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INDIAN ANALOGIES  
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
PLOTINUS

The results of recent research by J. Filliozat<sup>1</sup> have reopened the discussion of possible Indian influences on Plotinus. The present paper is not based on such investigation of historical documents concerning the extent of any specifically determinable sources. It will remain within the frame of the Plotinian thought itself and try to approach the implicit subject of comparative philosophy directly by a different method. This method can be defined as *doxographic*, or restricted to an essential analysis of ideas constituting the structure of systems to be compared. The other method—which comparative philosophy cannot ignore, especially on the actual level of historical research—is the method of *chronological documentation* which seeks to estimate possible indirect or direct influences of one system of thought upon another. Purely doxographic analysis of any particular subject from the viewpoint of comparative philosophy should however be considered as partial and restricted as long as an investigation of objective historical circumstances by the method of chronological documentation can be reasonably postulated, as in our case. The two methods and their fields of research being essentially different and independent of each other, the final aim of producing a coherent and synchronized unit of philosophical actuality in comparative philosophy cannot be attained alone by a *global* analysis of ideas essential for the immanent structure of a *closed* system of thought, as it used to be supposed too often in the past. Results that can be obtained by doxographic analysis—and in questions of essential philosophical interest only by it—will contribute to the formation of a valid basis for further investigation only if by applying this method special attention is paid to such comparative elements that may facilitate, or at least do not ignore, parallel research in the field of chronological documentation, and *vice versa*.

In this sense the following doxographic analysis of the Plotinian philosophy has been thematically determined by methodological motives.

## I

In comparative studies of analogous or common elements pertaining to separate systems of thought, special attention should be paid to *the imaginative aspect* of their structure. Its constituent part in the representation of intellectual contents cannot be reduced to the logical value of a symbolic *form* alone. In comparative philosophy the imaginative contents, representing an idea in its systematic explication, have an incontestable though not exclusively determinant value particularly in cases where the hypothesis of actual, indirect or direct, contacts or influences may reasonably be postulated, as it is assumed in the motives of such analogies with Indian views in the system of Plotinus.

In the following I shall try to demonstrate three specific types of analogies in imaginative complexes on three characteristic examples.

The first type of analogy can be termed "accidental". Its form is more that of a metaphor than an allegory. Such is the comparison of the body with a garment in a series of homologous metaphors by which Plotinus explains the theory of the soul's reincarnation, proceeding from the same metaphysical and psychological assumptions as can be found in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The illusory nature of sense appearances and the imperturbability of the spirit are particularly stressed thereby.

Analogies of the second type are the most valuable and the least frequent. There the imaginative representation is connected with a deeper analysis of some specific philosophical theory, whereby a detailed elaboration of the imaginative side is required, parallel to an extended deduction of ideas, while the basic image becomes naturally enlarged by other more or less accidental associations. Such is the deduction of the principle of identity of Being and Consciousness, explicated by the symbol of the tree to which Plotinus reverts on several occasions, mainly in his III *Ennead*. The same magnificent simile holds the central place in the deduction of Uddālaka's principle *tat tvam asi* in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.

As an example of the third kind of analogy the Plotinian theory on the hypostases (especially in the V *Ennead*) will be compared with the teaching of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. Some details of this analogy have been already elaborated by S. Radhakrishnan.<sup>2</sup>

The peculiar feature of this analogy consists in the fact that here, as in many other Vedāntic texts, the Upaniṣadic teaching contains an analysis of the state of dream, though not as an aspect of representation or as a simile within a complex of intellection, but as its immediate object of study. We do not find any such *analogy in the object* in Plotinus, though it is not difficult to find in the *Enneads* either similar theories or imaginative equivalents of the dream *as a simile* in some specific sense. A doxographic analysis of the Plotinian theory on the dreams in view of the elements elaborated in the Upaniṣad would therefore not bring us to a negative result. However, an *integral analogy* of essential comparative elements cannot be traced in Plotinus. It could only be *reconstructed* for the purpose of an ideal but not a representational doxographic analogy.

The examples mentioned above as characteristic for each of these three types of analogies are elaborated accordingly in the following chapters.

## II

*The simile of the garment* appears often in Indian texts dealing with the theory of reincarnation. In the following analogy it is connected with the central idea of a deduction corresponding to the interpretation of Arjuna's moral problem in the second *adhyāya* of the *Bhagavad Gitā*. It is the problem of the moral attitude toward mutual annihilation of living beings in their struggle for life and in war.

