ISSN 2299-0356

Filozoficzne Aspekty Genezy — **2025, t. 22, nr 1**

Philosophical Aspects of Origin s. 1–30

https://doi.org/10.53763/fag.2025.22.1.252

ARTYKUŁ ORYGINALNY / ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Nondual Panpsychism and Panentheism: Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, Rāmakṛṣṇa, and Vivekānanda

Received: November 1, 2025. Accepted: February 13, 2026. Published online: April 1, 2026.

Abstract: Nondual Panpsychism, a revisionary metaphysics, is panpsychic in maintaining that everything is a cognitive system. It is nondualistic in claiming that reality is neither monist nor dualistic. This article articulates its panentheistic implications. Nondual Panpsychism explains the emergence of finite cognitive systems from the cosmic cognitive system. Rejecting Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa's hard theological determinism, it affirms the theological libertarianism of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and Swami Vivekānanda. Although *māyā* is crucial to Vivekānanda's Panentheism, he cannot account for it. God's essence is to manifest. As God's manifestation, the cosmos is real. God transcends the cosmos by not being determined by it. God pervades the cosmos by creatively responding to it. God manifests as the despised and rejected. It explains why God does not laugh at some jokes.

Keywords:

cosmopsychism;
panpsychism;
Pratyabhijñā Śaivism;
Rāmakṛṣṇa;
Vivekānanda

1. Preliminary remarks

This article articulates the panentheistic implications of Nondual Panpsychism, a revisionary metaphysics. "Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is

concerned to produce a better structure". [1] Fritzman introduces Nondual Panpsychism, describes its main features, explains how it overcomes Micropsychism's combination problem and Cosmopsychism's decombination problem (described below), and contrasts it with versions of Idealism and Cosmopsychism. [2] For reasons of space, this article discusses only those aspects of Nondual Panpsychism that either are required to comprehend it or are directly relevant to its Panentheism.

Articulating Nondual Panpsychism's panentheistic implications is an enterprise in analytic philosophical theology. Referring to the disciplines of philosophy and theology, Murray and Rea explain:

> In keeping with the recent academic trend, contemporary philosophers of religion have been unwilling to maintain hard and fast distinctions between the two disciplines. As a result, it is often difficult in reading recent work to distinguish what the philosophers are doing from what the theologians (and philosophers) of past centuries regarded as strictly within the theological domain. Indeed, philosophers and theologians alike are now coming to use the term "analytic theology" to refer to theological work that aims to explore and unpack theological doctrines in a way that draws on the resources, methods, and relevant literature of contemporary analytic philosophy. The use of this term reflects the heretofore largely unacknowledged reality that the sort of work now being done under the label "philosophical theology" is as much *theology* as it is *philosophical*. [3]

"At present", Wood further observes, "it is not clear whether there is any meaningful difference between Christian »analytic theology« and Christian »philosophical theology,« which has been treated as a kind of philosophy". [4] Prescinding from the Christian tradition, Wood's observation also applies to this article. Since

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[1] P.F. Strawson, **Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics**, Routledge, London 1959, p. 9.

[2] See J.M. Fritzman, "Nondual Panpsychism: From the Extended Mind to Universal Consciousness and Śiva", *Filozoficzne Aspekty Genezy* [*Philosophical Aspects of Origin*] 2024, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 109–150, https://doi.org/10.53763/fag.2024.21.2.243.

[3] Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea, "Philosophy and Christian Theology", in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2021 Edition, https://tiny.pl/q8cm_0qnd [11.03.2026] [emphasis in the original].

[4] William Wood, "Philosophy and Christian Theology", in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2022 Edition, https://tiny.pl/k8vqxt_tp [11.03.2026].

it engages Indian philosophers in the Hindu tradition, this is also an enterprise in cross-cultural philosophy of religion.

Following this section, this article has nine others. The second explains how Nondual Panpsychism differs from alternative versions of Panpsychism, how it refigures Panpsychism, and how it is nondualistic. Section three considers a medieval Indian philosophy, Pratyabhijñā Śaivism. The fourth section affirms the Panentheism of the Indian mystic, Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa (1836–1886), but rejects his hard theological determinism. Section five supports the Panentheism of an Indian philosopher, Swami Vivekānanda (1863–1902), and his theological libertarianism. The sixth section argues that *māyā*, although crucial to Vivekānanda's Panentheism, has no place within it. Section seven contrasts Nondual Panpsychism and Vivekānanda's Panentheism. The eighth section briefly summarizes the comparisons of Panpsychism's Panentheism with the Panentheisms of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, Rāmakṛṣṇa, and Vivekānanda. Section nine proclaims that God manifests as the despised and rejected. The final section explains why God does not laugh at my jokes.

2. Varieties of Panpsychism

This section explains how Nondual Panpsychism differs from alternative versions of Panpsychism, how it refigures Panpsychism, and why it is nondualistic. The next four paragraphs mostly follow the discussion of Panpsychism in Goff, Seager, and Allen Hermanson. [5]

Panpsychism holds that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous. There are two types of Panpsychism: Micropsychism and Cosmopsychism. Micropsychism maintains that such microlevel things as subatomic particles or quantum fields have mentality (or proto-consciousness, mindedness, or experience). Constitutive Micropsychism further claims that macrolevel mentality is fully grounded in the microlevel mentality, which is fundamental. Micropsychism faces the "combination problem" [6] of explaining how mentality at the microlevel grounds mentality at the macrolevel. Cosmopsychism claims that the cosmos has mentality. It is com-

[5] See Philip Goff, William Seager, and Sean Allen-Hermanson, "Panpsychism", in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2022 Edition, https://tiny.pl/njb4qcf45 [11.03.2026].

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patible with Constitutive Micropsychism if the cosmos's mentality is fully grounded in microlevel mentality.

According to the Priority Monism of Schaffer, however, only the cosmos is fundamental and all concrete particulars are derivative. [7] When Cosmopsychism is coupled with Priority Monism, the resulting position is called Priority Cosmopsychism or Constitutive Cosmopsychism: the mentality of entities in the cosmos is fully grounded in the mentality of the cosmos, which is fundamental. Constitutive Cosmopsychism faces the "decombination problem" [8] of explaining how the cosmos' mentality grounds the mentality of entities within it.

