively; it knows all objects of the universe simultaneously by a single stroke of intuition since it transcends the limits of time and space which are the necessary conditions of all sense-perception.”¹⁰⁰

According to Ramanuja (c. 1017-1137) Brahman-God is present in mental space, with knowledge that is direct and complete without any need of inferential reason that leads the mind from one concept to another.

For Madhva (1199/1238-1278/1317), Brahman-God’s “creatorship presupposes full knowledge of the effects to be, its accessories, nature of effort, the expected results ... The all-creator must be all-knowing.... He is the One Lord present in all creatures though invisible, all-pervading, controlling all, presiding over all our Karma, and witnessing everything, the knower, without a physical body.”¹⁰¹ “God’s omniscience includes the knowledge of all subjects. Even as the things falling under the sunlight are illumined by the sun’s light, in the same way Gods knowledge is all-comprehensive and includes within it all subjects. ‘Having the comprehensive knowledge’ is the very nature of God.... He hears everything. He thinks over everything. He sees everything. He directs everything. He is the best speaker. He is all knower. He has special knowledge of everything. He is the indwelling person in the minds of all beings. He who is your indwelling controller is also the indwelling controller of all Jivas [individual souls or selves].”¹⁰²

Swami Vivekananda adds more on the Self-luminous omniscience of Nondual Brahman-Atman. “Tremendous power is manifested everywhere in nature, but it is not self-luminous, not essentially intelligent. The Purusha [Transcendental-Immanent Self, Pure Consciousness] alone is Self-luminous, and gives Its light to everything. It is the power of the Purusha that is percolating through all matter and force. If the mind were self-luminous it would be able to cognize itself and its objects at the same time, which it cannot. When it cognizes the object, it cannot reflect on itself. Therefore the Purusha is Self-luminous, and the mind is not.” “For the mind that has realized omnipresence there is no succession. Everything has become present for It; to It the present alone exists, the past and future are lost. Time stands controlled, all knowledge is there in one second. Everything is known like a flash.” “It is the only Knower--the only Self-luminous—the Light of consciousness. Everything else shines by light borrowed from It. Everything else

knows inasmuch as it reflects Its knowing.”¹⁰³ “God does not think; He does not reason. Why should He? Is anything unknown to Him, that He should reason?” “There is no infinite mind or infinite knowledge, because both mind and knowledge are limited.”¹⁰⁴

To quote Swami Abhedananda, “That eternal energy is not an unintelligent energy, but is intelligent. Wherever we cast our eyes, either in the external or internal world, we find the expression, not of a fortuitous or accidental combination of matter and mechanical forces, but of regular laws guided by definite purpose. This universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, one harmonious whole. It is not an aimless chain of changes which we call evolution, but there is an orderly hidden purpose at every step of evolution. Therefore, that energy is intelligent. We may call this self-existing, intelligent, eternal cosmic energy the Mother of the universe. She is the source of infinite forces and infinite phenomena. This eternal energy is called in Sanskrit Prakriti (Latin procreatrix), the creative power of the universe.... As all the forces of nature are but the manifestations of this Divine Energy, She is called all-powerful. Wherever there is the expression of any force or power in the universe, there is the manifestation of the eternal Prakriti or the Divine Mother.”¹⁰⁵

The Western Perspective

As the Italian Catholic St. Bonaventure (1221-74) put it, “The first Principle, because He is first and supreme, has a knowledge which is utterly simple [undivided] and perfect.... therefore it is in Himself and through Himself that the first Principle knows all things that are distinct from Him. From this it follows that He knows, second, created things uncreatedly; third, dependent things independently; fourth, temporal things eternally; fifth, future things presently; sixth, mutable things immutably; and seventh, contingent things infallibly.... As God produces in time through a single power all things in their complete fullness, even so He expresses them all in eternity through a single truth.”¹⁰⁶ Frederick Copleston pointed out that Bonaventure apprehended, “God’s act of knowledge is infinite and eternal, so that all things are present to Him, even future events: there is no succession in the Divine knowledge ... God knows all things by one eternal act and there is no temporal succession in that act, no before and after; but God knows eternally, through that one act, things as succeeding one another in time.” Etienne Gilson adds that Bonaventure taught it is not the case “that He [God] could only know things in turning Himself towards them and receiving their imprint upon His

intellect. Now, if it were so, the Divine intellect would clearly depend on things since it would be in potency as regards them and would owe to them its perfection.... the ideas of things are not in God distinct from His very nature. Knowing things, and knowing them down to their least individualizations, God nevertheless never turns away from Himself, for, if he knows by His ideas, He knows of Himself, and, in such a mode of knowing, the things receive their perfection from the knowing subject while he Himself owes nothing to the objects known.”¹⁰⁷

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) indicated that God is simple (undivided), His act of understanding and the object understood are identical. “Since, therefore God has nothing in Him of potentiality, but is pure act, His intellect and its object must be altogether the same.... In God intellect, the object understood, the intelligible species, and His act of understanding are entirely one and the same.”¹⁰⁸ “The Divine Intellect is never potentially but always actually understanding. Therefore It does not understand things successively but rather understands them together.”¹⁰⁹ “In God, however, the intellect and its object are one and the same, because by understanding Himself, God understands all other things.”¹¹⁰ Knowledge in God is one and undivided without multiplicity and is identical with the Divine Essence. “We say that God sees Himself in Himself, because He sees Himself through His Essence; and He sees other things, not in themselves, but in Himself, inasmuch as His Essence contains the likeness of things other than Himself.”¹¹¹

He continues, God is the first cause of all things through His intellect and will, which extends as far as His causality extends. “The knowledge of God is the cause of things. For the knowledge of God is to all creatures what the knowledge of the artificer is to things made by his art.... God causes things by His intellect, since His being is His act of understanding; and hence His knowledge must be the cause of things, in so far as His will is joined into it.”¹¹² “The likeness of every effect somehow pre-exists in its cause ... If, then, God is the cause of certain things, since according to His nature He is intellectual, the likeness of what He causes will exist in Him in an intelligible way. But what is in something in an intelligible way is understood by it.... God knows Himself and all the intervening causes between Himself and any given thing.... By knowing Himself, God knows whatever proceeds from Him immediately.”¹¹³

Christian philosophers of the Thomist [Aquinas] School hold that God created and knows the happenings of the universe in one instance in the Eternal Now. W. Norris Clarke, S.J. (1915-2008), explains it this way, God “freely decides in His

Eternal Now to create this world and sensitively registers in His consciousness all that goes on within it.... but without successive temporal change.... God is always knowing - not from an eternal past, but from His Eternal Now ... for St. Thomas [Aquinas] (and on back to St. Augustine, who first made the point), the whole of time itself is part of this created world, is itself therefore created. God stands completely outside the whole realm of time. Time is not some overarching entity or framework including both God and creatures in some common measure. God is simply not in created time at all, and there is no other. Hence God in His Eternal Now is simply present to each event in our time, neither before or after it, but simply as it actually occurs. What God knows is embedded in the flow of created time, but in no way does that imply that His own process of knowing is also caught in the same flow of time within His own being. Our flow of time is based on constant physical changes or motion in matter. It makes no sense to say that God's own inner action of knowing is locked into this process of physical (or any kind of created) motion.”¹¹⁴

Recapitulating, Brahman-God is Omniscient: living in the Eternal Now and not in succession, knowing all things at once, transcending time and space; knowing the past, present, and future by a single cognition in the Eternal Now; being present to each event as it occurs in time; knowing temporal things eternally, future things presently, mutable things immutably, and contingent things infallibly; by knowing Itself, Brahman-God knows whatever proceeds from It immediately; by knowing Itself, Brahman-God knows all the intervening causes between Itself and any given thing; if It had discrete and discontinuous cognitions, during the gaps the universe would cease to exist; Divine perception is not due to the contact of sense organs with their objects and does not receive the imprint of objects upon the intellect; and being the knower, Self-luminous It is able to cognize Itself and Its objects at the same time, unlike the human mind.

The Basic Characteristics of Divine Omniscience

What is the extent of the Divine Mind's omniscience? It involves possessing maximum possible understanding of everything that can be known. This includes all spiritual and secular knowledge of both Brahmaloaka-Heavenly events and those in the entire physical universe. Certainly it includes four things: complete immediate cognitive knowledge and perception of all external events in the universe; a total comprehension of the internal mental events of every thought of every conscious

being; a perfect understanding of how to accomplish any task (knowing how combined with the omnipotent skill to perform the action); and a full knowledge of all concepts and propositions. This is possible since Brahman-God being omnipresent is not only externally, but also internally pervading the consciousness of every person. While a few religious philosophers thought that Divine omniscience is limited to only universals, most would agree that it also includes complete knowledge of particulars. Brahman-God is omniscient in every possible world, while events such as Krishna's interaction with Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* occur only in this world.

It (or He or She) possesses conceptual and practical knowledge innately and immediately without having to acquire it. Brahman-God knows all things intuitively, utilizing nonpropositional modes of apprehending truth about reality. The Divine mode of knowing involves a single intellectual act attaining intimate epistemic acquaintance with every concrete occurrence. Consequently, its penetrating knowledge extends to more than the genus, but to the very individual and singular aspect of an entity that It causally sustains.¹¹⁵ If its cognitions were only discrete and discontinuous, during the gaps the universe would cease to exist. Divine perception is not due to the contact of sense organs with their objects and does not receive the imprint of objects upon the intellect. By contrast, human knowledge of things is mediated through and dependent upon a cognitive apparatus that grasps things incompletely through universal concepts not knowing the thing in itself. Not only does Brahman-God gain knowledge derived through immediate direct intuition, but also from observation and inference. It would be limited if It had only one-way of knowing.

During his human existence the Divine knowledge of Sri Ramakrishna was based on direct spiritual experience, rather than intellectual abstractions. If he wanted the answer to a question, he could ask the omniscient Divine Mother and likewise Jesus would converse with the Father in Heaven. At other times they could relate to their own Divine nature to receive an answer.

The problem is it is difficult to determine the nature of the Divine mode of knowing, because it differs considerably from that of humans. Our knowledge of human cognitive psychology at best only roughly gives us some analogous idea about the mental structure of the Divine Mind.¹¹⁶

As expressed by Thomas Aquinas, "But, since God is infinite, comprehending in Himself all the plenitude of the perfection of all being, He cannot acquire anything new, nor extend Himself to anything whereto He was not extended

previously.”¹¹⁷ According to Aquinas, in God’s omniscience there is no cognitive temporal sequence, no before or after, not the slightest change in His consciousness. God is always infinite in the fullness of His knowledge and cannot acquire any new knowledge from an external source that He did not previously have.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, an all-knowing Being has to have a perfect understanding of what induction and deduction are and how they operate, else it would not be omniscient. It knows all ideas and events both concretely and abstractly, in logical succession from cause to effect, utilizing inductive inference and deduction from prior knowledge. An omniscient being is perfect in reasoning, forming beliefs, learning, problem solving, decision making, judging and evaluating, personality and character forming, imagination, and long and short-term memory.

Omniscience and omnipotence are essential and necessary properties of a maximally Perfect Being that have always existed and cannot be destroyed. This means it is not possible for It to be non-omniscient or non-omnipotent. It is always omniscient and does not acquire any new knowledge.