*Bhagavad Gita, II:*

*Plotinus, Enneads* <sup>8</sup>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>12. But not in any respect was I ever not, nor thou, nor those kings; and not at all shall we ever come not to be, all of us, henceforward.</p> | <p>III,2,4:<br/>In the immaterial heaven every member is unchangeably itself for ever; in the heaven of our universe, while the whole has life eternally and so too all the nobler and lordlier components, the Souls pass from body to body entering into varied forms-</p> |
| <p>13. As to the embodied soul in this body come childhood, youth, old age, so the coming to another body; the wise is not confused herein.</p>    | <p>and, when it may, a Soul will rise outside of the realm of birth and dwell with the one Soul of</p>   |
| <p>15. For whom these contacts do not cause any waver, the man to whom pain and pleasure</p>   | <p>and, when it may, a Soul will rise outside of the realm of birth and dwell with the one Soul of</p>   |

- are alike, the wise, he is fit for immortality.
16. Of what is not, no coming to be occurs; no coming not to be occurs of what is; but the dividing-line of both is seen, of these two, by those who see the truth.
18. These bodies come to an end, it is declared, of the embodied eternal soul, which is indestructible and unfathomable. Therefore fight, son of Bharata!
19. Who believes him a slayer, and who thinks him slain, both these understand not: he slays not, is not slain.
22. *As leaving aside worn-out garments a man takes other, new ones, so leaving aside worn-out bodies to other, new ones goes the embodied soul.*<sup>4</sup>
23. Swords cut him not, fire burns him not, water wets him not, wind dries him not.
24. Not to be cut is he, not to be burnt is he, not to be wet nor yet dried, eternal, omnipresent, fixed, immovable, everlasting is he.
25. Unmanifest he, unthinkable he, unchangeable he is declared to be. Therefore knowing him thus thou shouldst not mourn him.
- all... for life here is a thing of change; only in that prior realm is it unmoving.
- III,2,15:  
This devouring of kind by kind is necessary as the means to the transmutation of living things which could not keep form for ever even though no other killed them: what grievance is it that when they must go their despatch is so planned as to be serviceable to others? Still more, what does it matter when they are devoured only to return in some new form? It comes to no more than the murder of one of the personages in a play; the actor changes his garments and enters in a new role.
- Men directing their weapons against each other — under doom of death yet neatly lined up to fight as in the pyrrhic sword-dances of their sport — this is enough to tell us that all human intentions are but play, that death is nothing terrible, that to die in a war or in a fight is but to taste a little beforehand what old age has in store, to go away earlier and to come back the sooner... For on earth, in all the succession of life, it is not the Soul within but the Shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains

26. Moreover, even if constantly born or constantly dying thou considerest him, even so, thou shouldst not mourn him. and acts out the plot on this world stage...
27. For to one that is born death is certain, and birth is certain for one that has died. Therefore the thing being unavoidable, thou shouldst not mourn.
20. He is not born, nor does he ever die; nor having come to be, will he ever more come not to be. Unborn, eternal everlasting, this ancient one is not slain when the body is slain. III,4,3:  
The dominant is the prior of the individual spirit; it presides inoperative while its secondary acts.
30. This embodied soul is eternally unslayable in the body of everyone, therefore all beings thou shouldst not mourn. III,2,15:  
To handle austere matters austere-ly is reserved for the thoughtful: the other kind of man is himself a futility. Those incapable of thinking gravely read gravity into frivolities which correspond to their own frivolous nature.
31. Having regard for thine own duty thou shouldst not tremble; for another, better thing than a fight required of duty exists not for a warrior. III,2,8:  
... And both one day stand girt and armed. Then there is a finer spectacle than is ever seen by those that train in the ring. But at this stage some have not armed themselves — and they duly armed win the day. Not even a God would have the right to deal a blow for the unwarlike: the law decrees that to come safe out of battle is for fighting men, not for those that pray.
33. If thou this duty-required conflict wilt not perform, then thine own duty and glory abandoning, thou shalt get thee evil.
38. Holding pleasure and pain alike, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then gird thyself III,2,13:  
Those that have unjustly killed, are killed in turn, unjustly as

- for battle : thus thou shalt not get evil. regards the murderer but justly as regards the victim, and those that are to suffer are thrown into the path of those that administer the merited treatment. It is not an accident that makes a man a slave ; no one is a prisoner by chance ... for in very truth. this ordinance is an *Adrasteia*, Justice itself and a wonderful wisdom.
39. This mental attitude has been declared to thee according to the *sāmkhya* teaching ; but hear it according to the *yoga*, disciplined with which mental attitude thou shalt get rid of the bondage of action. III,2,10 :  
Given the starting Principle, the secondary line, no doubt, is inevitably completed ; but each and every principle contributes towards the sequence. Now, Men are Principles, or, at least, they are moved by their characteristic nature towards all that is good, and that nature is a Principle, a freely acting cause.
50. The disciplined in mental attitude leaves behind in this world both good and evil deeds. Therefore discipline thyself unto discipline (of the *yoga*). Discipline in actions is weal. III,1,10 :  
Unwisdom, then, is not due to the Soul, and, in general, if we mean by Fate a compulsion outside ourselves, an act is fated when it is contrary to wisdom. But all our best is of our own doing : *such is our nature as long as we remain detached*. The wise and good do perform acts ; their right action is the expression of their own power.
51. For the disciplined in mental attitude, *action-produced fruit abandoning*, the intelligent ones, freed from the bondage of rebirth go to the place that is free from illness.