In addition to constitutive versions of Micropsychism and Cosmopsychism, there are nonconstitutive versions. Nonconstitutive Micropsychism holds that macrolevel mentality strongly emerges from microlevel mentality. Since macrolevel mentality is strongly emergent, it is only partially grounded in microlevel mentality. There are two forms of Emergent Micropsychism. On Layered Emergentist Micropsychism, microlevel mentality co-exists with macrolevel mentality. Mentality at both the microlevel and macrolevel is fundamental. According to Fusionist Emergentist Micropsychism, microlevel mentality combines into macrolevel mentality, such that the merged microlevel mentality ceases to exist as microlevel mentality, existing only as macrolevel mentality. Microlevel mentality is fundamental until it fuses; macrolevel mentality then emerges, which thereby becomes fundamental.

Nonconstitutive Cosmopsychism holds that the mentality of entities in the cosmos — variously referred to as subjects, finite centers of consciousness, or alters — is only partially grounded in the mentality of the cosmos. The mentality of the cosmos and that of its entities are fundamental. Nonconstitutive Cosmopsy-

[6] William E. Seager, "Consciousness, Information, and Panpsychism", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1995, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 280 [272–288], https://tiny.pl/xy2b489g [11.03.2026].

[7] See Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What", in: David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), **Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology**, Oxford University Press, New York 2009, pp. 347–383, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199546046.003.0012; Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole", *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 119, No. 1, pp. 31–76, https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-2009-025.

[8] Miri Albahari, "Beyond Cosmopsychism and the Great I Am: How the World Might be Grounded in Universal »Advaitic« Consciousness", in: William E. Seager (ed.), **The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism**, Routledge, New York 2020, p. 121 [119–130].

chism is analogous to Layered Emergent Micropsychism, as the cosmos' mentality and the mentality of its entities coexist.

Inspired by Mathews [9], Kriegel [10], Nagasawa and Wager [11], Shani [12], Goff [13], Shani and Kepler [14], Gasparri [15], Kastrup [16], Albahari [17], Vaidya [18], and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, Nondual Panpsychism posits that the cosmos is a cognitive system. The cosmic cognitive system is the substrate of all other systems. It is the horizon of all horizons against which all objects appear. The cosmos can be thought of as a totality, however, as the object that appears against itself as its own horizon.

[9] See Freye Mathews, "Pansychism as Paradigm", in: Michael Blamauer (ed.), **The Mental as Fundamental: New Perspectives on Panpsychism**, Ontos Verlag, Heusenstamm 2011, pp. 141–156, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110319859.141; Freye Mathews, "Living Cosmos Panpsychism", in: William E. Seager (ed.), **Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism**, Routledge, London 2019, pp. 131–143.

[10] See Uriah Kriegel, "Kantian Monism", *Philosophical Papers* 2012, Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 23–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2012.662806.

[11] See Yujin Nagasawa and Khai Wager, "Panpsychism and Priority Cosmopsychism", in: Godehard Brüntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla (eds.), **Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives**, Oxford University Press, New York 2016, pp. 113–129, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199359943.003.0005.

[12] See Itay Shani, "Cosmopsychism: A Holistic Approach to the Metaphysics of Experience", *Philosophical Papers* 2015, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 389–437, https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2015.1106709; Itay Shani, "Cosmopsychism, Coherence, and World-Affirming Monism", *The Monist* 2022, Vol. 105, No. 1, pp. 6–24, https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onab020.

[13] See Philip Goff, **Consciousness and Fundamental Reality**, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017; Philip Goff, "Micropsychism, Cosmopsychism and the Grounding Relation", in: William E. Seager (ed.), **Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism**, Routledge, London 2019, pp. 144–156.

[14] See Itay Shani, Joachim Keppler, "Beyond Combination: How Cosmic Consciousness Grounds Ordinary Experience", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2018, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 390–410, https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2018.30.

[15] See Luca Gasparri, "Priority Cosmopsychism and Advaita Vedānta", *Philosophy East and West* 2019, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 130–142, https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2019.0002.

[16] See Bernardo Kastrup, **The Idea of the World: A Multi-Disciplinary Argument for the Mental Nature of Reality**, Iff Books, Hampshire 2019.

[17] See Albahari, "Beyond Cosmopsychism…", pp. 119–130.

[18] See Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, "A New Debate on Consciousness: Bringing Classical and Modern Vedānta Into Dialogue with Contemporary Analytic Panpsychism", in: Ayon Maharaj (ed.), **The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedanta**, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2020, pp. 393–422, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350063266.ch-014.

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This requires conceptualizing the cosmos as a non-wellfounded set, such that the cosmos contains itself. "The term *non-wellfounded set* refers to sets which contain themselves as members, and more generally which are part of an infinite sequence of sets each term of which is an element of the preceding set". [19] A set is non-wellfounded if there is an infinite descending sequence: ... $\in a_{n+1} \in a_n \in ... \in a_1 \in b$; for example: $x = \{1,\{1,\{1,\{1 .... \}\}\}\}$. [20]

Nondual Panpsychism is closer to nonconstitutive versions of Micropsychism and Cosmopsychism than to their constitutive versions, as those latter versions presuppose full grounding. Constitutive Micropsychism insists that macrolevel mentality is fully grounded in microlevel mentality; Constitutive Cosmopsychism asserts that the mentality of entities is fully grounded in the cosmos' mentality. Nondual Panpsychism accepts the account of metaphysical grounding in Fritzman, which argues that grounding is always partial, never full. [21]

However, Nondual Panpsychism differs from nonconstitutive versions of Micropsychism and Cosmopsychism in four crucial ways. First, those versions accept that some things are fundamental. Layered Emergentist Micropsychism and Fusionist Emergentist Micropsychism maintain that both microlevel mentality and macrolevel mentality are fundamental; Nonconstitutive Cosmopsychism claims that the cosmos' mentality and that of its entities are fundamental. Rejecting foundationalist accounts of grounding, Nondual Panpsychism follows Fritzman in maintaining that grounding is ubiquitous, multidirectional, and multilevel, producing an ontological web of relations, where each thing partially grounds — and, reciprocally, is partially grounded in — every other thing. [22]

Second, grounding is one-directional for nonconstitutive versions of micropsychism and cosmopsychism. According to Layered Emergentist Micropsychism and Fusionist Emergentist Micropsychism, macrolevel mentality is

[19] Lawrence S. Moss, "Non-Wellfounded Set Theory", in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2018 Edition, https://tiny.pl/rm4m5002f [11.03.2026] [emphasis in the original].