In the British philosophers F. H. Bradley’s (1846-1924) system of thought, the Absolute Being’s omniscient comprehends the totality of existence harmoniously, without contradictions between any Its components or internal relations within Its total system of beliefs. Every belief in the coherent system of ideas entails all the others. It is all-comprehensive and all-inclusive without any external restrictions. Meaning it is infinite in the sense that it is not bound by anything else. As the totality, the Absolute is not a separate limited being among other beings.¹¹⁹ It is a coherent system of eternally existing finite members, embracing them in an all-inclusive harmony. Thus, there is a perfect unity of all Its aspects. Being a substantial totality beyond all relations, It is not the sum of things but a unity that transcends and yet contains every manifold entity. Its phenomenal members are less comprehensive (incomplete) and less coherent than the Whole (Absolute). Consequently, the Absolute is a higher experience above the distinctions that It includes. Each phenomenal member contributes, and is an essential and necessary factor for the unity of the Whole.¹²⁰ He writes, “The bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must hence somehow be at unity and self-consistent; for it cannot be elsewhere than in reality, and reality excludes discord. Or again we may put it so: the real is individual. It is one in the sense that its positive character embraces all differences in an inclusive harmony.” “Truth must exhibit the mark of internal harmony, or, again, the mark of expansion and all-inclusiveness. And these

two characteristics are diverse aspects of a single principle.”¹²¹

The knowledge of omniscient Brahman-God’s has at least the following five characteristics: correspondence, coherence, consistency, comprehensiveness, and connectedness. First, Its knowledge must correspond to reality, being objective, truthful, and veridical. Next, coherent meaning logical and cohesive. It is logically consistent with no possible contradictions whatsoever. Comprehensiveness means it is a complete system with maximum meaningfulness. Finally, there must be a systematic inner-connectedness between ideas. Brahman-God also knows why things happen as they do. Omniscience involves a perfect understanding of the causal sequence; works at both the individual level and at the group level; and knows the what, how, why, who, when, and where of a situation. It understands both changing and changing events, the theoretical and practical, and the abstract and the concrete.

Conceptually the most rational theories are the most comprehensive dealing with a wide range of phenomena (scope), logically consistent (lack of contradictions), and coherent and plausible (meaningful). The most veridical perceptions are ideally: 1) forceful and vigorous producing a feeling of certainty; 2) vivid producing clear images in the mind; 3) firm-solid having an almost unyielding surface or structure; 4) steady, persistent, continuing to exist or endure over a prolonged period; and 5) distinctive being recognizably different in nature from something else.¹²²

In the waking state unlike a dream we have prior knowledge of an object or event, expectation of future results, and some predictability. There is a continuity and consistency of existence, for example the clock in the room over many days remains basically the same in looks and function. We live a practical life relying on these verified expectations.

Historically commentators state that Brahman-God’s omniscient (like omnipresence and omnipotence) is infinite. Is maximum omniscience infinite (unlimited) or finite (limited)? Do intelligence, power, happiness, and love have an upper limit? If the number of possible ideas is finite with an upper limit, and the number of combinations of these ideas is also finite, then omniscience is finite. Is it possible to be omniscient possessing infinite knowledge, since knowledge by its very nature is a finite form of limitation? Origen (c. 185-254) believed that, “the infinite by its nature is incomprehensible” and if so omniscience would be finite.¹²³ Vivekananda expressed the idea that, “The Absolute and the Infinite can become this universe only by limitation. Everything must be limited that comes through the

senses, or through the mind, or through the intellect; and for the limited to be the unlimited is simply absurd, and can never be.” “There cannot be infinite thought, because thought comes from limitation. We have to go beyond the body, and beyond thought too, says the Advaita.” “There is no infinite mind or infinite knowledge, because both mind and knowledge are limited.”¹²⁴

From the Nondualistic perspective, Brahman-God is Knowledge (and Existence, Power)-Itself, which means It is identical with knowledge and does not participate in it to various degrees as humans do. It is the omnipresent ground and background of Reality that both transcends and is the immanent source of all existence, knowledge, and power.

For a Qualified Nondualists (Panentheism), Brahman-God is omniscient because It is the sum total of all the minds in the universe. Likewise, It is omnipotent being the sum total of all power and omnipresent of all existence in the universe. Swami Vivekananda relates, “The mind is universal. Your mind, my mind, all these little minds, are fragments of that Universal Mind.”¹²⁵ “What is called your mind is only a bit of this Mahat [Universal Mind].”¹²⁶ For more details see: Ch. VIII. Swami Vivekananda’s Scientific Cosmology, Section 3. Vivekananda’s System of Physics.

Since Brahman-God is omnipresent in every spatial location, It exists within every person’s consciousness, but is hidden from most people. On the phenomenal plane (and in the Divine world) existing within their consciousness It knows all of their thoughts. At the same moment It reacts differently to different people. Brahman-God is spatially omnipresent at every location and temporally omnipresent at every moment in time, with full knowledge of all prior, present, and future events. Being omnipresent enables Brahman-God to know all events that are taking place (omniscience) and to act everywhere with direct control over every aspect of the universe (omnipotence). There is no location where Brahman-God’s knowledge and power do not exist. It is conceptually omnipresent, existing simultaneously in every area of mental space, possessing direct and total understanding, which does not require inferential reason that directs the mind from one idea to another. That is, It has every conceivable thought at the same time. It is omnipresent because It exists in all phases of life including the mental, physical, and emotional; in all aspects of nature, in every stage of the causal process, in all concepts and theories, and temporally in all events.¹²⁷ An Omniscient Being is changeless in the sense that Its knowledge neither increases nor decreases. It is not timeless, since omniscient Brahman-God has to have perfect understanding of every temporal

sequence. Only at a lower level of manifestation, would Brahman-God's mind be focused at one place in conceptual space, yet omniscient because It can instantly navigate to any other location in the world of ideas.

The Divine Mind is connected with the subtle matter-energy of the past and of the future, and like humans with the gross matter-energy of the present. It has to be located in the present moment of time to know that an event is occurring now.¹²⁸ By contrast, physically we are limited to a single spatial location (our own self and immediate environment), and temporal location (the present), though we can think of other places and times. Our minds are located at one place in conceptual space, depending on what we are thinking of at the time, though we can navigate to other ideas in our mind.

Brahman-God is spatially omnipresent at every location, and therefore Its actions are not limited by the speed of light (a problem for quantum theory). According to Albert Einstein's "Special Theory of Relativity" (1905) there is no universal present, since observers in different frames of reference can have different ideas as to whether a pair of events happened at the same time or at different times. There is no physical basis for preferring one frame over another. This poses no problem for Brahman-God since It is omnipresent, located at every reference point.¹²⁹ If the universe is continuous then the number of reference points would be infinite, but if the universe is discrete made of quantum particles/events then the number would be finite in number. Einstein's theory emphasizes the interrelatedness of space and time, particularly as one approaches the speed of light.

Brahman-God is the first cause of all things including knowledge. Augustine (354-430) wrote, "Not because they are, does God know all creatures spiritual and temporal, but because He knows them, therefore they are" and Aquinas, "The knowledge of God is the cause of things."¹³⁰ Brahman-God does not react to a pre-existent perceived objects or ideas like we do, but Its own nature causes them to come into existence. Its knowledge is first-hand and ours is second-hand. It is omniscient because through Its omnipotence It projects all forms of knowledge. Due to Brahman-God's aseity, Its knowledge of contingent states of affairs is not dependent on some outside source. We are consumers of pre-existing knowledge concerning the world, while Brahman-God in contrast precedes knowledge as its producer. The ordinary causal flow of perceptual understanding from object to subject is reversed in Brahman-God's case from knowing subject to known object. The subject precedes the object. Its awareness of an object is not caused by the

thing that It perceives; rather Its power and knowledge cause the object to exist which It understands. We perceive an object and then as a reaction know it. Our knowledge is dependent on the nature of the object. Conversely, Brahman-God either knows the object before it is created, or the act of creating and knowing occur at the same time. In both the ontological or chronological beginning of existence, nothing exists not even empty space and Brahman-God creates the object directly from Its own Being, e.g., a projection from the Divine Mind. For Brahman-God the omnipotent willing of an event and omniscient knowledge of it occur simultaneously. It is like we purposely think of a house in our mind, whereby we concurrently both create it through our will and have knowledge of it through our intellect simultaneously.

From another standpoint, Brahman-God knows all things in the universe because they participate in (or imitate) Its perfection to varying imperfect degrees. Since It is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent It understands the lesser manifestations of these virtues.

In a sense there are two forms of omniscience. Through “Creative Omniscience” Brahman-God knows an object or event because It has created it. Also, being omniscient It has foreknowledge of the events It will bring about in the future. At a lower ontological level, there is “Reactive Omniscience” where the Personal Brahman-God as part of the temporal process perceives objects that exists apart from It, and is cognizant of their past, present, and future sequence of events.

An alternative idea is that these entities including knowledge are a transformation of Brahman-God their material cause. They are Brahman-God in another form. In recent times Brahman-God has been considered in more than Its Personal aspects. For example, It has been equated with the World Soul, cosmic energy, and mathematical entities.

If the Intrinsic nature of Brahman-God is omniscient then its knowledge would be Simple (Nondual) and there would be no distinction between what we consider as different ideas, they would be identical. This type of knowledge is unimaginable to us.

We have some idea of a person’s external behavior from which we attempt to infer what they are thinking and feeling. Omniscient Brahman-God has complete understanding of both of all of their internal thoughts and feelings and their external actions. It also knows of their thoughts and actions in the past that determine the present ones, not only in this life but of all prior lives.

Reason is based on a limited number of variables, while omniscience takes them all into consideration. Through reason we often speculate on the future, while omniscience knows the future because it is omnipresent across all events in time.

Possible Limitations of Divine Omniscience

As part of a scientific world, modern philosophers of religion tend to be critical and challenge traditional religious ideas more than the philosophers of the Middle Ages did. Concerning omniscience they ask the following three challenging questions:

1) How can Brahman-God understand negative feelings like hate and misery? One definition of omniscience is that Brahman-God has complete understanding of the true, the good that includes love, and the blissful. In addition to that a broader definition of omniscience also includes a complete understanding of truth and untruth, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil, love and hate, strength and weakness, and bliss and misery. Extending the definition of omniscience would also include a perfect internal psychological experiential understanding of ignorance and doubt, sadistic evil, hate, weakness and fear, and intense pain. A paradox is how can an all-knowing, omnibenevolent, all loving, omnipotent, and blissful Divine Mind experience these negative characteristics that are the result of a limitation of power? They are incompatible with Divine perfection and holiness. Does Brahman-God possess "Total Omniscience"? This would mean that It would understand the world in a Divine way as pure Spirit and at the same time in the way that every human, and animal including insects experiences it. If this is the case then It would know what hate, unhappiness, etc. are like. This is a debatable subject.

We can have these negative experiences because of our limitations. While our memory of extreme pain, etc. is imperfect, memory is always perfect for an omniscient Being. To be omniscient and fully understand an insane person, does Brahman-God think and feel exactly as that person does? In these examples omniscience appears to imply a logical contradiction. Is this knowledge impersonal and objective or personal and subjective? There is a distinction between feeling someone else's feelings and having those feelings as one's own. We can remember the pain of a burning sensation without feeling any misery, since our memory is but a faint copy of the original experience. But we must have first felt the burning sensation to know what it is like.¹³¹ The Divine Mind would not be burdened by these apparent contradictions if it is "Wholly Other" and operates in a manner that

is incomprehensible to us. Does Brahman-God gain this understanding by grasping abstract ideas or intellectual forms? In this case Its mode of knowing is so different from ours, it is difficult to conceive of how It would operate.