It may appear, if we confront the intellectual condensation of ideas in both texts, that a more concise and explicit formulation was attained in the *Gītā* than in the selection from Plotinus. This impression is due mainly to a greater extension of the chapters on *Providence* out of which the fragments from Plotinus have been selected. The criterion applied for their selection required that single phrases or parts of phrases should not be dismembered from their context nor bereft of their primary meaning in the quoted passage. At the

same time an integral representation had to be obtained with special regard to its imaginative components, consisting not only of a poetic metaphor, but implying the entire situation analogous to the epic motive of war as it is reflected in the *Gītā*. The ideal adequacy of some particular elements will, therefore, find a better expression in connection with some other subsequent motives.

The comparison of the above texts can also be extended in order to disclose a peculiar difference in their theoretical contents. From the view-point of the Indian theory of *karma* it may be noted that Plotinus's arguments to the same effect appear more coherent and specific than those professed by Kṛṣṇa in the same connection. The critical moral situation faced by the author of the *Gītā* amidst a waged war determines a radical idealistic solution of the problem of action, a solution that will become typical for the later *Vedānta*. There is a tendency in this passage of the *Gītā* to eliminate the deeper ontological sense of the theory of *karma* and to concentrate on a radical solution of the problem of causality—its abolition by liberation achieved in the *yoga*. Plotinus, on the other side, stressed with more intensity different implications of the idea that "all our reasoning on these questions must take account of previous living as the source from which the present takes its rise". Thus "the quality now manifested may be probably referred to the conduct of a former life" (III, 3, 4). "Similarly, the very wrong of man by man may be derived from an effort towards the Good; foiled, in their weakness, of their true desire, they turn against each other: still, when they do wrong, they pay the penalty ... for nothing can ever escape what decreed in the law of the Universe" (III, 2, 4).

In the *Gītā* an issue from this unavoidable situation of the human character is sought for in metaphysical cognition which, in the teaching of the *yoga*, can be interpreted also as a marked act of stands violence against our mundane nature.<sup>5</sup>

Plotinus remains satisfied with a poetic metaphor on the harmonious beauty of the universe: "Just so the Soul, entering this drama of the Universe, making itself a part of the Play, bringing to its acting its personal excellence or defect, set in a definite place at the entry and accepting from the author its entire role—superimposed upon its own character and conduct—just so, it receives in the end its punishment and reward" (III, 2, 17). The same view-point is not at all unfamiliar to Indian metaphysics. In our time it was stressed particularly by Rabindranath Tagore who tried, in his *Sādhana*, to deduce it from old Vedāntic antecedents. It may be worth mentioning that Shri Aurobindo in his immanent analysis of the *Gītā*, com-

menting on the passage X, 18, came to the following conclusion :  
 “Here the Gītā points at something that it does not express explicitly though it is often found in the Upaniṣads and was developed later on, in a greater intensity of vision by Viṣṇuism and Śāktism: the Joy Divine, a joy that man can reach in his mundane existence, the universal *ānanda*, the play of the Mother, the sweetness and the beauty of God’s *lilā*.”

Although Plotinus comes back in various connections to the moral aspect of the struggle and war, his argument remains concentrated just on this aspect whose importance in Indian literature, particularly in post-epic Hinduism, was enhanced by the *Vedānta* teaching on the illusory nature of the world (*māyā-vāda*).

The cult of beauty was pointed out in this connection by Radhakrishnan in the early Upaniṣads and even in the discourses of the Buddha. Thus, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV, 4, 4) we find the simile: “And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold turns it into another, newer and more beautiful shape, even so does this self, after having thrown away this body and dispelled its ignorance, make unto himself another, newer and more beautiful shape like that of the fathers or of the gandharvas, or of the gods or of Prajāpati or of Brahmā or of other beings”.

In an analogous meaning the simile of the garment can be found in other parts of the *Mahābhārata*: “Who goes over to yonder world must take off his body as a garment. Then, his soul becomes transparent from all sides to the penetrating eye of knowledge” (VII, 321, 54). P. Deussen singled out the analogy of this quotation with Plato’s *Gorgia* (523 E).

This is also the meaning in which the analogy reappears in *Ennead* I (6, 7): “Therefore we must ascend again towards the Good, the desired of every Soul. Anyone that has seen This, knows what I intend when I say that it is beautiful... To attain it is for those that will take the upward path, who will set all their forces towards it, who will divest themselves of all that we have put on it our descent: so, to those that approach the Holy Celebrations of the Mysteries, there are appointed purifications and the laying aside of the garments worn before, and the entry in nakedness—until, passing on the upward way, all that is other than the God, each in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure....the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being.”

In this passage the metaphor of the garment appears as a less important detail if compared with the central motive where the



principles of Intelligence and of Being are identified with the idea of Good and of Beauty. The postulate of their ideal harmony had been formulated by Plato, while several allusions to a harmonious trinity can be found in Plotinus. The quoted description brings us near to the idea of the supreme trinity, formulated in the above-mentioned frame of later Vedantism as *sat-cit-ānanda*. This formula, expressing the ideal state of mind, had not yet attained its final shape in the older Upaniṣads nor in the Gītā. However, the notion of *ānanda* appears there whenever Being (*Brahman*) and Consciousness (*Ātman*) are identified by the Upaniṣadic sages.