[20] See John Barwise and Larry Moss, "Hypersets", *Mathematical Intelligencer* 1991, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 31 [31–41], https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03028340.

[21] See J.M. Fritzman, "Metaphysical Grounding and Being's Incompleteness", *Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* 2024, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 329–345, http://doi.org/10.30687/Jolma/2723-9640/2024/02/001.

[22] See Fritzman, "Metaphysical Grounding...", pp. 329–345.

grounded in microlevel mentality; according to Nonconstitutive Cosmopsychism, the mentality of the cosmos' entities is partially grounded in its mentality. Because there is an ontological web of grounding relations, however, in a sense Nondual Panpsychism partly affirms both Layered Emergentist Micropsychism and Nonconstitutive Cosmopsychism. It maintains that the cosmos' cognition partially grounds that of its entities, their cognition partially grounds its, the cognition of microlevel entities partially grounds that of macrolevel entities, the cognition of macrolevel entities partially grounds that of microlevel entities, and the cognition of entities at the same level partially ground each other.

Third, for constitutive and nonconstitutive versions of Panpsychism, mentality is phenomenal consciousness, understood as Nagelian qualia, as the what-it-is-like to experience something and to have experience. However, Nondual Panpsychism denies that there is such phenomenal consciousness. Supposed phenomenal consciousness is access consciousness and forms of access consciousness accessed, higher order reflexive cognitive accessibility to access consciousness as "self-consciousness" and "monitoring-consciousness".[23] Nondual Panpsychism thereby refigures Panpsychism by claiming that everything is cognitive, and is a constituent in a cognitive system. "Cognition, in the sense of Atlan and Cohen,[24] most fundamentally involves choice of an action from a larger set of those available".[25] Entities have agency, as they choose actions. Cognition is intentional, as it is about options and content, and it is ubiquitous. The Pratyabhijñā Śaiva, Rāmakṛṣṇa, and Vivekānanda, or their translators, use "consciousness". When discussing their positions, this article acquiesces to that term.

The fourth way in which Nondual Panpsychism differs from constitutive and nonconstitutive versions of Panpsychism is that each of them implicitly presupposes that reality is whole and complete. However, Nondual Panpsychism is nondualistic in claiming that reality, although neither plural nor dual, is not one. Because grounding is always partial, moreover, each thing is partly ungrounded. No

[23] Ned Block, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1995, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 235 [227–247], https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00038188.

[24] See Henri Atlan and Irun R. Cohen, "Immune Information, Self-Organization, and Meaning", *International Immunology* 1998, Vol. 10, No. 6, pp. 711–717, https://doi.org/10.1093/intimm/10.6.711.

[25] Rodrick Wallace, "A Comment on Collective Belief", *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2020, Vol. 9, No. 7, p. 55 [55–57], https://wp.me/p1Bfg0-5eI [11.03.2026].

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thing is fully real. This is a condition of possibility of its reality. If a thing were fully grounded, *per impossible*, it would be wholly static and frozen, incapable of further development or change. This is true for each thing and for the cosmos itself. The monistic One is never fully one and reality is never completely real. This ontology is hunky: each thing partly grounds and is grounded by everything else, so that everything has parts and also is a constituent in a greater whole.

The proponents of Cosmopsychism do not explain why alters emerge from the cosmos' consciousness. Although it cannot be argued for here, Nondual Panpsychism maintains that to be is to appear. Even prior to the emergence of alters, finite cognitive systems, there is always already a diremption within the cosmos' cognitive system which allows it to appear to itself and so to be. A fissure divides the cosmos' cognition that appears from the cognition to which it appears. It is its own alter. In its self-cognition, the cognition that appears is nonidentical to the cognition to which it appears, and the cognition to which it appears does not appear to itself. It is, always already, one-becoming-two. As it becomes increasingly clear to itself, appearing as well as being appeared to, from multiple perspectives through the emergence of alters, it becomes ever more distinct from itself. Nonduality appertains both to the nonidentity between the cosmos' cognition and its alters, and to that within it.

The cosmos' cognition encompasses itself, its alters, their perspectives, while maintaining its distinct perspective. Alters are the cosmos' cognition, estranged from itself. Alters exist because of their estrangement from it and it continues through its self–alienation from them. Diremption is necessary but not misrecognition: alters can recognize that they are the cosmos' cognition, dirempted from itself. Their goal is the recognition that they are it and it is they.

3. Nondual Panpsychism and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism

Albahari [26], Gasparri [27], and Vaidya [28] discern connections between Cosmopsychism and Advaita Vedānta, which distinguishes *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* Brahman.

[26] See Albahari, "Beyond Cosmopsychism…", pp. 119–130.

[27] See Gasparri, "Priority Cosmopsychism…", pp. 130–142.

[28] See Vaidya, "A New Debate on Consciousness…", pp. 393–422.

Nirguṇa Brahman is ultimate reality, without qualities or attributes; it is unchanging, formless, undifferentiated, and pure (nonintentional) consciousness. *Saguṇa* Brahman, Brahman with qualities, is the personal God (*Īśvara*) who creates the cosmos. *Saguṇa* Brahman, the cosmos, and individual souls (*jīvas*) are real from the standpoint of conventional reality, but they are unreal from the perspective of ultimate reality. However, describing Cosmopsychism in terms of Advaita Vedānta risks inheriting its denial of conventional reality and associating the universal consciousness with an undifferentiated and static reality. [29]

Nondual Panpsychism looks to Kaśmir Śaivism's *pratyabhijñā* (recognition) system which holds that everything is Śiva, who is ultimate reality. [30] Śiva panentheistically manifests as the cosmos, pervading and becoming, but also transcending, the cosmos. As Śiva's manifestation, it is ontologically real and quasi-independent. Śiva has no goal in manifesting as the cosmos, other than the purposeless purposiveness of joyful self-expression.