2) Are Divine foreknowledge and free will compatible? According to one view if the omniscient Divine Mind has infallible foreknowledge of future human events, then those happenings must be determined and people have no free will choices concerning their actions. As Vivekananda explained, “Therefore we see at once that there cannot be any such thing as free will; the very words are a contradiction, because will is what we know and everything that we know is within our universe, and everything within our universe is molded by the conditions of space, time, and causation. Everything that we know, or can possibly know, must be subject to causation, and that which obeys the law of causation cannot be free.”¹³² We have free will in the sense that we have the freedom to select from a number of alternatives, but the choices we make are determined. Hence, humans have a determined will not a free will. Our actions appear to be free because we do not know the content of our unconscious and subconscious mind. If we had access to this information we would realize that their content (along with our conscious mind) determine our choices. Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) taught that what appear to be free actions are self-determined and contingent, not due to an external agent or entity. Yet they are determined by the nature and the prior states of the person.¹³³ Intellectually through reason we can realize that we have no freewill, but it is difficult to realize it existentially because we are hardwired to think we are the doer. If an omniscient Brahman-God has foreknowledge of future events this means the future is already fixed.

The alternative conception is that Brahman-God has foreknowledge of acts that occurred if they were determined or if they were the result of free will. For example, an astronomer knows the future positions of the planets without having control over them. Foreknowledge is not necessarily foreordination. This idea receives support from five different ideas.

First, is that Brahman-God lives in the “Eternal Now,” a temporal singularity where all time is condensed into a single moment without succession. A timeless Brahman-God has no temporal restrictions concerning what for us is foreknowledge, since It is contemporaneous with every temporal event. Transcending time and space, It knows all things at once by a single cognition. This is especially the case if Brahman-God is the cause of time.

Second, is that temporally omnipresent Brahman-God always occupies every possible location in time: what is for us the past, present, and future. It is not time-bound with a single temporal location the way we are. If It gained new knowledge as new events occur, Its prior knowledge would have been incomplete. Consequently, It has what is from our frame of reference foreknowledge since It exists in a temporal realm that is present from Its frame of reference and future for our frame of reference. What we consider to be the future is the present for Brahman-God. It and Divine causation pervade light, which they created and ontologically precede. Consequently, It can travel faster than the speed of light and is everywhere at once. If quantum event causation or thought pervades light at a more subtle level, they would not be bound by the speed of light.

Third, Vivekananda writes, “The past and future, though not existing in a manifested form, yet exist in a fine form.”¹³⁴ In this sense omnipresent Brahman-God is located everywhere in time since it exists in and has omniscient knowledge of both the realm of manifested and fine form. There are some human clairvoyants who have some knowledge of future events in a limited area of activity. It does not matter whether these events were the result of free will or determinism.

Fourth, if Brahman-God exists in another time frame then It can enter into our time frame at any location within it including what is future for us.

Fifth, An omniscient Being can know the future in detail because Brahman-God has complete understanding of the causes of these events that follow the law-like principles of Divine reason. This assumes that free will follows a law-like process. In a way, it is like an astronomer who understands the laws of planetary motion and knows where these heavenly bodies will be positioned in the future though this differs in that they do not have free will.

These five ideas go against Open Theism that teaches because God has granted humanity free will, the future free will choices people will make are not known ahead of time by God. If God knows beforehand what choices we will make, then we are not free to make a contrary choice and we do not have free will. Since the future has not already occurred, much of it is unknowable even to an omniscient God.¹³⁵

If we have a determined will and not a free will, then this is due to an omnipotent Brahman-God being the First Cause of all events that occur in the universe. It contains a Divine Mind consisting of ideas that will become all past, present, and future events for us.

According to the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535-1600) an omniscient God possesses “Middle Knowledge” of what the results would have been if any possible event had occurred. God’s “Middle Knowledge” also includes foreknowledge of which free actions each person would perform under every possible circumstance. Having this knowledge God knows which circumstances to bring into existence to bring the desirable result.¹³⁶

Omniscience requires that Brahman-God knows not only what will occur in the future, but also possesses counterfactual knowledge of what would have occurred if another event that didn’t happen had taken place. For example in 1939, an Omniscient being not only had foreknowledge what would occur during World War II, but also the understanding of what would have occurred if the following years if there had been no war. Concerning this type of counterfactual history we can only speculate if there was no World War II what the results would have been. Counterfactual history attempts to answer the question “What if” some other event had occurred. Its main limitation is that it is speculative in nature. This is different from a controlled experiment where one group gets the medicine and the other does not, and then the researcher compares the results.

3) Can a timeless Being comprehend events within time? According to Thomas Aquinas from a timeless eternity, God knows in a durationless instant everything in their minutest detail about the past, present, and future. A perfect and omniscient Brahman-God must know absolutely, necessarily, unchangingly, and infinitely all that there is to be known. Having no temporal location, no phase of Its life is prior to any other phase of it. Being both timeless and immutable, a sequence of events is known simultaneously all at once, not in succession (*tota simul*).¹³⁷

In response to Aquinas’ views, modern religious philosophers ask the question, how is it possible for a simple, timeless, and immutable Brahman-God to be omniscient?¹³⁸ Not being a part of the temporal process, can It have a perfect comprehension of the time-sequence and understanding of different temporal perspectives? How can a timeless Being have any idea what time is, that temporal events occur sequentially one after another, or know the difference between the past, present, and future? Can Brahman-God know the difference between before and after, or between 5 and 6 o’clock without some understanding of time? How can a timeless Brahman-God work within the world of time? Can a changeless Brahman-God produce or have a perfecting understanding of what change is? Since knowledge changes over time, does Brahman-God have to change to be the knower

of this?¹³⁹ Does It know temporal things timelessly, the changeable unchangeably, the material immaterially, the composite simply, and propositions nonpropositionally? To be omniscient would It have to understand time and change the way we do?¹⁴⁰

In addition, can a timeless immutable Being have any thoughts whatsoever? The act of knowing requires time to manifest. Certainly human thought is impossible without duration. Can a timeless Being remember, anticipate, or deliberate, all of which require time? Our idea of knowledge involves complexity, change, time, and parts. In other words, for all this to be possible the mode of understanding of a simple-timeless-immutable Brahman-God would have to be totally different from ours. Can all ideas be condensed into a single idea? Knowing that, one would know everything.

An alternative view is that it is Nirguna Brahman, the Essence (Svarupa) of Brahman-God is timeless and Saguna Brahman, the Manifestation of Brahman-God is omniscient and omnipotent within the realm of space and time. These are two different realms and the characteristics of one is different from that of the other. A Simple Being cannot be omniscient since It has no thoughts that have diversified conceptual parts.

One might define omniscience in a limited manner. Three forms of omniscience: are Conceptual Omniscient of all concepts, propositions, and ideas, a complete intellectual understanding of everything; Perceptual Omniscience of all external events in the universe and of thoughts; and Feeling Omniscience of every possible feeling and emotional state of every living being. A qualified or limited definition of omniscience might be to have an abstract knowledge of pain or evil, and not a concrete sensual understanding of them. Or it could include one or two of these forms of omniscience, but not all three.

Another limited view of omniscience is that Brahman-God knows everything that is logically possible to know. Most Western thinkers (with the exception of Rene Descartes) believe that an omnipotent Brahman-God cannot violate the law of non-contradiction. That is It cannot: change the past like erasing the Second World War from history, create a round square on a two dimensional surface, make the part larger than the whole without changing the part, create a Being greater than Itself, etc. If Brahman-God can do this then there is a possibility that these worlds presently exist. This leads to the question, are there any logical limits to the Divine Mind's omniscience as there are for omnipotence, such as not violating the law of non-contradiction? Some religious philosophers believe the Divine Mind cannot

know future events or every personalized subjective experiences of every individual.

Being omniscient means the Divine Mind knows everything. If we have a problem, to seek a solution we should make an effort to approach Brahman-God who has full knowledge of our circumstances. Instead we do everything but that to alleviate the problem. Human reason cannot always know the Lord's intentions for us, since their reason is based on a limited number of variables-information-ideas with restricted knowledge of the future. Divine omniscience on the other hand is composed of unlimited variables-information-ideas to work with and has perfect knowledge of the future, and therefore might come out with a different solution to solve our problems than we would do.

Some religious philosophers believe Brahman-God does not have a complete understanding of the limitations of human existence. One of the reasons It incarnates is to get a better understanding of the human predicament. This way Brahman-God discovers what discomfort, lack of knowledge, and negative emotions are all about.¹⁴¹

5. Omnibenevolence (Sarvashreyas)

Indian: "Send us only what is good.... We with our hymns this day elect the God, Lord of the good, Savitar [the sun deity]" (RV 5:82.5, 7). "Our sin that sinless Varuna discovered" (RV 7:28.4). "The Great Lord is the ... Bringer of good" (Svet. Up. 6:5-6). "Abandon all dharmas [duties] and come to Me [Lord Krishna] alone for shelter. I will deliver you from all sins" (BG 18:66).

Old Testament: "Good and upright is the Lord" (Ps. 25:8). "For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever (Ps. 100:5). New Testament: "No one is good but God alone" (Lk. 18:19; cf. Mt. 19:17; Mk. 10:18). "For by grace you have been saved by faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God- not because of works" (Eph. 2:8; cf. 2:5; Rom. 3:24).

Sri Ramanuja asserted, "We know from Scripture that there is a Supreme Person whose nature is absolute bliss and goodness; who is fundamentally antagonistic to all evil; who is the cause of the origination, sustentation, and dissolution of the world; who differs in nature from all other beings, who is all-knowing, who by his mere thought and will accomplishes all his purposes; who is an ocean of kindness as it were for all who depend on him; who is all-merciful; who is

immeasurably raised above all possibility of any one being equal or superior to him; whose name is the highest Brahman.”¹⁴²

Vedantist Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) taught the creation of the world is a free act and self-imposed limitation of the Divine. It is the Divine play (lila) of God who finds great joy in the creative manifestation of the world. God created humans so He can love them, and they can be united to Him. “We feel that this world is a creation, that in its centre there is a living idea, which reveals itself in an eternal Sympathy played on innumerable instruments, all keeping perfect tunes.” God “the lover seeks his own other self in his beloved. It is joy that creates this separation in order to realize, through obstacles, the union.” The creator and creation are eventually united in the joy of love. In the heavenly state God and the liberated soul, become equal partners in the game of love and the experience of joy.¹⁴³

Vivekananda affirmed, “He is Ishvara—‘the Eternal, the Pure, the Ever-Free, the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-Merciful, the Teacher of all teachers’; and above all, ‘He the Lord is, of His own nature, inexpressible Love.’ These certainly are the definitions of a Personal God.” “The Divine Mother is the Kundalini (‘coiled up power) sleeping in us; without worshipping Her we can never know ourselves. All-merciful, all-powerful, omnipresent are attributes of Divine Mother. She is the sum total of the energy in the universe. Every manifestation of power in the universe is ‘Mother’ She is life, She is intelligence, She is Love.”¹⁴⁴

