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Some Answered Questions

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Question.—How do the Theosophists and the Súfís understand the question of pantheism? 1 What does it mean, and how nearly does it approximate to the truth?

Answer.—Know that the subject of pantheism is ancient. It is a belief not restricted to the Theosophists and the Súfís; on the contrary, some of the sages of Greece believed in it, like Aristotle, who said, “The simple truth is all things, but it is not any one of them.” In this case, “simple” is the opposite of “composed”; it is the isolated Reality, which is purified and sanctified from composition and division, and which resolves Itself into innumerable forms. Therefore, Real Existence is all things, but It is not one of the things.

Briefly, the believers in pantheism think that Real Existence can be compared to the sea, and that beings are like the waves of the sea. These waves, which signify the beings, are innumerable forms of that Real Existence; therefore, the Holy Reality is the Sea of Preexistence, 2 and the innumerable forms of the creatures are the waves which appear.

Likewise, they compare this theory to real unity and the infinitude of numbers; the real unity reflects itself in the degrees of infinite numbers, for numbers are the repetition of the real unity. So the number two is the repetition of one, and it is the same with the other numbers. 291

One of their proofs is this: all beings are things known of God; and knowledge without things known does not exist, for knowledge is related to that which exists, and not to nothingness. Pure nonexistence can have no specification or individualization in the degrees of knowledge. Therefore, the realities of beings, which are the things known of God the Most High, have the existence which knowledge has, 3 since they have the form of the Divine Knowledge, and they are preexistent, as the Divine Knowledge is preexistent. As knowledge is preexistent, the things known are equally so, and the individualizations and the specifications of beings, which are the preexistent knowledges of the Essence of Unity, are the Divine Knowledge itself. For the realities of the Essence of Unity, knowledge, and

the things known, have an absolute unity which is real and established. Otherwise, the Essence of Unity would become the place of multiple phenomena, and the multiplicity of preexistences ⁴ would become necessary, which is absurd.

So it is proved that the things known constitute knowledge itself, and knowledge the Essence itself—that is to say, that the Knower, the knowledge and the things known are one single reality. And if one imagines anything outside of this, it necessitates coming back to the multiplicity of preexistences and to enchainment; ⁵ and preexistences end by becoming innumerable. As the individualization and the specification of beings in the knowledge of God were the Essence of Unity itself, and as there was not any difference between them, there was but one veritable Unity, and all the things known were diffused and included in the reality of the one Essence—that is to say, that, according to the mode of simplicity and of unity,

²⁹² they constitute the knowledge of God the Most High, and the Essence of the Reality. When God manifested His glory, these individualizations and these specifications of beings which had a virtual existence—that is to say, which were a form of the Divine Knowledge—found their existence substantiated in the external world; and this Real Existence resolved Itself into infinite forms. Such is the foundation of their argument.

The Theosophists and the Súfís are divided into two branches: one, comprising the mass, who, simply in the spirit of imitation, believe pantheism without comprehending the meaning of their renowned savants; for the mass of the Súfís believe that the signification of Being is general existence, taken substantively, which is comprehended by the reason and the intelligence—that is to say, that man comprehends it. Instead of that, this general existence is one of the accidents which penetrate the reality of beings, and the qualities of beings are the essence. This accidental existence, which is dependent on beings, is like other properties of things which depend on them. It is an accident among accidents, and certainly that which is the essence is superior to that which is the accident. For the essence is the origin, and the accident is the consequence; the essence is dependent on itself, and the accident is dependent on something else—that is to say, it needs an essence upon which to depend. In this case, God would be the consequence of the creature. He would have need of it, and it would be independent of Him.

For example, each time that the isolated elements combine conformably to the divine universal system, one being among beings comes into the world. That is to say, that when certain elements combine, a vegetable existence is produced; when others combine, it is an animal; again others combine, and they produce different creatures. In this case, the existence of things is the consequence of their ²⁹³ reality: how could it be that this existence, which is an accident among accidents, and necessitates another essence upon which it depends, should be the Preexistent Essence, the Author of all things?

But the initiated savants of the Theosophists and Súfís, who have studied this question, think there are two categories of existence. One is general existence,

which is understood by the human intelligence; this is a phenomenon, an accident among accidents, and the reality of the things is the essence. But pantheism does not apply to this general and imaginary existence, but only to the Veritable Existence, freed and sanctified from all other interpretation; through It all things exist, and It is the Unity through which all things have come into the world, such as matter, energy and this general existence which is comprehended by the human mind. Such is the truth of this question according to the Theosophists and the Súfís.