Divine manifestation can be explicated in terms of play (*līlā*). Śiva's manifestation as the cosmos is Śiva's *līlā*. *Līlā* has sportive and theatrical senses. Berger et al. compare Śiva's manifestation as the cosmos to a king who, solely for amusement, writes a play in which he plays all of the characters, including the king. [31] They also compare Śiva's manifestation to the daydream of Adam Cook (played by Oscar Levant) in Vincente Minnelli's 1951 film, *An American in Paris*. Cook fantasizes that he is simultaneously the pianist, conductor, orchestra, and audience. He imagines performing the third movement of George Gershwin's *Concerto in F*. Their comparison would have been even more apt had Cook also daydreamed of himself composing that concerto.

Alternatively, Śiva's manifestation can be explicated in terms of set theory. Non-wellfounded set theory allows a set to contain itself as a member, and a non-wellfounded set has an infinite descending sequence. Multiset theory allows a set

[29] See Gasparri, "Priority Cosmopsychism…", pp. 130–142.

[30] See J.M. Fritzman, Sarah Ann Lowenstein, and Meredith Margaret Nelson, "Kaśmir to Prussia, Round Trip: Monistic Śaivism and Hegel", *Philosophy East and West* 2016, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 371–393, https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2016.0028; Sari L. Berger, J.M. Fritzman, and Brandon J. Vance, "Thinking With, Against, and Beyond the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy — and Back Again", *Asian Philosophy* 2018, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/09552367.2018.1432281.

[31] See Berger, Fritzman, and Vance, "Thinking With, Against, and Beyond the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy…", p. 4.

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to contain multiple instances of its members. Dynamic set theory allows members to be inserted into or deleted from a set. Śiva can be conceptualized as a non-well-founded multiset that dynamically transforms itself. Śiva contains an infinity of instances of Śiva. Moreover, Śiva contains only instances of Śiva.

Śiva is continually pulsating with dynamic and energetic waves. Initially, there is negative interference and the waves seemingly cancel each other. As the waves subsequently positively interfere with each other, their constructive interference manifests the cosmos through a series of emanations. Yet, as each subsequent emanation increases fragmentation, diversity, and forgetfulness that it is Śiva.

Anuttara (Supreme) is the moment when Śiva seems to be unmanifest, with negative interference among Śiva's waves. Even then, there is imperceptible motion whereby Śiva is manifesting. There is never a moment, temporal or logical, when Śiva is not becoming manifest:

> Even as it remains the One [...] the use of "*Anuttara*" as the idea of the supreme also carries with it the implication of two because the very form of the word is the comparative [...]. This comparative form in the word "*Anuttara*" indicates the presence of the other, since the very form by virtue of comparison inherently implicates the presence of a second, to whom the first is compared [...]. The grammatical form of the word "*anuttara*" implicates both the idea of the One and of Two". [32]

Extending this, Nondual Panpsychism maintains that *Anuttara*, regarded as a wholly unmanifest, is a nostalgic posit. Śiva is always dirempted. [33] Śiva's manifestations, alters, have Śiva as their ground, since they *are* Śiva. Śiva is also grounded in Śiva's alters: it is only through them that Śiva can appear and so be.

Pratyabhijñā Śaivism has incompatible Impersonal and Personal Components. [34] The Impersonal Component asserts hard theological determinism. Śiva is the sole actor and Śiva's manifestations lack free will. The Impersonal Component is similar to Rāmakṛṣṇa's hard theological determinism, discussed below. Nondual

[32] Loriliai Biernacki, "Abhinavagupta's Theogrammatical Topography of the One and the Many", in: Chris Boesel and S. Wesley Ariarajah (eds.), **Divine Multiplicity: Trinities, Diversities, and the Nature of Relation**, Fordham University Press, New York 2014, p. 96 [85–105].

[33] See Don Handelman and David Shulman, **God Inside Out: Śiva's Game of Dice**, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997.

[34] See Berger, Fritzman, and Vance, "Thinking With, Against, and Beyond the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy...".

Panpsychism repudiates the Impersonal Component and endorses the Personal Component.

The Personal Component accepts theological libertarianism. It resembles Vivekānanda's theological libertarianism, also discussed below. Śiva's manifestations, the cosmos and its members, have relative autonomy. Although ultimately everything is Śiva, the aspects of Śiva which are dissociated from Śiva have free will and agency. They are not marionettes. Śiva is intentional and differentiated consciousness. There is nothing other than Śiva. But Śiva is always othered. Śiva manifests as the cosmos. The cosmos is Śiva manifested. In this Panentheism, as in Meister Eckhart's, "God transcends creation because he [*sic*] is immanent to all creatures". [35]

Larson objects that Pratyabhijñā Śaivism inconsistently holds both that the cosmos is subsumed under Absolute Consciousness and that the cosmos has positive value. [36] He urges that there are only three consistent options. First, Absolute Consciousness alone is real and the cosmos is illusory (*māyā*), as in Advaita Vedānta. Second, in addition to Absolute Consciousness, there is a real, distinct, and determinate realm of becoming (*prakṛti*, *pariṇāma*), as in Sāṁkhya-Yoga. Third, Absolute Consciousness does not exist, as in Buddhism or materialism.

Larson's objection can be rebutted by privileging the Personal Component of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, which maintains that Absolute Consciousness, Śiva, is always intentional. Further, even when Śiva, as *Anuttara*, is conscious of only Śiva, the subject of consciousness is nonidentical to the object of consciousness. Further, the cosmos is Śiva's manifestation, such that Śiva both pervades and transcends the cosmos. The cosmos exists within Śiva. It is real. As Biernacki recognizes, this is a Panentheism. [37] There is only Śiva in that nothing is external to Śiva

[35] Bernard McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity", in: Dominic J. O'Meara (ed.), **Neoplatonism and Christian Thought**, SUNY Press, Albany 1982, p. 133 [128–139].

[36] See Gerald James Larson, "Review of *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* by Kamalakar Mishra", *Philosophy East and West* 1997, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 259–287, https://doi.org/10.2307/1399878.

[37] See Loriliai Biernacki, "Panentheism and Hindu Tantra: Abhinavagupta's Grammatical Cosmology", in: Loriliai Biernacki and Philip Clayton (eds.), **Panentheism Across the World's Traditions**, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, pp. 161–176, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199989898.003.0009.