The Vedantic philosopher and mystic Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) writes that God as Sat-chit-ananda (Existence-consciousness-bliss) following His inherent nature, creates the universe out of the sheer blissful joy of the Self-manifestation of His Divine Nature. For God, creating and governing the universe in its many diverse forms is a Divine sport or play. Lila the Divine play is Brahman’s (God’s) “perpetually inexhaustible, creating and recreating Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation.” Creation of the world is “a free self-unfolding or self-expression of God.... a play of self-concealing and self-finding ... a play of extreme attractiveness.” It is a drama that unfolds “for the amusement of the Divine Being.” L. Stafford Betty interprets Aurobindo this way, “It is as if God in His play wills to experience reality simultaneously from an infinite number of angles instead of from, or rather in addition to, His vantage point at the center of and identical with all Reality.” In the act of creating, Sat-chit-ananda is not motivated by duty or any form of privation. Out of infinite possibilities, God creates specific actualities following a definite Divine plan. Fortunately, there is a teleological end of

the world play, which ends in the universal sanctification of all people.¹⁴⁵

The Western Perspective

It was formulated by Thomas Aquinas that, “The goodness of God, therefore, is not something added to His substance; His substance is His goodness.... We must, therefore, reach some first good, that is not by participation good through an order toward some other good, but is good through its own Essence. This is God. God is, therefore, His own goodness.... For that which participates in potency, and being is an act. But God is Being Itself, as we have proved. He is not, therefore, by participation good; He is good essentially.”¹⁴⁶ “Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea.”¹⁴⁷ “That which is the highest good is, from the highest point of view, the end of all things. But there is only one highest good and this is God ... So all things are ordered to one good, as their end, and this is God.”¹⁴⁸ “Good is attributed to God, as was said, inasmuch as all desired perfections flow from Him as the first cause.... Everything is therefore called good from the Divine goodness, as from the first exemplary, effective and final principle of all goodness. Nevertheless, everything is called good by reason of the likeness of the Divine goodness belonging to it.”¹⁴⁹ “If natural things, in so far as they are perfect, communicate their good to others, much more does it pertain to the Divine will to communicate by likeness Its own good to others as much as possible.”¹⁵⁰ Consequently, “All things desire God as their end in desiring any particular good ... for nothing is good and desirable except inasmuch as it participates in the likeness to God.”¹⁵¹ “The entire universe, with each of its parts, is ordered toward God as its end, in so far as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine goodness ... Divine goodness is the end of all corporeal things.”¹⁵² With understanding that is more adequate, a descriptive term like goodness is predicated primarily to God and only secondarily to creatures, because it is perfectly manifested in God and only to a limited extent in creatures. To ascribe goodness to God is more than saying that God is not bad or that He is the creator of goodness, but rather that God is Goodness-Itself. Descriptive terms like the highest good and first being “express such perfection along with the mode of supereminence with which they belong to God are said of God alone.” They “signify a perfection without defect.”¹⁵³

Aquinas articulates that God does not arbitrarily decide if an act is moral or immoral. Nor is the moral law something separate from God, but is a manifestation of the Divine Essence. His commentator Frederick Copleston, S.J. (1907-94)

explains Aquinas's idea, "We must not imagine that God is subject to the moral law, as something apart from Himself.... He wills it because He loves Himself, the supreme Good, and because He cannot be inconsistent with Himself. The moral law is thus ultimately founded on the Divine Essence itself and so cannot change. God wills it certainly, but it does not depend on any arbitrary act of the Divine will.... God is Himself the supreme Value and the source and measure of all value: values depend on Him, but in the sense that they are participations or finite reflections of God, not in the sense that God arbitrarily confers on them their character as values."¹⁵⁴

A Discussion of the Subject

The question arises is Brahman-God's conception of goodness different from that of the human intellect? If Divine goodness were entirely different from ours, then Brahman-God's goodness would be unintelligible to us. Consequently, we consider the relationship between human and Divine good to be analogous, rather than univocal or equivocal. Omnibenevolence implies that Brahman-God is morally perfect in every possible way, both in regards to Itself and in relation to others. Its omnibenevolence can never be lost. Since the Divine Nature is morally perfect, the desires, character traits, and action that proceed from It must be perfectly good as well. It is therefore not subject to temptation or any possible moral weakness. Due to Its perfect Divine Nature, It exists necessarily and is essentially good. Therefore, It cannot under any circumstances not be good, which would be contrary to Its inner nature. It is Goodness-Itself and always necessarily wills what is compatible with Its own impeccable Divine Nature. Brahman-God is necessarily good and acts in accordance with all the moral principles. Its moral perfection consists in perfectly fulfilling all of Its duties. It is the source and exemplar of human goodness. Following the logic of Shankara and Aquinas quoted in the Perfection section, there are degrees of virtues such as goodness, and there is a highest good, a "super-eminent," a "maximum" upper limit which is Brahman-God. Brahman-God's essential properties unlike ours are maximal such as omnibenevolence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Maximal properties of Brahman-God are immutable, while degreed properties of the world are mutable.

Divine Transcendence implies Brahman-God's qualitative difference from created beings and the objects of our experience. In virtue of Its relation to the universe, Brahman-God has duties shared by no one else (e.g., to preserve the

creation) of which we have a limited understanding. In this sense Divine goodness is ontologically different from human goodness. Its nature manifests first through the Divine Intellect and Divine Feelings, then the Divine Will, and finally through Divine Actions. Being perfectly good by nature, it is impossible that It should command us to act in ways that are not for the best. Since Brahman-God is the supreme standard of moral value, we should attempt to imitate the nature of Brahman-God in whatever way we can.

The law of non-contradiction and laws of logic, reason, and morality are not something apart from and independent of Brahman-God that It must obey. They are each grounded in and part of Its Essential Nature and therefore cannot be other than what they are. Brahman-God's intellect, feelings, will, and actions are not arbitrary, but identical with and inseparable from Its Essence (Nature). As eternally true Its inherent essential qualities are not subject to change. They are self-existent and partake of the unchanging nature of the Necessary Being, though their empirical manifestations are subject to variation.¹⁵⁵

The “Euthyphro Dilemma” is found in Plato’s dialogue Euthyphro. There Socrates asks, “Is the good affirmed by the gods because it is good, or is it good because the gods decides it to be so?” Stated by Leibniz, “Does God command this particular action because it is morally right, or is it morally right because God commands it?” In other words, which is ontologically prior God or the Good? Are moral standards right or wrong in themselves independent of God's commands? If one answers that God affirms the good that is separate from Himself because it is objectively good then He participates in “the good.” God is not sovereign but is bound by the laws of morality instead of being their establisher. God would not be omnipotent but would be limited by moral standards and have to make commands in accordance with them. He would be dependent upon and subservient to the good and have to follow its dictates to be moral. If goodness did not exist, God could not be good. Similarly, if reason is independent of God, He would be subservient to it and to be rational would have to conform to its rules.

Alternatively, if one can answer from the standpoint of Divine Command Ethics, according to which acts are right or wrong solely because God commands or forbids them. According to the critics of this idea, in this case goodness is arbitrary since God might make hatred and theft meritorious acts. Morality is not true necessarily since its standards could change radically if God so willed them to do so. In opposition to the critics, God is perfectly and essentially good so His commandments must be good and cannot be harmful. Sin is due to ignorance, but

God is omniscient and can only will the good.¹⁵⁶

A more sensible alternative is to realize that the dilemma falsely assumes that Saguna Brahman-Personal God and the Good are two separate entities. They are two different aspects of the same Perfection. If goodness were separate from Brahman-God, It would participate in it, and would be influenced by it and thus not fully independent. If goodness did not exist Brahman-God could not have this virtue. For more details see: Section 9. Saguna Brahman is Identical With All Divine Entities where it is stated that the Highest Reality is both a person (Brahman-God) and a principle (Goodness).

In the creative process Brahman-God transforms into space, time, and causality. For example, if time were something apart from the Personal Brahman-God, then It would be subservient to time and have to adjust Its life to it. The Divine Being would no longer be Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18) or “All in All” (1 Cor. 15:28, KJ). All that is good is an imitation of Brahman-God’s nature. This criterion for morality provides an objective foundation upon which all ethics standards are based. Most important, only things and actions in agreement with Brahman-God’s nature are morally good. Believing in a moral order in the universe should motivate a person to be more moral.¹⁵⁷ If properties like goodness (and wisdom and power) are not identical with Brahman-God, then It is dependent upon things other than Itself. They would have to exist before It can exemplify them. This is a violation of the principle of aseity (Divine independence).

Nirguna Brahman the Essence of God transcends knowledge, power, and goodness and therefore ontologically precedes them. Saguna Brahman the Personal God is identical with power, knowledge, and goodness.

For Plato the Forms-Ideas exist separate from God as independent entities with their own objective ontological status. Augustine (354-430) and later Anselm (1033-1109) identified the Platonic Forms such as goodness, justice, courage, etc. as ideas in the mind of God.¹⁵⁸ For them these standards of ontological perfection cannot exist in an independent realm apart from the Divine Mind. The mind of God is identical with God and therefore the Platonic Forms-Ideas, and knowledge, power, and goodness are identical with God.

From the dualistic point of view Goodness, Religious Scripture, the Eternal Truths, etc. are part of the Divine Mind and Divine Nature. They are created by Saguna Brahman-God as aspects of the universe and are under His/Her control. Its goodness is through Its own Essence, and not from participation in something external. Saguna Brahman-God is essentially good by nature, meaning there is

nothing arbitrary about His commands and it is not possible for Brahman-God to command us to act in ways that are not for the best.

Our knowledge of the goodness of earthly things provides some positive knowledge of Divine goodness, and philosophically affirms the dependence of earthly morality on Brahman-God. We seek goodness, kindness, love, knowledge, truth, and joy because they originate from Brahman-God their source, the first and final cause of existence that ultimately draws a soul to the Lord. Consequently, whenever a person engages in these values they participate to some extent in Brahman-God, who is identical with these characteristics. The Divine Being judges a human action to be good if it participates in Its goodness. Since there is an analogical (not equivocal) relationship between Divine and human goodness, participation is always partial. Whatever is in harmony with Brahman-God's Nature is morally good, which provides human ethics with an objective moral standard. Contra William of Ockham, an evil act could never be made good or morally obligatory because it is opposed to Brahman-God's Divine Nature. Since It is the highest good, the greatest good for a human is to know and love Brahman-God and to live in Its presence.

Brahman-God might have the potential power to perform an evil act, but has the perfect purified will not to exercise that power.¹⁵⁹ For an impeccable Brahman-God to commit an evil act is a paradoxical logical contradiction. There are three defective causes of an evil action, ignorance (lack of understanding), weakness (lack of willpower), and dissatisfaction (lack of happiness). An omniscient, omnipotent, and omniblissful Being does not possess these negative traits. Thus, being omniscient It knows what is good in every case, and being omnipotent It cannot sin, since It is not under the control of any negative external or internal forces. Brahman-God has perfect freedom, since It is internally omnipotent with a will that is not motivated by internal selfish desires and there is nothing external to It that can constrain Its action. Its volitional goodness arising from Its perfect nature is not itself causally determined by any independent entity.

An extrinsic Brahman-God is omniblissful living in a perfectly blissful state not subject to any negative emotions. It is passible to love and bliss and feels compassion for human suffering. It is like a person who feels compassion for a suffering individual, but does not feel the actual pain itself. A Personal Brahman-God must be perfect in love and compassion sensitive to the joys and sufferings of people. It experiences the positive emotion of love, but not the physical or mental discomfort associated with pain and sorrow. It is involved in personal relations with

people and sensitive to their situation, which It takes into account when responding to them.

While Christians emphasize the goodness of God, Vedantists place more stress on the bliss (Ananda) of Brahman.¹⁶⁰

Summarizing what has been stated in Sections 2 through 5, for each of these four attributes the generic explanations are for omnipresent (P-presence), omnipotence (A-all-powerful), omniscience (K-knowledge), and omnibenevolent (G-goodness) in relation to Brahman-God (B-G):

- 1) B-G is PAKG-Itself (e.g., Knowledge-Itself, etc.).

- 2a) B-G is PAKG through Its own Essence, not by participation;
- b) The PAKG of all things are derived from B-G's very nature;
- c) PAKG are not something separate from B-G added to Its nature;
- d) B-G is simple (undivided), therefore Its PAKG are identical;
- e) PAKG in B-G are one and undivided without multiplicity and are identical with the Divine Essence;
- f) Being undivided, B-G's entire being exists in all forms of PAKG.

- 3a) B-G is the background and substratum that pervades and interpenetrates all PAKG;
- b) The entire universe is pervaded by B-G, the inner ruler that abides within all PAKG and does so in order to maintain them;
- c) Being omnipresent all PAKG is within B-G;
- d) B-G is within all PAKG.