At the beginning of his first treatise on *Providence* (III,2,1) Plotinus establishes the following "relationship" of the same three attributes: "Intelligence or Being constitutes the authentic and primal Kosmos. This contains within itself no spatial distinction, and has none of the feebleness of division... In this Nature inheres all life and all intellect, a life living and having intellection as one act within a unity: every part that it gives forth is a whole; all its content is its very own, for there is here no separation of thing from thing, no part standing in isolated existence estranged from the rest... Everywhere one and complete, it is at rest throughout and shows difference at no point. There is no action of one part upon another; there can be no reason for changing what is everywhere perfect. Why should Reason elaborate yet another Reason, or Intelligence another Intelligence? A power of producing by the Self is not indwelling to absolutely perfect beings. Beings produce and move themselves only by reason of some failure in quality. Those whose nature is all Blessedness have no more to do than to repose in themselves and be their being... But such is the Blessedness of this Being that in its very non-action it magnificently operates and in its self-dwelling it produces mightily."

The first identification is that of Intelligence and Being. So too in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads the identification of *Brahman* and *Ātman* is the basic postulate. This identical Being (*sat*) is the essential Truth (*satya*) of the universe, it is the First (*pūrva*), Inextended (*avyakta*), Undivided (*advaita*) so that it can be said: "*sa eṣo' nimā aitad ātmyam idaṁ sarvaṁ, tat satyam . . .*"

In the explication of the idea of the unity and perfection of the intelligible world the most important detail for our comparison is the insistence, on both sides, on its immovability and immeasurability. The richest choice of attributes designating these absolute qualities can be found in the quoted analogies from the Gītā. In II, 24, it is called "fixed, allpervasive, constant, immovable, eternal" (*nityaḥ, sarvagataḥ, sthāṇur-acalo'yam syanātanaḥ*). It is

obvious that the definition of the irrational character of the Absolute, mentioned in the next sentence of the *Gītā* (as *acintya* but *viditvā*), will possibly be no less explicit in the *Vedānta* than in the Plotinian metaphysical construction. Let us remember *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I, 3, 10-11): "Beyond the senses are the objects, and beyond the objects is the mind; beyond the mind is the intelligence, and beyond the intelligence is the great self. Beyond the great self is the unmanifest; beyond the unmanifest is the spirit (*puruṣa*). Beyond the spirit there is nothing; that is the end, that is the final goal." According to Yājñavalkya (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV, 5, 15) the transcendence of the supreme principle of intelligence becomes evident in the impossibility of its positive definition: "That self is (to be described as) 'not this, not this' (*neti, neti*)... Indeed, by what would one know the knower?" - "This eternal greatness of *Brahman* is not increased by work, nor diminished" (ibid IV, 4, 23).

In this imperturbable integrity of Being and Intelligence is contained the supreme Bliss of the *Vedānta*. The most condensed expression of this trinity in its unique perfection is witnessed in the concluding sentence of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III,9,28 as "*viññānam ānandam brahma*". In the course of development of the philosophical terminology this designation had been gradually changed until the standardized formula *sat-cit-ānanda* was coined.<sup>7</sup>

### III

The last sentence quoted from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*, III, is the conclusion of one among many Upaniṣadic allegories on *the tree of existence*. There are three essential elements in those allegories. In our example they are expressed in the following terms:

"As the tree, king of the wood, so indeed is a man..."

"A tree when it is felled springs up from its root in a newer form; from what root does man spring forth when he is cut off by death?"

"When born, he is not born again, for who should create him again? *Brahman*, the knowledge, the Bliss is the final goal of him who offers gifts, as well as of him who stands firm and who knows it."

This theory of oneness of the world-soul was known to Plotinus and he takes a critical viewpoint of it in his tractate on *Fate* (III,1,4). There we find the first allegory of the tree: "Is it one Soul, penetrating all things and performing all acts? Is every separate phenomenon a member of the whole that moves in its place with the general movement?... *Is it like in a plant whose principle is in the root, and*

we are asked on that account to reason that not only the interconnection linking the root to all the members and every member to every other, but the entire activity and experience of the plant, as well, must be one organized overruling, a destiny of the plant? - But such an extremity of determination, a destiny so all-pervasive, does away with the very destiny that is affirmed: it shatters the sequence and cooperation of causes... If all that performs acts and is subject to experience constitutes one substance, if one thing does not really produce another thing under causes leading back continuously one to another, then it is not a truth that all happens by causes, since all beings constitute only one single being. Then we are not ourselves, nothing is our act, our thought is not ours, our decisions are the reasoning of something outside ourselves ...”

The central Upaniṣadic theory to whose deduction the simile of the tree is attached is Uddālaka Āruṇi's teaching on *tat tvam asi* in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI,8. The same subject, including the *sequel of examples* used to demonstrate the corresponding theory inspired the most extensive analogy in Plotinus, though in his writings the simile itself appears also in several other contexts.