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— *il n'y a pas de hors-Śiva*, to paraphrase Derrida. [38]

4. Rāmakṛṣṇa's Panentheism and Hard Theological Determinism

Rāmakṛṣṇa is an exponent of Vijñāna Vedānta. "*Vijñāna*" is his "term for the »intimate knowledge« of God as the infinite reality that is both personal and impersonal, with and without form, immanent in the universe and beyond it". [39] Further, "Sri Ramakrishna maintains that the impersonal Brahman-Ātman and the personal Śakti are complementary aspects of one and the same Infinite Reality". [40] Infinite Reality transcends both impersonality and personality: "Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly contrasts two types of spiritual experience: *jñāna* (»Knowledge«), the Advaitic realization of the impersonal Ātman, and *vijñāna* (»Intimate Knowledge«), a vaster, richer, and more intimate realization of God as the Infinite Reality that is both personal and impersonal, with and without form, immanent in the universe and beyond it". [41] Ramakrishna also holds that "the universe is a real manifestation of God". [42]

Distinguishing between God's essence and manifestation, Rāmakṛṣṇa maintains that God's essence always is omniscient, omnipotent, pure, and immaterial, even when God self-veils and self-limits by manifesting in the form of ignorance. He claims that there are seven planes of consciousness. Persons at the lower planes do not recognize that they are manifestations of God. Insofar as God manifests as an ignorant person, God does not have access to God's perspective but only to that person's ego-centric perspective. In this way, he solves Cosmopsy-

[38] See Jacques Derrida, **Of Grammatology: Corrected Edition**, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1997, p. 158, https://doi.org/10.56021/9781421419954.

[39] Ayon Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality: Sri Ramakrishna and Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion**, Oxford University Press, New York 2018, p. 1, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190868239.001.0001.

[40] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality...**, p. 62.

[41] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality...**, p. 16.

[42] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality...**, p. 23.

chism's decombination problem: "God thereby limits Herself in such a way that She »loses« Her own divine perspective and enjoys instead the respective conscious perspectives of each of those ignorant people. I put »loses« in scare-quotes, because Ramakrishna is committed to the panentheistic view that God in Her essence (*svarūpa*) still remains perfectly pure, omnipotent, and divine". [43] At the seventh plane of consciousness, people lose their individual perspectives and wholly merge in God's.

Discussing Marion, [44] Maharaj writes that, "from Sri Ramakrishna's standpoint, what remains unthought by Marion is the possibility that God is the paraconsistent Infinite Reality that is *both* the personal God of Love *and* the impersonal Absolute beyond subject-object duality". [45] Maharaj maintains that Rāmakṛṣṇa accepts a paraconsistent logic: "For Sri Ramakrishna, since 'everything is possible for God,' God is free from all limiting conditions, including even the law of contradiction. The first step in conceiving God without any conditions is to abandon the either-or paradigm of the rational intellect in favor of the both-and paradigm of *vijñāna*: the Infinite Reality is *both* personal and impersonal, *both* with and without form, *both* immanent and transcendent". [46]

Allen argues that Rāmakṛṣṇa should be interpreted as non-paraconsistently maintaining that God has impersonal and personal *aspects*, [47] however, and Medhananda accepts that Allen's non-paraconsistent interpretation is preferable (Medhananda previously published as Maharaj). [48] Rāmakṛṣṇa continually affirms that the Infinite Reality is impersonal and personal. He accepts Panentheism: "The panentheistic experience of *vijñāna* revealed to him that God has become every-

[43] Swami Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism**, Oxford University Press, New York 2022, p. 349, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197624463.001.0001.

[44] See Jean-Luc Marion, **God without Being: Hors-Texte**, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, second edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2012.

[45] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality…**, p. 79 [emphasis in the original].

[46] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality…**, p. 79 [emphasis in the original].

[47] See Michael S. Allen, "The Paraconsistent Brahman? *Saguṇatva*, *Nirguṇatva*, and the Principle of Non-Contradiction", *Hindu Studies* 2021, Vol. 25, pp. 73–78, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11407-021-09291-x.

[48] See Swami Medhananda, "Continuing the Philosophical Conversation on Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa: A Response", *Hindu Studies* 2021, Vol. 25, pp. 141–164, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11407-021-09300-z.

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thing in the universe". [49] The cosmos is in the Infinite Reality — and so the cosmos is an aspect of the Infinite Reality — but the Infinite Reality transcends the cosmos.

Rāmakṛṣṇa is a hard theological determinist: "Ramakrishna's belief in the complete inability of the human being to initiate action was total. Human agency is a pernicious illusion". [50] Rāmakṛṣṇa accepts occasionalism. God is the only causal agent. Each thing is a simple existence that depends solely on God. It has no causal efficacy. It moves (or not) only because God actively sustains its existence and movement. Although people have no free will, "ignorant people are under the *illusion* that they are free". [51]

His hard theological determinism is startling in light of his articulation of a both/and understanding of Infinite Reality, according to which Infinite Reality is both personal and impersonal, both with and without form, and both immanent and transcendent. Readers likely anticipated that Rāmakṛṣṇa would instead maintain that God alone does everything and that humans, as manifestations of God, also have free will.

Although that change in his position would have avoided the self-undermining of Rāmakṛṣṇa's actual position, discussed below, it nevertheless would reject his panentheistic metaphysics, a crucial aspect of Vijñāna Vedānta. Rāmakṛṣṇa believes that the cosmos is a real manifestation of God. People are not other than God. Rather, they are manifestations of God. Rāmakṛṣṇa expresses this in his theodicy. His response to the problem of evil has two dimensions, a "saint-making" theology and a panentheistic metaphysis. [52]

With the first dimension, God permits evil "in order to create saints". [53] By experiencing good and evil, people learn to overcome such evil tendencies as "anger, lust, and greed" and to cultivate the spiritual and ethical virtues necessary to real-

[49] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality...**, p. 245.

[50] Jeffrey J. Kripal, **Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna**, second edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998, p. 68.

[51] Maharaj, **Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality...**, p. 244 [emphasis in the original].

[52] Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism...**, p. 259.

[53] Ramakrishna, **The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna**, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York 1992, p. 97.

ize God. [54] Rāmakṛṣṇa accepts *karma*, rebirth, and universal salvation. Each person experiences suffering and happiness in accordance with that person's *karma*, which is the cumulative result of that person's past behavior in this life and in previous lives. Further, each person will eventually attain salvation, either in this life or a subsequent life.