- 4) B-G dwells in a higher Transcendent dimension that encompasses all lesser dimensions including all PAKG.

- 5a) There is nothing outside of or prior to Infinite B-G (including space, time, and law) on which Its existence depends or can act on or limit Its PAKG;
- b) An infinite B-G encompasses everything including all PAKG.

- 6a) All of existence is a fragment of the Universal Body and Mind;
- b) We are all fragments or modes of B-G's PAKG, under Its control and absolutely dependent on It;

c) All entities are controlled and supported by B-G's PAKG because they are Its parts;

d) The sum total of all PAKG, not the human alone, is B-G the Totality of all existence that is moving the universe.

7a) All forms of PAKG are manifestations or reflections of B-G to varying degrees;

b) Creatures exist only in as far as they participate in B-G's PAKG.

8a) There are varying manifestations, degrees, and gradations of PAKG, and for each there must be a highest and perfect limit (omni), which are the attributes of B-G;

b) Everything manifests PAKG to a limited degree only because of its likeness to the Divine.

9a) Ontologically B-G precedes all PAKG as their first cause being the source of everything;

b) B-G the first cause that is not bound by any law, (or creates the law) creates PAKG;

c) B-G is the first uncaused universal cause under which all secondary causes including PAKG are included and subject to It as their creator, preserver, and destroyer;

d) B-G is entirely present in all PAKG as the universal cause and knower of all things;

e) All things are subject to B-G's PAKG, both in their general and individual aspect;

f) All laws and forces in the world exist only because B-G's PAKG establishes and maintains them.

10) All PAKG are ordered to B-G the final cause, the supreme good, which is their end.

11a) PAKG are determined by B-G, not by Its created objects;

b) PAKG are not self-caused in a temporal sense because they would have to exist prior to themselves to create themselves.

12a) B-G's PAKG are eternal, without beginning nor acquired from another source;

b) B-G created time, which is required to manifest PAKG;

c) By a single all-embracing act, B-G directs PAKG toward all objects at all times.

13) B-G is perfect in every way.

14a) B-G is wholly present everywhere without being confined to any specific PAKG;

b) B-G is the sum total of existence including all PAKG;

c) Because of Brahman (God's) omnipresence, Its PAKG extends to all people and all events.

6. Personal

Vivekananda states, "According to the dualists, again, this God is personal in that He has qualities, not that He has a body. He has human attributes; He is merciful, He is just, He is powerful, He is almighty, He can be approached, He can be prayed to, He can be loved, He loves in return, and so forth. In one word, He is a human God, only infinitely greater than man; He has none of the evil qualities which men have. 'He is the repository of an infinite number of blessed qualities'--that is their definition." "He from whom this universe proceeds, in whom it rests, and to whom it returns, He is Ishvara, the Eternal, the Pure, the All-Merciful, the Almighty, the Ever-Free, the All-Knowing, the Teacher of all teachers, the Lord who of His own nature is inexpressible Love."¹⁶¹

Swami Vireswarananda (1892-1985) the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order wrote, "In the *Gita* the Personal God is given more prominence than the impersonal. 'Personal' does not mean merely 'having form,' it means also the formless aspect with attributes, the Ishvara, as He is called in the *Gita*. The term 'personality' refers to a self-conscious being capable of knowing, feeling, willing, loving, and satisfying man's longing for a personal relationship. All human qualities are attributed to the Divine Personality, but they are free from all human limitations. Thus, He not only knows, but He is omniscient. ... When we think of God as inactive He is impersonal, and when He is active He is called Ishvara, the Personal God, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, the father, mother, friend, Lord, supporter, abode, refuge, and goal. This universe is pervaded by Him in His unmanifest form. He exists supporting the whole universe with a portion of Himself. Thus He is both immanent and transcendent. He is seated in the heart of all beings, controlling them from within. There is nothing higher than He. Just as He

supports this whole universe as its cause, even so He supports the differentiated things as their very essence.... This mystery of *maya* veils Him from ordinary mortals, but those who surrender themselves to Him surmount this *maya*. Those who take refuge in Him and strive for liberation know that supreme Brahman, the Impersonal, through the grace of the Lord. Again, this universe of sentient and insentient beings is the manifest form of the formless Ishvara, for He has become all this.... This universe being a manifest form of the Lord, He is immanent in all things, and as such they are symbols of God. In certain things, however, the manifestation of His power, is greater, which makes them far superior to other objects of that class.”¹⁶²

Concerning the Personal God Arthur Peacocke (1924-2006) the Cambridge and Oxford University Theologian and Biochemist envisioned, “Although God is, in some sense, supra-personal, we may well expect in the personal that is, in persons, in history, in personal experience, in personal encounter - to find meanings of God unveiled in a way not possibly communicated by the meanings God has written into non-human, impersonal levels of existence. The level of the personal (with all its uniqueness, new language, non-reducible concepts, new modes of experiencing, etc.) allows expression of new aspects of the meaning and purpose God is expressing in creation which could only be incompletely expressed, if at all, through the non-personal, and historically earlier levels. The more personal and self-conscious is the entity in which God is immanent, the more capable is it of expressing God's supra-personal characteristics and the more God can be immanent personally in that entity.”¹⁶³

Richard Swinburne at Oxford in England writes that a theist believes that there is a God who is “something like a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who is eternal, free, able to do anything, knows everything, is perfectly good, is the proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe.”¹⁶⁴

Philip Clayton of Claremont Divinity School in Southern California adds, we “use language for the Divine that is not-less-than-personal. It suggests a Divinity that is not inferior in agency to human agents, but rather one that infinitely transcends all forms of finite agency—a creative Divine, and hence, perhaps, a providential God as well.... Since it is incoherent to imagine that the ultimate ground or spiritual reality is less than what it has produced, and it clearly isn't merely a human person, we are justified in conceiving It as supra-personal.... the

relationship between God and humans is the person-to-person relationship, rather than the relation of impersonal forces or deterministic causes. ‘God relates to us as one person relates to other persons,’ it is often said, even if God remains infinitely more than ‘just a person.’ ... The key modern resource for the theology of Spirit is the switch from substantialist thinking to a subject-based ontology. During this period, the Spirit came to be linked in the first place with human subjects and with their experience. This a tremendous transformation from the medieval period, where the Spirit represented an objective metaphysical principle ... The Spirit, which in the Middle Ages had served as a principle of demarcation between the human and superhuman, the natural and supernatural, now became the principle of unity between the two, the basic principle of all being. We exist as Spirit and pervasively in Spirit. Spirit now becomes the basic ontological category, that which unites all living things.”¹⁶⁵

“A 2008 survey by the Pew Research Center reported that, of U.S. adults, 60% view that ‘God is a person with whom people can have a relationship,’ while 25% believe that ‘God is an impersonal force.’ A 2008 survey by the National Opinion Research Center reports that 67.5% of U.S. adults believe in a Personal God.”¹⁶⁶

A Personal Brahman-God is worshipped in all of the major religions of the world. One reason is that there is an analogical relationship between our finite self and the supreme Self. According to Philosophical Theism Its characteristics are being omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, omniblissful, omnitemporal (eternal); and both transcendent and immanent, both creating and being actively involved in the world. It is a living being conscious of Its own existence; having the ability to think rationally, remember, reflect, decide, and perceive; act intentionally bringing about various states of affairs, responding to situations, and is endowed with volition; has emotional feelings, including love; is engaged in inter-personal relations and communication with others; and is temporal. Brahman-God makes choices based on Its own determination and is free to do whatever It chooses. It not only has the capacity for these functions, but is actively engaged in them.¹⁶⁷

None of these characteristics were created but are part of Its Essential Nature. Can we say Brahman-God is more than a person but is Personhood-Itself? If being a person was not part of Brahman-God’s nature, It would be limited in Its capacity. Since God is the ground of all that constitutes our personhood, we must say that God is not less than personal.

Brahman-God communicates His/Her will and purpose to humanity through the Avatara-Divine Incarnations and their associates, prophets, sages, mystics, yogis, and saints. It is the source of the scriptural revelation that teaches that Brahman-God is personal. He/She is passible expressing feelings and emotions for the benefit of humanity. This way we get some idea of what the Lord is like. But the relationship is only analogous, Brahman-God does not experience these emotions in the same way we do.

A Personal Brahman-God is worthy of worship being wholly good, having inherent moral perfection, and is unlimited in power. An anthropomorphic God possess the most sublime qualities.¹⁶⁸ A devotee can establish an intimate personal spiritual relationship with a Brahman-God who has the power of liberation-salvation. From It the devotee receives guidance concerning what they should and should not do. We possess the capacity to know and love our creator and can relate to It as a friend, servant, or as a son or daughter. The person who realizes Brahman-God is never lonely in the world since It is full of compassion and merciful loving kindness. We should follow the moral teachings and commands of Brahman-God by living a virtuous and pious life.

The Christian Trinity is composed of three persons (hypostases), the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One substance (Greek ousia, Latin substantia) is manifested in all three Persons. In the Pentateuch, God talks with and instructs His prophets and possesses volition, emotions, intention, and other attributes characteristic of a person.

As a note of caution Vivekananda mentioned the danger of placing too much emphasis on the person, “The glory of Krishna is not that he was Krishna, but that he was the great teacher of Vedanta. If he had not been so, his name would have died out of India in the same way as the name of Buddha has done. Thus our allegiance is to the principles always, and not to the persons. Persons are but the embodiments, the illustrations of the principles.”¹⁶⁹

For most people it is easiest to worship Brahman-God as a person, but this does not appeal to everyone. If an atheist or agnostic does not like the word God, they can think of this omnipotent and omniscient power as the first cause, ultimate reality, or the source of existence including their own. This source is far greater than we are having maximal power and knowledge. Through meditation we can make some contact with this power that will make us a transformed person. For example, while Albert Einstein rejected a Personal God, he referred to his belief system as “cosmic religion.” He recognized a “miraculous order which manifests

itself in all of nature as well as in the world of ideas.” A cosmic religion is necessary for science. He wrote, “I have nothing but awe when I observe the laws of nature. There are not laws without a lawgiver, but how does this lawgiver look? Certainly not like a man magnified.”¹⁷⁰ It is possible for an atheist to be more religious than some churchgoing people. In loving knowledge, truth, or goodness without realizing it, they are worshipping Brahman-God.

While atheism is the denial of the existence of Brahman-God, anti-theism is a deliberate opposition to theism. Anti-theists regard theism as destructive as in the case of religious wars and violence or inquisitions, and as irrational in asserting ancient ideas that are no longer held by modern science. Of course they overlook the good theism has done in promoting moral behavior.

7. Luminosity (Paramjyoti, Prakasha)

Indian: “The sun does not shine there, nor the moon ... When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light everything is lighted” (Mun. Up. 2:2.10; cf. Br. Up. 4:3.6; Kat. Up. 2:2.15; Svet. Up. 6:14; BG 8:9). “I know the great Purusha [Atman], who is luminous, like the sun, and beyond darkness” (Svet. Up. 3:8; cf. Ch. Up. 3:17.7; BG* 13:17, p. 136). “The Atman is the light: the light is covered by darkness. This darkness is delusion.... When the light of the Atman drives out the darkness that light shines forth from us, a sun in splendor” (BG* 5:15-16, p. 73; cf. 13:33).

Old Testament: “Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, O Lord” (Ps. 4:6; cf. 89:15)! “In thy light do we see light” (Ps. 36:9). “Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me” (Ps. 43:3). New Testament: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (Jn. 1:5, KJ). “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5). “The city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light” (Rev. 21:23; cf. 22:5).