It is necessary to remember that Yājñavalkya, who was a student with Uddālaka Āruṇi, repeats in a condensed form, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV,5, the main tenets of his teacher Uddālaka on this subject, in order to connect therewith his own deduction of “*neti, neti*”.

Passages which will be compared here consist, on both sides of fairly condensed texts. In *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI, the conclusion concerning the identity of Being, “*tat tvam asi*”, is repeated in nine instances (para 8-16). Yājñavalkya, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* V, took over from *Chāndogya* two of those examples: on the rivers and on the salt (12-13). In Plotinus the analogous deduction is condensed in para 10 of the 8th treatise in the *III Ennead* (on *Contemplation*). He mentions first the simile of the *rivers*, then follows that of the *tree*. In *Chāndogya* the first example refers to plants and animals in general (9), the next to rivers, the simile of the tree is the third, while the following are the seeds of *nyagrodha*—a typical symbol of the cosmic tree “growing upside down”, described also in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (XV, 1-3)—and then the lump of salt (13). The last three examples are taken from human life and are by far not so characteristic for the new method of reasoning as the first four.

In the chapter preceding the series of examples (8) the “root of beings” is mentioned, the supposition of the entire sequel being that “all these creatures have their root in Being, they have

Being as their abode, Being as their support". Plotinus concludes the paragraph preceding the homologous *similia* (9), with the statement: "Consequently, the One is none of these beings, it precedes all beings". From this view-point his imagination finds its approach to the ancient analogies of the rivers and their source, of the tree and its roots. No wonder that his conclusion appears analogous to Yājñavalkya's theory of "*neti, neti*".

*Simile of the rivers*

"These rivers flow the eastern toward the east, the western toward the west. They go just from sea to sea. They become the sea itself. Just as these rivers, while there, do not know: 'I am this one', 'I am that one', in the same manner all these creatures even though they have come forth from Being do not know that they have come forth from Being." (*Chānd. Up. VI, 10*)

*Plotinus*: "Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains always integrally as it was; The tides that proceed from it are at one within it before their several ways, yet all, in some sense, know beforehand down what channels they will pour their streams." (*III Enn., 8, 10*)

*Simile of the tree*

"Of this mighty tree if someone should strike at the root it would bleed but still live: if someone should strike it at the middle, it would bleed but still live. If someone should strike at the top, it would bleed but still live. Being pervaded by its living self, it stands firm, drinking in its moisture and rejoicing. If the life leaves one branch of it, then it dries up; if it leaves a second, then it dries up; if it leaves the third, then it dries up. If it leaves the whole, the whole dries up... Verily, indeed, this body dies, when deprived of the living self, the living self does [not die. That which is the subtle essence this whole world has for its self..." (*Chānd. Up. VI, 11*).

*Plotinus*: "Or think of the Life coursing throughout some mighty tree while it is the stationary Principle of the whole, in no sense scattered over all that extent but, as it were, vested in the root: it is the giver of the entire and manifold life of the tree, but remains unmoved itself, not manifold but the Principle of that manifold life, (*III Enn. 8,10*)

In this second analogy a passage from the *V Ennead* (2,2), where Plotinus returns to the same topic, seems to reproduce more faithfully

the imaginative composition of the Upaniṣadic picture: "Looking more minutely into the matter, *when shoots or topmost boughs are lopped fram some growing plant*, where goes the soul that was present in them? Simply, whence it came: soul never knows spatial separation and therefore is always within the source. If you cut the root to pieces, or burn it, where is the life that was present there? In the soul, which never went outside of itself."

"Neti neti"

In connection with the philosophical interpretation of these two metaphors by Plotinus it is interesting to extend the analysis of the homologous elements to the next simile in the *Chānd. Up.*, that of the *seed*, and also to the simile of the *salt*, as taken over by Yājñavalkya in *Bṛh. Up.* IV, 5, 13.

"...That subtle essence which you do not perceive, verily, from that very essence this great *nyagrodha* tree exists." (*Chānd. Up.* VI, 12)

"As a mass of salt is without inside, without outside, is altogether a mass of salt, even so is this Self, without inside, without outside, altogether a mass of intelligence only. Having arisen out of these elements (the Self) vanishes again in them. There is no more cognizance (*saṁjñā*)... That Self is (to be described only as) 'not this, not this.'" *Bṛh. Up.* IV, 5, 13)

*Plotinus* : "Now when we reach the One — the stationary Principle in the tree, in the animal, in Soul, in the All — we have in every case the most powerful, the precious element: when we come to the One in the Authentically Existing Beings—their Principle and source of Potentiality—shall we lose confidence and suspect it of being nothing? Certainly this Absolute is nothing, *nothing of that whose source it is*. Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of it — not existence, not essence, not life — since it is That which transcends all these. Abstract from Being in order to hold it! ... " (*III Enn.*, 8. 10)

#### IV

The uplift through contemplation or initiation into mysteries, interpreted in the *VI Ennead* (9, 11) as a return from the world of multiplicity to the original unity proceeds by three higher degrees of manifestation or emanation of the world (world-*ṣoul*, Reason, Unity). It was mentioned above that Radhakrishnan had compared these three stages with the phases of awakening which, in the representational world of the Upaniṣads correspond to stages of dream.