With the second dimension, God both pervades and transcends the cosmos. Based on his own experience of *vijñāna*, Rāmakṛṣṇa claims that "God Herself has become everything — the universe and its living beings" referring to God's feminine form as Kālī. [55] "From Ramakrishna's panentheistic standpoint of *vijñāna*, since God Herself has become everyone, including both the victims of suffering and the inflicters of suffering, the problem of evil — which presupposes a *difference* between God and Her suffering creatures — no longer arises". [56] Everything that happens, whether it seems good or evil, is a manifestation of God. Because ignorant people have the illusion of free will, though, they can still strive to become better persons.

However, this Panentheism would entail that people do have free will. Although the cosmos can be differentiated from God, that differentiation is only relative. Further, differentiating the cosmos from God, according to the perspective of Rāmakṛṣṇa's panentheistic metaphysics, means differentiating one specific manifestation of God from God's other manifestations. As each piece of gold is fully gold, each manifestation of God is fully God. Each of God's manifestations has free will because God has free will. God's freedom is a necessary attribute of God's being. Hence, rather than maintaining that ignorant people are under the illusion that they are free, Rāmakṛṣṇa's Vijñāna Vedānta requires that ignorant people are free because they are manifestations of God. Their ignorance does not consist in their belief that they are free — they are free, as manifestations of God — but rather in their failure to recognize that they are manifestations of God.

Rāmakṛṣṇa should have endorsed theological libertarianism, holding that both God and God's manifestations have free will. Perhaps because he forgets his manifestationism when discussing free will, and perhaps because he does not want to

[54] Ramakrishna, **The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna...**, p. 97.

[55] Ramakrishna, **The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna...**, p. 818.

[56] Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism...**, p. 260 [emphasis in the original].

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suggest that God could be constrained by anything, he advocates for hard theological determinism. This is doubly unfortunate in ways that Rāmakṛṣṇa does not recognize. First, as noted above, hard theological determinism implicitly rejects his panentheistic metaphysics, a vital aspect of his Vijñāna Vedānta. Second, hard theological determinism itself implicitly presupposes free will and so it is self-undermining. He maintains that ignorant people have the *illusion* of free will. However, if God were the sole agent, as Rāmakṛṣṇa claims, people could not *have* illusions. Moreover, people could not have knowledge, as he says they can, neither *jñāna* nor *vijñāna*.

God operates humans as a ventriloquist operates a marionette. [57] Although the marionette seems to talk and move, the ventriloquist is the agent. God is the ventriloquist and everything else is the marionette. A marionette does not have mental states, although the marionette nonetheless seems to speak eloquently about many subjects. It is the ventriloquist who has mental states. Although people are real manifestations of God, God has mental states but they do not.

This requires that free will is a contingent attribute of God, an attribute which God's manifestations lack, although they are God become manifest. If free will is a necessary attribute of God, it is nonsensical to ask if God could freely choose to become wholly determined. If free will is a contingent attribute of God, however, it is an attribute that God could freely choose to not have. People might ask God — if, *per impossible*, they had the free will to ask questions — why God does not jettison free will and instead take on the attribute of determinism, like all of God's manifestations. "Why don't you become like us", they would jeer, if they could; "Scared?"

Rāmakṛṣṇa's hard theological determinism is self-undermining. In order for people to *have* illusions, they must have some degree of free will, such that illusions can be attributed to them. A ventriloquist can have illusions but not the marionette. This point can be generalized: people could not have mental states, according to hard theological determinism. More radically — since Rāmakṛṣṇa believes that everything is moved by God — nothing is alive.

Kant knows this! [58] He accepts a principle of inertia according to which an ob-

[57] See Ramakrishna, **The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna...**, p. 893.

[58] See Immanuel Kant, **Philosophy of Material Nature**, trans. James W. Ellington, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1985.

ject only changes velocity or trajectory when affected by an external force. To be alive, a creature must be able to move itself. Accepting the inertia principle, Kant concludes that nothing can move itself, and so nothing is alive. Biological organisms move only because they are affected by external forces. He maintains that humans can never comprehend how it is possible that, although matter is actually lifeless, organisms nevertheless seem to be alive. Similarly, Rāmakṛṣṇa that God is the sole agent and nothing is able to move itself. Things move only if God moves them. Hence, Rāmakṛṣṇa is committed to holding that nothing is alive.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's hard theological determinism is incompatible with his claim that God causes ignorant people to have illusions of free will. Given hard theological determinism, people have no illusions, beliefs, or thoughts. Indeed, there are no people, no organisms, no objects of any sort. There are only simple existences, God's manifestations which God moves. Vijñāna Vedānta collapses. There is not even *jñāna*, much less *vijñāna*.

5. Vivekānanda's Panentheism and Theological Libertarianism

Following his guru, Rāmakṛṣṇa, Vivekānanda believes that God becomes everything. His Panentheistic Cosmopsychism accepts the reality of both the impersonal and personal nondual Brahman. Although the impersonal Brahman is higher, and more comprehensive and complete than the personal Brahman, they are not opposed. The impersonal Brahman encompasses the personal Brahman. Ultimate reality includes and encompasses all personalities. Through a playful process of self-veiling and self-limitation, the Divine Cosmic Consciousness manifests as each individual consciousness.

Vivekānanda follows Rāmakṛṣṇa in accepting an impersonal-personal ultimate reality. However, Vivekānanda "subtly reconceptualizes the traditional Advaitic doctrine of impersonality (*nirguṇatva*) to include, rather than exclude, personality". [59] While Vivekānanda agrees with Rāmakṛṣṇa that God is both the impersonal Absolute and the personal God of Love, he further maintains that former encompasses the latter. The impersonal Absolute includes all personalities. It is higher than the personal God of Love in being more comprehensive and complete.

[59] Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism…**, p. 53.

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Vivekānanda should be read as perfecting and expanding Rāmakṛṣṇa's Vijñāna Vedānta instead of only explicating it. Yet, it is likely that Rāmakṛṣṇa would welcome Vivekānanda's subtle reconceptualization. Rāmakṛṣṇa might allow that Vijñāna Vedānta should be interpreted in light of Vivekānanda's reconceptualization.