For Shankara cognitive and perceptual sense knowledge are discerned through the pure light of Brahman-Atman, whose essential nature is self-luminous (svaprakasha) and self-revealing, like a lamp that illumines an object. Because Brahman (God) is self-luminous, everything else shines. “That reality [Atman] sees everything by Its own light. No one sees it. It gives intelligence to the mind and the

intellect, but no one gives it light.... The universe shines with its reflected light. That reality pervades the universe, but no one penetrates it. It alone shines. It is consciousness itself.”¹⁷¹ “The eye and the other organs receive their powers of vision and so forth only by being inspired by the energy of Brahman; by themselves, divested of the light of the Atman that is Pure Intelligence, they are like wood or clods of earth.”¹⁷² Brahman-Atman is directly reflected without an intervening mode on the human mind, which undergoes modifications that perceive objects and produce thoughts. Like a crystal that absorbs physical light, the mind receives the light of consciousness from Brahman. The mind is like a mirror that reflects objects and it thereby becomes conscious of them. “He (the Lord) alone and nothing else can be that luminous principle. It is proper to deny that they [i.e., the sun] can have any illumination even in respect of Brahman: for whatever is perceived is perceived through the light that is Brahman, but Brahman is not perceived through any other light. It being by nature self-effulgent.”¹⁷³ All human awareness is due to the light of consciousness of the self-luminous Brahman who is the Witness Self (Saksin). Brahman shines through all sense experiences and cognition, not as an object, but as the condition of the possibility of an object being known by the subject. Mind and intellect, derive their strength of intelligence from the illuminating light of Brahman. For this reason, cognitive understanding is self-revealing carrying its own certainty and self-validity.¹⁷⁴

Vivekananda covered the subject this way, “That which is self-luminous cannot decay. The luminosity of that which shines through a borrowed light comes and goes; but that which is light itself, what can make that come and go, flourish and decay? We see that the moon waxes and wanes, because it shines through the borrowed light of the sun. If a lump of iron is put into the fire and made red-hot, it glows and shines, but its light will vanish, because it is borrowed. So, decadence is possible only of that light which is borrowed and is not of its own Essence. Now we see that the body, the external shape, has no light as its own Essence, is not self-luminous, and cannot know itself; neither can the mind. Why not? Because the mind waxes and wanes, because it is vigorous at one time and weak at another, because it can be acted upon by anything and everything. Therefore the light which shines through the mind is not its own. whose is it then? It must belong to that which has it as its own Essence, and as such, can never decay or die, never become stronger or weaker; it is self-luminous, it is luminosity itself. It cannot be that the soul [Atman] knows, it is knowledge. It cannot be that the soul has existence, but it is existence. It cannot be that the soul is happy, it is happiness itself. That which is

happy has borrowed its happiness; that which has knowledge has received its knowledge; and that which has relative existence has only a reflected existence. Wherever there are qualities these qualities have been reflected upon the substance, but the soul has not knowledge, existence, and blessedness as its qualities, they are the Essence of the soul.... We see, then, that this human being is composed first of this external covering, the body; secondly, the finer body, consisting of mind, intellect, and egoism. Behind them is the real Self [Atman] of man. We have seen that all the qualities and powers of the gross body are borrowed from the mind, and the mind, the finer body, borrows its powers and luminosity from the Soul [Atman], standing behind.”¹⁷⁵ Vivekananda uses the word “borrows” and Westerners the term “participates in”

On this subject a brother disciple of Vivekananda, Swami Vijnanananda revealed, “One who can detach his mind from material things will see the effulgent light of Brahman and His presence in everything.... Whenever the mind becomes pure and holy by being detached from material things, it reflects the effulgent light of God.... Do you know what the light is? It is very sweet and soothing, representing joy and peace and enlightenment. That is light effulgent.... Beyond this universe lies that ocean of Divine light. It is through the grace of the great souls that we find our way to that Divine light. They help us to rise from the lower plane to the higher. Thus we get the inspiration to cross 'the seas of the material world' and move into the ocean of Divine light.”¹⁷⁶

Concerning Divine luminosity, Swami Satprakashananda (1888-1979) of the Ramakrishna Order stationed in St. Louis, Missouri ascertained that Brahman as Atman is the luminous Self, which directs the human mind from within. Atman manifests as the inner light, the fundamental principle of consciousness that is objectified in all mental activities. Shining through all mental operations, the self-effulgent Supreme Reality is the immutable light of Pure Consciousness and the omnipresent ground of cognition. “It is the light that reveals itself in every form of cognition. Nay, it shines through all mental operations and through all functions of the sensory and motor organs.”¹⁷⁷ “Being composed of the subtlest and most transparent substance and closest to the Self [Atman], mind (antahkarana) receives the light of consciousness that belongs to the Self and is illuminated by it. With no light of its own it appears luminous. It seems to cognize, though it is not a cognizer but only an instrument of cognition. A crystal looks bright because of the light it absorbs, an iron ball glows with fire that permeates it; similarly, minds shine with borrowed light of consciousness.... The light of consciousness radiating from

the mind enables the motor-organs to function. All external perceptions, all actions, are due to the radiance of consciousness received by the organs from the luminous Self (Atman) through the mind.... It is the light that reveals itself in every form of cognition. Nay, it shines through all mental operations and through all functions of the sensory and motor organs.”¹⁷⁸ “The same unvarying light of Pure Consciousness that the witness-Self is, illumines the mental mode of cognition, whether perceptual, inferential, or verbal. In each case, the cognitive mode conforms to the object cognized and manifests it to the cognizer directly or indirectly.”¹⁷⁹ We have knowledge only because of the luminous Self, which simultaneously reveals the cognizer [knower], object cognized [known], and the cognition [knowing].¹⁸⁰

The Church Father St. Augustine (354-430) from North Africa and Rome revealed, “I entered into the secret closet of my soul, led by Thee ... and beheld with the mysterious eye of my soul the Light that never changes, above the eye of my soul, above my intelligence.... It was higher because it made me, and I was lower because [I was] made by it.”¹⁸¹ Augustine’s conception is explained by Frederick Copleston, S.J. (1907-94). “This Divine light, which illuminates the mind, comes from God, who is the ‘intelligible light,’ in whom and by whom and through whom all those things which are luminous to the intellect become luminous. [Augustine wrote,] ‘When directed to intelligible things in the natural order, according to the disposition of the Creator, it sees them in a certain incorporeal light which is *sui generis*, just as the corporeal eye sees adjacent objects in the corporeal light.’ These words seem to show that the illumination in question is a spiritual illumination which performs the same function for the objects of the mind as the sun’s light performs for the object of the eye: in other words, as the sunlight makes corporeal things visible to the eye so the Divine illumination makes the eternal truths visible to the mind.... why did St. Augustine postulate such an illumination; why did he think it necessary? Because the human mind is changeable and temporal, so that what is unchangeable and eternal transcends it and seems to be beyond its capacity.... We need, therefore, a Divine illumination, in order to enable us to apprehend what transcends our minds, ‘for no creature, howsoever rational and intellectual, is lighted of itself, but is lighted by participation of eternal Truth.’”¹⁸²

Frederick Copleston wrote that the English Bishop Robert “Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253) taught that, “God is pure Light, the eternal Light (not in the corporeal

sense, of course), and the angels are also incorporeal lights, participating in the eternal Light. God is also the 'Form of all things,' but Grosseteste is careful to explain that God is not the form of all things as entering into their substance, uniting with their matter, but as their exemplary form.... From this it follows that no created truth can be perceived except in the light of the supreme Truth, God. Augustine bore witness to the fact that a created truth is visible only in so far as the light of its *ratio eterna* [eternal reason] is present to the mind. How is it, then, that the wicked and impure can attain truth? They cannot be supposed to see God, who is seen only by the pure of heart. The answer is that the mind does not perceive the Word or the *ratio eterna* directly, but perceives truth in the light of the Word. Just as the bodily eye sees corporeal objects in the light of the sun without looking directly at the sun or even perhaps adverting to it at all, so the mind perceives truth in the light of the Divine illumination without thereby perceiving God, the *Veritas summa* [sum of truth], directly or even without necessarily realizing at all that it is only in the Divine light that it sees truth.”¹⁸³

Discussing the ideas of Bonaventure (1221-74), Paul Tillich informs us, “The principles of truth are the Divine or eternal light within us. We start with them; we begin with our knowledge of God, and from this we go to the world, using the principles of the Divine light within us. This Divine light or these principles are the universal categories, especially the *transcendentalia*, those things which transcend everything concrete and given, such as being, the true, the good, the one. These are ultimate concepts of which we have immediate knowledge, and this knowledge is the Divine light in our soul. Only on the basis of this immediate knowledge of the ultimate principles of reality can we find truth in the empirical world. These principles are present in every act of knowing.... every act of cognition is made in the power of the Divine light. The Franciscans [of which Bonaventure was a member] said that this Divine light and these principles within us are uncreated, and we participate in them. Somehow this means that there is no such thing as secular knowledge. All knowledge is in some way rooted in; the knowledge of the Divine within us.... A mathematical proposition as well as a medical discovery is implicitly religious because it is possible only in the power of these ultimate principles which are the uncreated Divine light in the human soul. This is the famous doctrine of the inner light, which was also used by the sectarian movements and by all the mystics during the Middle Ages and the Reformation period.... from Augustine to Bonaventura we have a philosophy that is implicitly religious, or theonomous, in which God is not a conclusion from other premises, but prior to all

conclusions, making them possible. This is the philosophy which ... I call the ontological type; it can also be called the mystical type, the type of immediacy.”¹⁸⁴

The light of Brahman-God is necessary for all forms of perception and cognition, for both animals and humans. It is a matter of degree, whereby a quantitative change brings about a qualitative change, a new emergent. So we can say the reflection of the Divine light is greater for a genius than for an ordinary intellect, and is even more pronounced in the case of a spiritual than intellectual illumination.

Ramakrishna mentioned concerning the future Vivekananda that he saw a “fragment of his body and mind descending to earth in the form of a bright light.” Vivekananda’s mother said she “saw a Divine light emanating from the image of Shiva,” and it entered her womb. The question is why did his subtle body take the form of light? Why not some other physical element? Was this light imperceptible to the physical senses and perceptible only to someone with Divine sight?

8. Name (Nama)

Indian: “This syllable OM [AUM] is indeed Brahman. This syllable is the Highest. whoever knows this syllable obtains all that he desires” (Kat. Up. 1:2.16, cf. Mand. Up. 1:26, 28). “Verily nothing is more purifying than the holy name of God” (Bhagavatam 6:1).

Old Testament: “I extol thee, my God and King, and bless thy name forever and ever” (Ps. 145:1). New Testament: “Hallowed be thy name (Mk. 6:9). “I have manifested my name to the men whom thou gavest me ... Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou has given me... I have made known to them my name” (Jn. 17:6, 11, 26).