In the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* the sphere of the waking state is called *vaiśvānara*. According to Śamkara's commentary it is so named because it "leads all creatures in diverse ways" of existential activities. The next state, *taijasa*, is that of dreaming. In it consciousness is limited to the "cognizance of internal states", since he who sleeps dreams "by his own brightness, by his own light; in that state the person becomes self-illuminated" (*Brh. Up.* IV, 3, 9). The third is the state of deep dreamless sleep. It is called the state of knowledge (*prajñā*) by identification, since the subject and the object have "become one" in the totality or "mass of knowledge full of bliss". "The fourth state" (*turiya*) is the ultimate state of the *Ātman*. According to *Māṇḍūkya Up.* it is "not that which cognizes the internal, not that which cognizes the external (objects) not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive ... This is *Ātman*." The difference between the two latter stages, according to commentaries, is that the former still contains latent "seeds" of worldliness — the *logoi spermatikoi*, assumed in the same function by Plotinus.

The essential connotations of this "road of introversion", as Radhakrishnan designates it<sup>9</sup> are given in the V *Ennead* (3, 8): "Even in our own sphere our vision is light or rather becomes one with the light, and it sees light for it sees colours. In the intellectual, the vision sees not through some organic medium but by and through itself alone, for its object is not external: by one light it sees another not through any intermediate agency; a light sees a light, that is to say a thing sees itself... Think of the traces of this light upon the soul, then say to yourself that such and more beautiful and broader and more radiant, is the light itself; thus you will approach to the nature of the Intellectual Principle and the Intellectual Realm... It is not the source of the generative life of the soul which, on the contrary, it draws inward, preserving it from such diffusion, holding it to the love of the splendour of its Prior. Nor does it give the life of perception and sensation..."

Efforts to overcome duality on this ground, in the case of Plotinus, have been stressed by Radhakrishnan, too. However, among several aspects of the *ideal adequation* of the three stages of identity, imperturbability and quietness (cf. III *Ennead*, 8. 5), we do not find in Plotinus any *imaginative adequation* to the peculiar subject of dream-consciousness. On the Indian side, a positive, almost creative power of "realization" had been attributed to the dream, so that the proceedings of the meditation (*samādhi*, *dhyāna*)

could be deduced directly therefrom. For Plotinus dream is a variegated picture of illusion, one of the imaginative elements of Indian *māyā* or *upādhi*.

The central comparative theme of this article would, however, remain incomplete if such aspects of partial and peripheric coincidences of the dream-motive were not also reconsidered as well.

In Bṛh. Up. IV, 3, 9 — quoted at beginning of this article — Yājñavalkya gives a description of the dream as a two-sided psychical power of internal illuminations. The awareness of the dream as pure phantasy is still very spontaneous, as if its philosophical prejudicing was just about to take some shape: “Verily, there are just two states of this person (the state of being in) this world and in the other world. There is an intermediate third state, that of being sleep. By standing in this intermediate state one sees both those states... Now whatever the way is to the state of being in the other world, having obtained that way one sees both the evils (of this world) and the joys (of the other world). When he goes to sleep he takes along the material of this all-embracing world, himself tears it apart, himself builds it up... In the state of dream going up and down, the god makes many forms for himself...” (id. 13).

The comparison of the dream with a mirror, in *Kāṭha Up.* (II,3,5) recalls another analogy to the idea of *māyā* in the III *Ennead*, though its illusoriness effects primarily the world of ancestors and of demons (*gandharva*) the same as in the last example quoted from Yājñavalkya: “As in a mirror, so in the soul, as in a dream, so in the world of the manes, as (an object) is seen in water, so in the world of the *gandharvas*; as shade and light in the world of Brahmā”. — Plotinus (III, 6-7) compares “those who, on the evidence of thrust and resistance identify body with real being and find assurance of truth in the phantasms that reach us through the senses, to those who, like dreamers take for actualities the figments of their sleeping vision. The sphere of sense pertains to the Soul in its slumber, for all of the Soul that is in the body is asleep and the true getting-up without the body and not with it. In any movement that takes the body with it there is no more than a passage from sleep to sleep, from bed to bed. The veritable walking or rising is to abandon definitely the corporeal things.” — “The Being that we imagine in the matter is no Being, but a passing play. All that seems to be present in it plays with us, it is only a phantasm within another phantasm; it is like a mirror showing things as in itself when they are really elsewhere, filled in appearance but actually empty, containing nothing, pretending everything... images playing upon an image devoid of Form...”

In order to complete the range of analogies referring to the dream-motive, let us remember *Maitri Up.* (VI, 25) where the allegory of dream is connected to that of the "cavern of senses", the *tertium comparationis* being essentially the same as in the famous chapter from Plato's "Republic" (VII, 1): "And thus it has been said elsewhere: 'He who has his senses indrawn as in sleep, who has his thoughts perfectly pure as in dream, who, while in the cavern of the senses, is not under their control, perceives him who is called Praṇava, the leader'."