Agreeing with Rāmakṛṣṇa's claim that God becomes everything by manifesting as the cosmos, Vivekānanda also agrees with Rāmakṛṣṇa on three other points. First, God literally becomes the cosmos and everything in it. According to Vivekānanda's Panentheistic Cosmopsychism, the Divine Consciousness is the only reality. Nothing but God exists. The cosmos has no independent existence. It exists solely because it is a manifestation of God. Second, divine manifestation is God's self-veiling and self-limitation through *māyā*. "By means of the individuating principle of *māyā*, this nondual Divine Consciousness — in its personal aspect as Śakti or the »Divine Mother« [60] — manifests as everything in the universe through a process of playful self-limitation or self-veiling". [61] Time, space, and causation are real, but only as God's manifestation. Finally, consciousness has seven planes. Each of the planes is mutually exclusive. A creature at one plane of consciousness does not have access to any other. People at the lower planes have ego-centered perspectives. They cannot recognize that they are God's manifestations. People at the highest plane do not have ego-centered perspectives. They realize that they are God's manifestations.

Vivekānanda denies that God contains or subsumes the first-person conscious perspective of finite subjects. The nondual Divine Consciousness, in its personal aspect as God, manifests as the cosmos. God also manifests as the consciousness of each sentient entity. God is none of these entities, in God's essential nature, and does not have access to any entity's mental state. Rather, God has only God's own perspective and so God remains pure, perfect, and divine.

God's essence is radically distinct from God's manifestation, according to Vivekānanda. Although God manifests as the cosmos — God becomes the cosmos, including the consciousness of each finite entity — God's essence is wholly unaffected by God's manifestation. As noted above, God manifests as the cosmos

[60] Swami Vivekananda, **The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda: Mayavati Memorial Edition**, Vol. 8, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 2006–2007, pp. 252–253.

[61] Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism...**, p. 353.

through the self-veiling and self-limiting power of *māyā*. This is God's play. In God's essence, though, God has only God's own perspective. God neither shares nor has the perspective of any finite entity. Finite entities have imperfect consciousnesses. Many entities are ego-centric perspectives and do not realize that they are God's manifestations. Vivekānanda does not regard this as a limitation on God's omniscience, Medhananda explains, [62] as Vivekānanda would accept Swinburne's definition of God's omniscience, "by God's being omniscient I understand that he [*sic*] knows whatever it is logically possible that he [*sic*] know". [63] Vivekānanda would claim that God's omniscience consists in God knowing everything which is logically possible for God to know. God remains omniscient because it is logically impossible for God to know the consciousness of any finite entity.

Commenting on Swinburne's statement that "by God's being omnipotent I understand that he [*sic*] is able to do whatever it is logically possible (i.e. coherent to suppose) that he [*sic*] can do", [64] Medhananda interprets Vivekānanda as holding that God's omnipotence consists in God being able to do everything that it is logically possible for God to do. [65] However, Vivekānanda would not agree with Swinburne when he further asserts: "Since God is omnipotent, then he [*sic*] can prevent anything from happening if he [*sic*] so chose. So whatever happens happens because he [*sic*] makes it or permits it to happen". [66] Vivekānanda would not agree because it is not logically possible for God to access the conscious perspective of any finite entity. Because God cannot know what an entity is thinking or experiencing, God cannot make or permit that entity's thoughts or experiences.

Vivekānanda accepts libertarian free will. People can love God as a friend. People, manifestations of God, play. And they play with God. Vivekānanda maintains that God and people are playmates, that God plays in everything, in every atom and star, and that people are God's chess pieces. [67] While comparing people to chess pieces might suggest that they are merely pawns, Vivekānanda emphasizes

[62] See Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism...**, p. 356.

[63] Richard Swinburne, **The Existence of God**, second edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004, p. 7.

[64] Swinburne, **The Existence of God...**, p. 7.

[65] Medhananda, **Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism...**, p. 356.

[66] Swinburne, **The Existence of God...**, p. 99.

[67] Vivekananda, **The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda...**, pp. 94–95.

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that God and people are agents who play together. For Rāmakṛṣṇa, though, people are God's playthings. They are only played.

Although Rāmakṛṣṇa is Vivekānanda's guru, here the circle becomes complete. The student becomes his guru's guru. Vivekānanda is perfecting and expanding Rāmakṛṣṇa's Vijñāna Vedānta, not explicating it. Perhaps Rāmakṛṣṇa would enthusiastically welcome Vivekānanda's reconceptualization of the Advaitic doctrine of impersonality to include personality. According to this reconceptualization, the impersonal Absolute includes all personalities. Since the impersonal Absolute can include all personalities only if there are personalities to include Rāmakṛṣṇa might subtly reconceptualize his hard theological determinism to complement Vivekānanda's theological libertarianism: Although God is the sole agent, everything is God, and so everything is agential.

6. An Internal Criticism of Vivekānanda

Vivekānanda maintains that God manifests as everything in the cosmos by means of the individuating principle of *māyā*, through God's self-veiling and self-limitation. *Māyā* is inexplicable (*anirvacanīya*), however, and has no place in this divine economy. Since *māyā* is supposedly the explanation for God's manifestation, *māyā* cannot be a result of God's manifestation. Nor can *māyā* be located within God's essence. That would mean that self-veiling and self-limitation are not accidental features of God, situated solely in God's manifestation, features which God could dispense with by choosing not to manifest God. Rather, self-veiling and self-limitation would be part of God's essence. God would be essentially, not contingently, veiled from God. The limitations and imperfections which Vivekānanda hoped to confine to God's manifestation would also appear within God's essence.

That criticism can be articulated differently. God's manifestation is God's impetus to the play of self-veiling and self-limitation. From where does this impetus arise? It cannot arise from God's manifestation, since the impetus initiates God's manifestation. If the impetus is instead located in God's essential nature, then it is essential that God manifest as self-veiled and self-limited. It is essential that the pure, perfect, and omniscient appear as the impure, imperfect, and ignorant. The radical distinction between God's essence and God's manifestation collapses, as it is essential that God manifest God.