In the New Testament, demons were cast out by the power of His name (Mk. 9:38; Lk. 9:49), which is hallowed (Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2). Jesus will do what you ask in His name (Jn. 14:13-14). The name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be: called upon (1 Cor. 1:2), glorified in you (2 Thes. 1:12), not blasphemed (Jam. 2:7), and believed in (1 Jn. 3:23). In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we: are sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:11), should bow our knee (Phil. 2:10), and speak all words and perform all deeds (Col. 3:17).¹⁸⁵

Vivekananda specified, “In the *Bible* we read that the holy name of God was considered sacred beyond compare, holy beyond everything. It was the holiest of all names, and it was thought that this very Word was God. This is quite true. What is this universe but name and form? Can you think without words? Word and thought are inseparable. Try if any one of you can separate them. Whenever you think, you are doing so through word forms. The one brings the other; thought brings the word, and the word brings the thought. Thus the whole universe is, as it were, the external symbol of God, and behind that stands His grand name. Each particular body is a form, and behind that particular body is its name. As soon as you think of your friend So-and-so, there comes the idea of his body, and as soon as you think of your friend’s body, you get the idea of his name. This is in the constitution of man.”¹⁸⁶ “Form is the outer crust, of which the name or the idea is the inner essence or kernel” of the same entity.¹⁸⁷

The Swami continues, “The Lord first becomes conditioned as the Sphota [Logos, Sound-Brahman], and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This Sphota has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the [Sanskrit] Om [Aum]. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this Om and the eternal Sphota are inseparable; and, therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal Om, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created.... Again, all articulate sounds are produced in the space within the mouth beginning with the root of the tongue and ending in the lips—the throat sound is A, and M is the last lip sound, and the U exactly represents the rolling forward of the impulse which begins at the root of the tongue till it ends in the lips. If properly pronounced, this Om will represent the whole phenomenon of sound-production.”¹⁸⁸

Interestingly if we reverse the sound Aum (Om) we get Mua suggesting that the Mother reunites us with Brahman-God. There is a close connection between Brahman-God and Its name.

Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254) tells us, “But in fact certain sounds and syllables which are pronounced with or without aspiration, with either long or short vowel-sound, control those who are invoked probably by some natural power imperceptible to us. If this is so, and names are not a matter of arbitrary convention, the supreme God ought not to be invoked by any name except those used by Moses and the prophets and our Saviour and Lord himself, such as Sabaoth, Adonai, Shaddai, and again, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of

Jacob. "For this" he says, "is an everlasting name and a memorial to generations of generations" (Exod. 3:15).¹⁸⁹ Origen believed that the religious words must be said in Hebrew or they will be "weak and ineffective." This is a problem with a translation because it is not always the signification of the name that gives it power but "the qualities and characteristics of the sounds."¹⁹⁰

On this subject the Calvinist Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) professed, "In the most general sense of the word, then, the name of God is His self-revelation. It is a designation of Him, not as he exists in the depths of His Divine Being, but as he reveals Himself especially in His relation to man. For us the one general name of God is split up into many names, expressive of the many-sided Being of God. It is only because God has revealed Himself in His name (*nomen editum*), that we can now designate Him by that name in various forms (*nomina indita*). The names of God are not of human invention, but of Divine origin, though they are all borrowed from human language, and derived from human and earthly relations." God is the Incomprehensible One, but in His name, he becomes finite and reveals Himself to limited human consciousness. The names of God can be proper names, essential names or attributes, and personal names like Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹ For more on this subject see: Ch. VI. Creation of the Phenomenal World, Section 2. Creation from Divine Spoken Words

9. Saguna Brahman is Identical With All Divine Entities

To think of Saguna Brahman-God as only a Person (anthropomorphic) is to limit the infinite. It is omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipresent, and omniblissful because It is power, knowledge, goodness, presence, and bliss. Saguna Brahman-God and Its attributes are one and the same thing. For example, It is omnipotent not because it gains power that which is external to Itself, but because It is power. We are separate from knowledge and gain it through participation while Saguna Brahman-God is omniscient because It is knowledge.

If knowledge were separate from Saguna Brahman-God, It would participate in it, and would be influenced by it and thus not fully independent. Its understanding would be subject to change, progressing from a condition of potential (lacking omniscience) to actual knowledge. If Brahman-God learned about things separate from Itself, then It would not be the first cause and creator of those events. Its knowledge is through Its own Essence, and not from participation in something external. When these attributes manifest in reduced quality and quantity in the

universe they are under Saguna Brahman-God's control. Saguna Brahman-God is Knowledge, Power, and Goodness-Itself meaning It is identical with these characteristics and does not participate in them as we do.

If Saguna Brahman-Personal God and the Moral Law were considered to be two separate entities, then all of Brahman-God's activities and ideas concerning morality would be determined by an external source. This is a violation of the principle of Divine aseity, being that an independent Brahman-God cannot be influenced by anything else. Brahman-God would not be what It is through Itself (*per se*) but through another (*per aliud*). This is to deny Its sovereignty over all things. In fact in the realm of ethics, Brahman-God the Supreme Being would be subservient to the Moral Law, whose dictates It is obliged to obey. So it is best to realize they are not separate and that Brahman-God is Morality Itself. Brahman-God did not invent moral truths nor is It bound by them as an external source; they reflect the Divine nature which is necessarily good. All value is grounded in the Divine nature. All other things are good to the extent they partake of Brahman-God's intrinsic moral nature.¹⁹⁶

According to many Theists-Dualists, Saguna Brahman-God has maximum knowledge but is different from it. From another perspective, Saguna Brahman-God and perfect knowledge (including reason, the Transcendental *Vedas* which are the Eternal Truths (Latin Aeternus Veritas, English Eternal Verities), Moral law, Platonic Forms-Ideals, and logical truths such as the law of non-contradiction are different aspects of one and the same entity. Are they the thoughts in the mind of Saguna Brahman? It is Existence-Being (Sat), Consciousness-Intelligence (Chit), and Bliss-Feelings (Ananda). Saguna Brahman-God is these entities only in their perfect state. Actually, Saguna Brahman-God is identical with or manifests as a Person (Ishvara), Principles (such as Goodness, the Transcendental *Vedas*), Practices (ethical and mystical activity), Eternal Truths, Platonic Ideas, and Justice), Powers (Energy), Properties, and Places (such as the Brahmaloaka-Kingdom of Heaven). In this sense It is both personal and non-personal Brahman-God. Existence, consciousness, bliss, goodness, substance, form, meaning, etc. in their most perfect state are not separate from the Divine Mind, they are Brahman-God in another form. Person, Principle, Practice, Power, Properties, and Place are not the same thing (as stated by the doctrine of Simplicity which applies to another realm), but are six different entities and Brahman-God is all of them. Saguna Brahman-God is the revealer (bhakti-personal), the revelation (jnana-knowledge), and the act of revealing (karma-action). Shakti is both power, energy, and potency; and the Divine Mother.¹⁹⁷

This raises the question is there a blissful BrahmaloKa-Kingdom of Heaven where one communicates with Saguna Brahman-God intellectually and not socially? One possibility is the Platonic Forms or Ideas that are timeless (atemporal), unchanging (aspatial), unconditioned, self-existent, and perfect; the non-physical essences of all things. They do not have a location in space or time but provide the formal basis for space and time. All objects and matter in the physical world are imperfect imitations or copies that participate in them. The transcendent Forms or Ideas include those of ideals (e.g., truth, beauty, and goodness), class (e.g., dog, human), qualities (e.g., redness, roundness), and of relations (e.g., largeness, equality).¹⁹⁸ They exist in the intelligible world which is the mind of Saguna Brahman-God.

The highest Divinity manifests personally as the living Brahman-God and impersonally (or nonpersonally) in at least three ways: As the spiritual law which is objectified in the sacred scriptures that direct a person to Brahman-God, the cosmic law that creates and maintains the universe, and the prescriptive and normative moral and social law. Revealed scriptures are sacred because they are partial manifestations of the heavenly scriptures

They are different aspects of the same Perfection. When Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14.6) he refers to himself as the truth (Principle), not that truth is something separate from him that he participates in.

An omnipotent Divine Will is not subject to any external restraints. Therefore reason cannot be external to the Divine Will forcing It to act in a particular way. Reason is Brahman-God in a nonpersonal form. Brahman-God follows reason because it is part of and one with Its nature. They are not two separate entities. The human will reacts to something apart from it, but this is not the case for the Divine Will. Brahman-God is known through thought which is not a separate entity but is part of It’s nature.

All religious scriptures are approximations to varying degrees of the Transcendental *Vedas*- Eternal Truths (Aeternus Veritas). As Vivekananda noted, “By the *Vedas* no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times.” “Veda means the sum total of eternal truths.”¹⁹⁹ Veda is his term for the Transcendental *Vedas*. When Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14.6) he refers to himself as the truth (Principle), not that truth is something separate from him that he participates in. Existence, consciousness, bliss, goodness, substance, form, meaning, etc. in their most perfect state are not separate from the Divine Mind,

they are Brahman-God in another form. In this sense It is both personal and non-personal Brahman-God.

Sri Ramakrishna told his devotees, “God and his name are identical ... There is no difference between Rama and His holy name.” “God is not different from His name.”²⁰⁰ Formerly Jiva Goswami (1511-66) the Bengal Vaishnavist emphasized that there is no difference between Bhagavat (God) and his name. The holy name of God is an incarnation of the Lord, a nonbodily form of letters or sounds that is as real as his physical form (Varna Avatar).

According to the Simplicity (Undividedness) of God, “There is also no real distinction between God as subject of His attributes and His attributes.... God is omniscient, then, not in virtue of instantiating or exemplifying omniscience — which would imply a real distinction between God and the property of omniscience — but by *being* omniscience. And the same holds for each of the Divine omni-attributes.” There is no metaphysical distinction between Brahman-God and Its attributes (qualities). All perfection exists in Brahman-God as an integral part of Its intrinsic identity and not as something added on to It. Divine attributes are identical to Its being, not qualities that make up that being. It does not have a quality such as goodness but is Goodness Itself.²⁰¹

This idea is confirmed by Augustine (354-430), “God is not great by a greatness, which is not that which He Himself is, so that God becomes as it were a sharer in it when He is great. For in that case the greatness would be greater than God, but there cannot be anything greater than God; therefore, He is great by that greatness which is identical with Himself.... He Himself is His own greatness. Let the same also be said of the goodness, the eternity, the omnipotence of God, in fact in all of the attributes, which can be predicated of God when He is referred to as He is in Himself.”²⁰² Implying Brahman-God does not receive Its greatest (or goodness, power, or knowledge) from anything else.

Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) in his *Monologion* identified the Supreme Being with justice, power, and eternity. “When it [the supreme Being] is called just it is properly conceived of as being justness, but not as possessing justness. Hence, if, when it is said to be justness, it is not said of what character it is, but what it is.” “It is manifest that its power is nothing else than itself.” “Its eternity is nothing else than itself.”²⁰³ Otherwise, if it merely possesses justice, power, and eternity, it would have these qualities "through another and not through itself" and would be dependent on something apart from It, which is contrary to the nature of the Supreme Being.

For Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), eternity is nothing else than God Himself. “Nor is He eternal only, but He is His own eternity; whereas no other being is its own duration, since it is not its own being. Now God is His own uniform being; and hence He is His own essence, so He is His own eternity.”²⁰⁴ “In every simple thing, Its being [existence] and that which It is [essence, attributes] are the same. For if the one were not the other, simplicity would be removed. As we have shown, however, God is absolutely simple. Hence, in God, being good is not anything distinct from Him; He is His goodness.” “Eternity is nothing else but God Himself.” “The truth of the Divine Intellect is God Himself.”²⁰⁵ It is God “whose essence alone is His being, in Whom there are no accidents, since whatever belongs to another accidentally belongs to Him essentially.” “In God being and essence are the same ... His essence or quiddity [whatness] is not something other than His being. Or it has been shown above that there is some being that must be through Itself, and this is God.” “God’s being is His essence. Therefore, God’s understanding is His intellect.”²⁰⁶

According to the Bengal Vaishnavist Jiva Goswami (c. 1511-96) that Bhagavat’s (Brahman-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 Bhagavat’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 logically distinguishable from each another.²⁰⁷

The Bengal Vaishnavist, Baladeva Vidyabhusana (c. 1700-93) (following the presentation of Jadunath Sinha) taught, “God's form or Personality is not different from His Essence. God is of the Essence of knowledge, powers, and lordship. Divine Personality is identical with the Essence of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. His Essence also is not additional to, or different from His Personality.... There is non-difference or identity between the Divine Attributes and the Divine Substance. We speak of difference between them, though there is identity between them, as we speak of the waves of water. There is no internal difference between Divine Personality and Divine Essence, and between Divine Essence and Divine attributes.” 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.²⁰⁸

To give two examples of a non-personal view of Divine attributes: Plato (427-327 B.C.) conceived of the Forms-Ideas (*Eidos*) such as Justice, Beauty, and Goodness as separate from God, yet having the Divine qualities of being eternal, unchanging, indestructible, perfect, spaceless, timeless, and existing in a transcendental realm. The Hindu Purva-Mimamsa religious philosophy systematized by Kumarila (620/50-680/700) apprehends the Divine not as a Personal God, but an eternal and authorless religious scripture, the Sanskrit *Vedas*. But we must remember that religious scriptures are only one of the aspects of the Divine. From our standpoint the transcendental *Vedas* are one of the forms of Brahman-God.