## V

The approach to the comparative analysis of the theory of contemplation in the preceding chapter brought us to a subject in which the adherence of imaginative elements to the central conception loses its strength and becomes accidental. In such cases *the frequency of fortuitous associations* may still indicate some prospective extension of analogies, or rather of *homologous trends in the development of ideas*. At this limit the *problem of differential analysis* arises also within the scope of our study.

Several authors have attempted to deduce from a phenomenological *analysis of the contemplative thought* differential criteria for a global delimitation, or rather discrimination, of European and Indian, or still better, of Eastern and Western philosophies. Contrary to such ambitions, the purpose of the following concluding considerations on the Philosophy of Plotinus is to add a specific example of differential analysis, not as a tentative contrary alternative to the preceding interpretation by doxographic analogies, but rather as their prospective extension.

Authors who have dealt with problems of the logic of cultural (or "moral") sciences in recent times—and they are not many<sup>9</sup>—agree that the comparative method can attain a wider scope and bring about results of essential importance only when it is directed to the investigation of common features. Pointing out of differences would never constitute the sufficient reason for a scientific method based on general principles. The comparative value of the differential analysis should therefore always be considered in its dependence on the basic meaning previously determined by the method of analogy.

At the beginning of chapter III, a problem of differential analysis was pointed out, referring to the theory of oneness of the world-soul. Essential difference in the conceptual *sub-stratum* had to be distinguished *within* the analogy of the imaginative representation used as a common example in the discussion of the metaphysical theory of identity.



There Plotinus criticized a popular oriental theory as it probably was transmitted by the Stoics. If we try to estimate the depth of his objective knowledge of such theories of foreign provenance—theories whose objective historical confrontation in the cultural sphere of Alexandria has to be taken for granted—then the comparison of two different examples of criticism to that effect, within his own philosophy, may reveal also some characteristics of our philosopher's own method.

Within the structure of the Plotinian system the theory of contemplation occupies the central position. By it his system obtained its specific place in the history of Western philosophy. The same problem re-acquired an equivalent value only when it was brought into the centre of a wider philosophical interest in modern comparative studies of Indian and European philosophies. Western interest in *yoga* and Buddhist meditation may confirm the actual importance of this topic also beyond our limits.

In this case, as in that mentioned above, the differential element should be considered as an essential *symptom of the depth* in which the analogy is rooted. It is obvious, and has often been stressed, that "philosophers almost never do describe the teaching of others in an objective and independent way, but rather interwoven in their own systems as proof and illustration".<sup>10</sup> If comparative philosophy should just serve the purpose of discovering plagiarisms (as naive enthusiasts sometimes tried to do), then its own *raison d'être* would become null and void—another barren ideal of a negative philosophy.

The basic approach of Plotinus to the problem of contemplation results from a trend of thought which seems to proceed from a direction opposite to that which we would expect in the Indian system. He considers contemplation primarily as the process of world manifestation or emanation. Nevertheless, the opposite intention of the contemplative thought, that of liberation from duality and ignorance, is known to him as well, so that both courses merge ultimately in one "circuit": "Action, thus, is set towards contemplation and an object of contemplation... The Soul produces for the purpose of contemplation, in the desire of knowing all its contents... Thus once more, action is brought back to contemplation...in the course of its circuit, and ... the knowing faculty comes to identification with the object of its knowledge" (III, 8, 6). The Soul "refused to have the total intelligible Being simultaneously present", "it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession". Therefore "time was produced by desire succession," and contemplation could "uncoil" in a twofold direction: "A Seed is at rest; the nature-principle within, uncoiling outwards, makes way towards what seems

to it a large life ; but by that partition it looses...For the Kosmos moves only in Soul — the only space within the range of the All open to it to move in — and therefore its Movement has always been in the Time which inheres in Soul” (III, 7, 11), while “the addition introduces deprivation and deficiency” (III, 9, 7).

The orphic symbols of Seed and Serpent are associated, in the same passage of Plotinus, with reminiscences seeming more explicitly Vedic when connected with his theory of Time whose Iranian, *zurvanist*, inspiration could hardly be put in doubt. These seem to be the stages of the philosopher’s ideal journey to the Indo-Iranian East, in space and time, up to the analogy of the Vedic Creation Hymn (R. V. X, 129) : “But from the Divine Beings thus at rest within themselves, how did this Time first emerge? We can scarcely call upon the Muses to recount its origin *since they were not in existence then—perhaps not even if they had been.* The engendered thing, Time, itself, can best tell us how it rose and became manifest...”(l.c.)

In order to explain the appearance of the dual aspect of the world-process by his theory of creative contemplation Plotinus made use “indeed of a puzzling mass of various arguments and illustrations” and achieved, according to E. Bréhier, nothing more than “a paradox that he maintained for all the levels of Being”<sup>11</sup>. This set of arguments may appear in a less puzzling light, if we compare the Indian, Advaita, version of his theory with the share of explicitly western traditions in it.