Briefly, with regard to this theory that all things exist by the Unity, all are agreed—that is to say, the philosophers and the Prophets. But there is a difference between them. The Prophets say, The Knowledge of God has no need of the existence of beings, but the knowledge of the creature needs the existence of things known; if the Knowledge of God had need of any other thing, then it would be the knowledge of the creature, and not that of God. For the Preexistent is different from the phenomenal, and the phenomenal is opposed to the Preexistent; that which we attribute to the creature—that is, the necessities of the contingent beings—we deny for God; for purification, or sanctification from imperfections, is one of His necessary properties. So in the phenomenal we see ignorance; in the Preexistent we recognize knowledge. In the phenomenal we see weakness; in the Preexistent we recognize power. In the phenomenal we see poverty; in the Preexistent we recognize wealth. So the phenomenal is ²⁹⁴ the source of imperfections, and the Preexistent is the sum of perfections. The phenomenal knowledge has need of things known; the Preexistent Knowledge is independent of their existence. So the preexistence of the specification and of the individualization of beings which are the things known of God the Most High does not exist; and these divine and perfect attributes are not so understood by the intelligence that we can decide if the Divine Knowledge has need of things known or not.

Briefly, this is the principal argument of the Súfís; and if we wished to mention all their proofs and explain their answers, it would take a very long time. This is their decisive proof and their plain argument—at least, of the savants of the Súfís and the Theosophists.

But the question of the Real Existence by which all things exist—that is to say, the reality of the Essence of Unity through which all creatures have come into the world—is admitted by everyone. The difference resides in that which the Súfís say, “The reality of the things is the manifestation of the Real Unity.” But the Prophets say, “it emanates from the Real Unity”; and great is the difference between manifestation and emanation. The appearance in manifestation means that a single thing appears in infinite forms. For example, the seed, which is a single thing possessing the vegetative perfections, which it manifests in infinite forms, resolving itself into branches, leaves, flowers and fruits: this is called appearance in manifestation; whereas in the appearance through emanation this Real Unity remains and continues in the exaltation of Its sanctity, but the existence of creatures emanates from It and is not manifested by It. It can be compared to the sun from

which emanates the light which pours forth on all the creatures; but the sun remains in the exaltation of its sanctity. It does not descend, and it does not resolve itself into luminous forms; it does not appear in the substance of ²⁹⁵ things through the specification and the individualization of things; the Preexistent does not become the phenomenal; independent wealth does not become enchained poverty; pure perfection does not become absolute imperfection.

To recapitulate: the Súfís admit God and the creature, and say that God resolves Himself into the infinite forms of the creatures, and manifests like the sea, which appears in the infinite forms of the waves. These phenomenal and imperfect waves are the same thing as the Preexistent Sea, which is the sum of all the divine perfections. The Prophets, on the contrary, believe that there is the world of God, the world of the Kingdom, and the world of Creation: three things. The first emanation from God is the bounty of the Kingdom, which emanates and is reflected in the reality of the creatures, like the light which emanates from the sun and is resplendent in creatures; and this bounty, which is the light, is reflected in infinite forms in the reality of all things, and specifies and individualizes itself according to the capacity, the worthiness and the intrinsic value of things. But the affirmation of the Súfís requires that the Independent Wealth should descend to the degree of poverty, that the Preexistent should confine itself to phenomenal forms, and that Pure Power should be restricted to the state of weakness, according to the limitations of contingent beings. And this is an evident error. Observe that the reality of man, who is the most noble of creatures, does not descend to the reality of the animal, that the essence of the animal, which is endowed with the powers of sensation, does not abase itself to the degree of the vegetable, and that the reality of the vegetable, which is the power of growth, does not descend to the reality of the mineral.

Briefly, the superior reality does not descend nor abase itself to inferior states; then how could it be that the Universal ²⁹⁶ Reality of God, which is freed from all descriptions and qualifications, notwithstanding Its absolute sanctity and purity, should resolve Itself into the forms of the realities of the creatures, which are the source of imperfections? This is a pure imagination which one cannot conceive.

On the contrary, this Holy Essence is the sum of the divine perfections; and all creatures are favored by the bounty of resplendency through emanation, and receive the lights, the perfection and the beauty of Its Kingdom, in the same way that all earthly creatures obtain the bounty of the light of the rays of the sun, but the sun does not descend and does not abase itself to the favored realities of earthly beings.

After dinner, and considering the lateness of the hour, there is no time to explain further.

Salutations.

1. Lit., the unity of existence. [[↑ Back To Reference](#)]
2. God. [[↑ Back To Reference](#)]

3. i.e., an intellectual existence. [[↑ Back To Reference](#)]

4. gods. [[↑ Back To Reference](#)]

5. i.e., infinite continuation of causes and effects. [[↑ Back To Reference](#)]

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