In opposition to this idea, many theists believe that the thoughts of a Personal God consciously and intentionally create all necessary and contingent entities. Anselm, and particularly Leibniz claimed that abstract objects depend on the thoughts in the mind of God. By thinking Divine thoughts God causes abstract objects to exist. He is metaphysically and causally prior to the existence of any products of His creative activity. That abstract objects such as properties, propositions, laws, relations, states of affairs, numbers, and necessary truths depend on God for their existence and intrinsic characteristics. An abstract object such as Euclidean geometry operates independently of empirical events. God is thought of as causally active, while abstract objects are regarded as causally inert. Theists conceive of an asymmetrical dependence relation between God the absolute creator and abstract objects, such that they depend on Him as their cause but He does not depend on them. They believe the whole Platonic realm is thus seen as derived from the ideas of God. Conversely, Plato taught that the Ideals have objective ontological status independent of God. Metaphysics is a systematic description of fundamental and complex abstract objects.²⁰⁹ In the *New Testament*, Jesus Christ says, "I am truth" not I am truthful (Jn. 14.6). What is abstract at the empirical level of gross matter and energy is concrete in the higher realm of subtle matter and energy.

There are a number of objections to Plato's idea. First, if the properties of power, knowledge, goodness, etc. existed separately from the Divine nature, It would be conditioned and limited by them. Thomas Aquinas believed that if the properties were distinct from God, then He would be subsequent to them and would depend upon the existence of something other than Himself, which violates His aseity. He wrote, "Everything composite is subsequent to its components and dependent upon them; whilst God, as we have seen, is the first of all beings."²¹⁰ Second, if intelligence and power were separate from It, Infinite Brahman-God would

participate in the attributes of intelligence and power, which would be greater and broader than Itself and they would limit It.

Third, if knowledge, power, goodness, existence, etc. did not exist, Brahman-God could not be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, or exist. Intelligence and power would be prior to Brahman-God, which then It would not be the first cause. Its understanding and power would be subject to change, progressing from a state of potential to actuality. If they were separate from Brahman-God, then It would be subservient to them and would not be all-powerful or supreme. Fourth, does Brahman-God create Its own nature, the essential properties of omniscience and omnipotence that are logically necessary for and exemplified within Its creative activity? Certainly Brahman-God does not stand in a relation of causal dependence to Itself. Brahman-God cannot create abstract entities like creativity, power, knowledge, or existence unless It already possesses these properties. For example, it takes power to create power. If Brahman-God causes Itself to exist and to be omnipotent the process would have to be non-temporal, else we would be involved in a causal circle.²¹¹ Fifth, If Brahman-God creates the properties and Eternal Truths, why can't It annihilate or alter them? Most religious philosophical thinkers believe that an omnipotent Brahman-God cannot violate the law of non-contradiction. For example, Brahman-God cannot create a being superior to Itself, produce a five-sided triangle on a two dimensional surface, make $2 + 2 = 7$, change the past after it occurred, etc. The law of non-contradiction and of reason are not something apart from Brahman-God that limit Its activities. They are Brahman-God Itself, which is one with Its own internal nature. In Brahman-God there is no subject-attribute distinction as there is for humans.

As an alternative one might believe that power, knowledge, goodness, etc. exist independent of Brahman-God, but that they are under Its jurisdiction since It created them. In this way Divine aseity is retained. This raises the difficult question, what was the nature of Brahman-God before It created them? It would have to be something different from them. Nor could It ever be known since all forms of knowledge are something created that comes later. Conversely, the fact that Brahman-God is power, knowledge, and goodness in their highest respect implies It is analogically knowable. One might answer that they exist in a subtle form in Brahman-God as Divine Ideas and It makes them manifest in the creation. This process could be without beginning occurring at all times, or chronological first as Ideas and later as a manifestation.

Nothing exists apart from Saguna Brahman-God to bring It into existence

(aseity). It does not depend on something other than Itself to be what It is (Its nature). It is neither limited by nor determined in any way by anything other than Itself. At the Divine level only It exists and there is nothing else to limit, control, or work on It. This means every mode of being (e.g., power, knowledge, goodness) is ultimately dependent upon Brahman-God and not vice versa. It is the source of existence, with the power of bestowing it or withdrawing it from all beings. The Self-Caused One derives Its being and perfection from Its own internal nature and not from any entity external to It. As Self-Existent, Brahman-God is the ground and cause of Its own existence and nature. Because Brahman-God is not created or dependent on anything, It is not composed of anything more basic than Itself. Conversely, humans exhibit a dualistic subject-predicate structure, a property combined with the person that bears it. They participate in power, knowledge, goodness, etc. that are separate from themselves. Moreover, Brahman-God's thoughts are not just a reflection of how external things are in themselves, because It is not dependent upon created reality in any way. On the contrary, created reality is dependent upon Its thoughts.

Considering Brahman-God and goodness to be two separate entities and not as identities, results in the Euthyphro Dilemma. The question arises, “Is the good, good because God wills it (as Divine command theories teach), or does God will it because it is good?” In support of the former, the German Isaac Dorner (1809-84) believed that goodness is not derived from its own essence or inherent nature, but from the will and power of God. As Eleonore Stump points out, the problem is that this makes goodness arbitrary since God could have willed something else good or in the future might change the present definition of goodness. In contrast, the latter view implies that God has no choice and is constrained by an external goodness to will as It does.²¹² This dilemma is avoided if Brahman-God and perfect goodness are identical, one Reality looked upon from two different standpoints.

Brahman-God constitutes an ontological domain of the highest order that is the ultimate source of all forms of existence. Jivas [individual souls] who participate in this realm are obviously subordinate to It. In order to exist and be individuated they possess properties of power and knowledge by a limited participation (*ens per participationem*) in being. Vedantists like Vivekananda sometimes use the word “borrowed” and the Christian Platonists “participate in.” Everything is through another except for Brahman-God that acts through Itself. The changeless and eternal Brahman-God is the exemplary cause of the phenomenal

world, having inherent physical, knowledgeable, and moral causal power.²¹³ It is the first being through its essence (*ens per essentiam*), and no attribute or quality exists prior to It for It to participate in. If It participated in an attribute, it would be a supplementary quality added to Its infinite being. Nothing can be added to or subtracted from It. By analogy, fire is hot by its nature, while water becomes hot by participating in the fire's heat.²¹⁴ Brahman-Atman would not be the Self-Existent (Svasiddha) if It attained knowledge, power, goodness, etc. from a source separate from Itself.

Both *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) and *creatio ex deo* (creation out of the being of God) reject *creatio ex materia* (creation out of pre-existent external materials). In other words, Brahman-God does not create the world out of pre-existing external power, knowledge, goodness, ideas, laws, etc. Either they are identical with Brahman-God or are created out of nothing.

Plotinus' (c. 205-70) Intellectual Principle can be divided into Nous the Divine Intellect and knower, and Noeta the Divine World and known. Thought (subject) and being (object) form a unified single reality. Nous and Noeta are identical, they are one differing only as a logical (not an actual) distinction.²¹⁵ From this standpoint, Brahman-God is the Brahmaloaka-Heavenly Kingdom of God Itself, and not something separate from It.

As phenomenal beings, we participate in or borrow from the realms of knowledge and power that are separate from us. Yet whatever knowledge, power, etc. we possess in our immediate experience is what we consider to be our phenomenal self. David Hume (1711-76) possibly indirectly under Indian Buddhist influence (see endnote) taught that our mind is a bundle or collection of distinct perceptions (ideas and impressions) that rapidly succeed one another without an underlying permanent, unitary, independent self. Being always in a state of flux, there is no constant and unchanging entity we call the self. There are thoughts, feelings, and perceptions without an underlying self. This corresponds with the Buddhist idea of not-self, that the unitary self is a fiction and that nothing exists but a collection of five aggregates.²¹⁶ As Buddha stated, "There is no 'being' found here [within oneself], only a heap of karmic constituents." An unchanging subtle essence called the Self does not exist, for everything that arises and exists is codependent and continually changing. This view denies the unity and continuity of the enduring self. Opponents say, a physical object such as a rock or a tree is a constant entity with a number of properties. The mind is an immaterial entity also with many properties that are causally interconnected. The difference being that

physical objects unlike immaterial entities can be experiences with the five senses. This is because the mind and thoughts are composed of subtle not gross matter. We intuitively think we have a permanent self.

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- ⁵ CW, VI:94.
- ⁶ CW, II:234-35.
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- ⁹ CW, I:506. To learn more about our relationship to the Universal Mind (Mahat) see: Gopal Stavig, “Swami Vivekananda’s Akasha-Prana Universe and Samuel Alexander’s Space-Time Universe,” *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture* (Oct. 2014), pp. 454, 459-60.
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- ²³ Bavinck, pp. 162-63.
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- ²⁷ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, tr. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 106-08.
- ²⁸ Preus (1970), p. 80.
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- ³⁰ NCE, X, p. 593.
- ³¹ Web: www.reasonablefaith.org/defenders-2-podcast/transcript/s3-9
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- ⁴² CW, V:434.
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- ⁴⁵ CW, V:269.
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became famous for teaching ideas that to some extent were known to the Indian Buddhist and Carvaka philosophers more than a thousand years earlier. They were Berkeley's Subjective Idealism (Yogacara-Vijnanavada Buddhism), and Hume's Non-Self (Buddhist Anatta, Nagasena fl. 150 B.C.). Hume's idea that there is no necessary connection between cause and effect, since casual relations are not perceptible, only sequence of events was taught by Indian Charvaka materialists and later by the Islamic al-Ghazali. In addition, John Locke's (1632-1704) Representative Realism bears some resemblance to that of the Indian Sautrantika Buddhism. The British philosophers no doubt added new ideas to the discussion. It is not known if these ideas existed in abbreviated oral form in Western Europe at that time, originating from the contemporary Jesuit and Franciscan studies of Asian Buddhism. More study is required to discover the similarities and the differences between the Indian Buddhist and British philosophers on these subjects. Two articles have come out proving the possibility that Hume (and possibly Berkeley) had some knowledge of these Buddhist ideas that originated in India. They are Nolan Jacobson, "The Possibility of Oriental Influence in Hume's Philosophy," in Alexander Macfie, *Eastern Influence on Western Philosophy* (Edinburgh University, 2003), pp. 110-29; Allison Gopnik, "Could David Hume Have Known about Buddhism?" *Hume Studies* (2009), pp. 5-28; Gopal Stavig, "Congruencies Between Indian and Islamic Philosophy," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 81 (2000), pp. 213-26. Many of David Hume's reasons in opposition to the Design Proof were stated 700 years earlier by Ramanuja according to C. Mackenzie Brown, "The Design Argument in Classical Hindu Thought," *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 12-2 (Aug. 2008), pp. 105, 134-37.