Without entering into further details, let us remember once more Yājñavalkya’s description of the dream-consciousness as an intermediate state of existence and try to understand in the Upaniṣadic light the following conclusion of Plotinus : “It is not in the soul’s nature to touch utter nothingness ; the lowest descent is into evil and, so far, into non-being : but to utter nothing, never. When the soul begins to mount, it comes not to something alien but to its very self... self-gathered it is no longer in the order of Being, it is in the Supreme. There is thus a converse in virtue of which the essential man outgrows Being, becomes identical with the Transcendent of Being”.

In the following quotation from the I *Ennead*, the state of contemplation is described not as spreading but as condensation of the “ray of attention” (to apply an adequate term from Husserl’s phenomenology) in whose spotlight alone the world of duality can “uncoil” ; the state of contemplation indicating the path of freedom, analogous to *samādhi* in its proper sense. In general lines this analogy can be reconnected also with the final part of the II *adhyāya* of the

*Bhagavad Gītā* and thus complete the thematic cycle of the first analogy quoted in this paper.

I *Ennead* (4, 9-12): "Wisdom is, in its essential nature, an Authentic-Existence, or rather is The Authentic-Existent and this Existent does not perish in one asleep or, to take the particular case presented to us, in the man out of his mind: the Act of this Existent is continuous within him; and is sleepless activity: the Sage, therefore, even unconscious, is still the Sage in Act... Consequently, the Sage arrived at this state has the truer fullness of life, life not spilled out in sensation but gathered closely within itself... pleasure that does not rise from movement and is not a thing of process, for all that is good is immediately present to the Sage and the Sage is present to himself: his pleasure, his contentment, stands, immovable."

*Bhagavad Gītā*, (II, 68-69): "Therefore whosoever has withdrawn on all sides the senses from the objects of sense, his mentality is stabilized. What is night for all beings, therein the man of restraint is awake; wherein other beings are awake, that is night for the Sage of vision."

The last two sentences quoted from Plotinus contain almost literally the essential elements of the stages of *dhyāna* in the Buddha's formulation: "... the second *dhyāna*, a state of joy and ease, born of the serenity of concentration, when no reasoning or investigation goes on ... Mindful and self-possessed he experiences in his body that ease which the *arhats* talk of when they say: 'The man serene and self-possessed is well at ease',: and so he enters into and abides in the third *dhyāna*."

We have considered the theory of contemplation as an example of differential analysis of analogous theories and, before that mentioned the criticism of Plotinus concerning a typically oriental theory of *pan-en-theism* with a view to confirming the conclusions drawn from the preceding analysis of the imaginative aspect in the structure of the Plotinian thought. Thus, the extension of analogies from occasional images to a homologous development of ideas represented by them reflects an intensive elaboration of homologous theories marked by critical distinction and specification of different possible solutions within their scope. Avoiding of superficial analogies that might suggest a syncretism in taking over bits and pieces appears evident. In the system of Plotinus consistent thinking to the end always corresponds to a coherent inspiration. Compared to typical eclectic influences of oriental views in other hellenistic schools, notably throughout the development of the Stoic philosophy, the system of Plotinus can be distinguished by the essential mark of its ideal analogies

with authentic Indo-Iranian traditions. To what extent a reliable knowledge of those sources—whose existence at Plotinus' times seems to be confirmed by recent research—may have contributed to the ideal harmony of his system, is a question to which a definite reply has not yet been given, though at the present state of studies it does not any longer seem to be definitely insoluble.

1. "Les relations extérieures de l'Inde (I)", "La doctrine bramannique à Rome au IIIe siècle" — Pondicherry, Institut Français d'Indologie, 1956.

2. "The Principal Upaniṣads", London, 1953. p. 699-705.

3. Quotations from the Gītā are, in general lines, taken from F. Edgerton's translation, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 38, Cambridge, Mass., 1944. Those from Plotinus follow St. Mackenna's translation, London, 1917—1930. In both cases slight changes have been made where deemed necessary to the author, mainly for terminological reasons.

4. For the comparison with the actor cf. *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*, 42: ... *prakṛter vibhūta-yogān naṣṭvād vyavatiṣṭhate liṅgam*.

5. Cf. *Kaṣha Up.* II, 3, 17: ... *taṃ svāc-charīrāt pravṛthen-muñjādi veṣikam dhairyeṇa*.

6. The quotation is retranslated from the French version of Anilbaran Roy's "The Message of the Gītā as interpreted by Shri Aurobindo".

7. This problem was studied very carefully by P. Deussen in his "Philosophy of the Upaniṣads" ("Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie" I, 2—Leipzig, 1922, 4th ed., pp. 115-133.)

8. l. c. 704.

9. Here I have in view mainly: P. Masson-Oursel, "La Philosophie Comparée", Paris, 1923; E. Rothacker, "Logik u. Systematik der Geisteswissenschaften" ("Handbuch der Philosophie", Abt. II), München, 1927; and E. Cassirer, "Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften", Göteborg, 1942.

10. F. Cumont, "Die Orientalischen Religionen im Römischen Heidentum"—Leipzig, Teubner, 1913, p. 13

11. E. Bréhier, French translation of the Enneads, III, 151.