In articulating God's essence as radically distinct from God's manifestation — such that God can manifest as the imperfect cosmos, while God remains essentially perfect — Vivekānanda comes close to positing two gods: an essential God and a manifest God. Any linkage between them — such that God, in God's essence, manifests the cosmos — results in God's essence being sullied by God's manifestation. Either it is God's essence to manifest God or it is not. If it is not God's essence to manifest God, then God's manifestation is inexplicable and, again, this threatens to become two gods. If it is God's essence to manifest God, to become the cosmos, then God's essence requires God's manifestation. This latter alternative touches Nondual Panpsychism. It does not require that God manifest in any specific way. God need not have become this particular cosmos. Yet, it does require that God manifest in some way or another. This makes God's essence essentially incomplete, in a sense, necessitating God's manifestation.

7. Nondual Panpsychism and Vivekānanda's Panentheism

Nondual Panpsychism resembles Vivekānanda's Panentheism in various ways, yet they also differ. They are similar in that both maintain that the cosmos and everything in it are manifestations of God. The cosmos is real, not illusory, because it is God's manifestation. They are also alike in claiming that the goal for humans is to overcome their ego-centric perspectives by recognizing that they are manifestations of God.

Nondual Panpsychism and Vivekānanda differ in that he holds that when persons overcome their ego-centric perspectives, they have only a divine perspective. However, Nondual Panpsychism holds that these persons instead achieve a stereoscopic view, such that they do not fully lose their ego-centric perspective, but recognize that they are God's manifestation and so they are God, and that everything else is God too. Nondual Panpsychism and Vivekānanda also differ in that he claims that God becomes the cosmos only because of God's play but that God could have chosen not to become anything, and so could have remained alone in God's aloneness. Nondual Panpsychism instead maintains that God's desire to become the cosmos is located in God's essential nature. God, in God's essential nature, chooses to play by becoming the cosmos. God could have chosen to play in some other way. How God chooses is, in God's essential nature, wholly up to God.

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Vivekānanda would agree that "God is an omnipresent spirit". [68] God is omnipresent in that everything is God, everything is a manifestation of God. Yet, God's manifestation is not fully present to God's essential nature, and God's essential nature is not fully present to God's manifestation. Indeed, God is alienated from God: God, in God's essential nature, neither comprehends God's own manifestation nor recognizes God in God's manifestation. While God's manifestations can think and feel together, God in God's essential nature is incapable of participating in these. In the end, Vivekānanda's God is wholly isolated, incapable of feeling lonely, and unable to recognize how utterly alone God is.

Nondual Panpsychism offers another way, one where God is in a loving, creative, and compassionate dialogue with the cosmos, where God's perfection means that God is now as perfect as God can be. It allows that God can become more perfect than God is now and that God is now more perfect than God has been. God suffers with those who suffer, weeps with those who weep, and rejoices with those who rejoice.

Nondual Panpsychism maintains that the cosmic cognitive system necessarily dissociates, as the cosmic cognitive system must appear in order for it to be, and so it must at least appear to itself. However, the cosmic cognitive system which appears is nonidentical to the cosmic cognitive system to which it appears. There is an originary diremption within the cosmic cognitive system, a diremption which has always already occurred. The notion of the cosmic cognitive system existing prior to its dissociation, fully one with itself, is a retrospective fantasy. The cosmos and its entities are the dissociates of the cosmic cognitive system, which is their substance and substrate. They are it, but it is alienated from itself. Rāmakṛṣṇa and Vivekānanda would be correct to say that this dissociation is God's self-veiling and self-limiting. However, those are not aspects only of God's manifestation as the cosmos — that is, God's becoming the cosmos — but also of God's essence. God is veiled from God. To be is to appear. Were this veiling wholly overcome, if God became fully one, God would not appear even to God, and so would not be.

The cosmos is a manifestation of God. It is necessary that God manifests God, but it is contingent how God manifests God. It is possible, moreover, that this cosmos is just one among many universes. God may have manifested as an indefinite

[68] Swinburne, **The Existence of God...**, p. 99.

number of things, as worlds without end, amen. God dissociates. The cosmos is a result. The cosmos is God, in God's necessary self-estrangement from God. The cosmos is also God's manifestation. God has become the cosmos. As every piece of gold is fully gold, everything is God. The cosmos is full of God and the cosmos is God. God transcends and pervades the cosmos. This is Panentheism, not Pantheism.

Nondual Panpsychism refigures Panentheism by maintaining that God transcends the cosmos, not by extending beyond it, but by not being determined by it. People transcend their circumstances by not allowing those circumstances to determine the range of their responses, the scope of their imaginations, or the quality of their sympathies. Further, God pervades the cosmos by creatively and compassionately responding to it. This resembles the Panentheism of Hartshorne. [69] Responding to the objection that his ontological argument defines a Pantheism in which God and the cosmos are identical, he writes: "But we have not identified God or perfect being with the totality of things in any sense which prevents him [*sic*] from being personal and free with respect to them; for he [*sic*] is the *flexibly* selfidentical totality, which is so radically independent of its parts (and they, in another way, of it) that it will be *itself* no matter how they, as contingent and more or less free beings, develop". [70] As Hartshorne insists, "this view should be called »panentheism« not pantheism". [71]

Hartshorne's dipolar process theism maintains both that God is self-identical (God is always in relationship with the cosmos), and that God is not self-identical (God continually develops by responding to the cosmos). Nondual Panpsychism supplements this by claiming that God and God's parts are not radically independent, as they ontologically depend on each other. God is partially grounded by entities and they by God. God is personal and free with respect to the cosmos. God continually seeks to transform foes to friends and alters to *amigues*.

[69] See Charles Hartshorne, "The Formal Validity and Real Significance of the Ontological Argument", *Philosophical Review* 1944, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 225–245, https://doi.org/10.2307/2182097.

[70] Hartshorne, "The Formal Validity…", pp. 241–242 [emphasis in the original].

[71] Hartshorne, "The Formal Validity…", p. 242.

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8. A Cursory Summation

The Panentheism of Nondual Panpsychism agrees with that of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism's Personal Component, according to which Śiva manifests as the cosmos and its entities. Conceptualized as a dynamic non-wellfounded multiset, Śiva contains an infinity of instances of Śiva. Since every entity is an instance of Śiva, each has libertarian free will. On this point, Nondual Panpsychism disagrees with Rāmakṛṣṇa's hard theological determinism. Although Rāmakṛṣṇa realizes that everything is a manifestation of God, and that each manifestation is God, he nevertheless denies that God's manifestations have free will. Nondual Panpsychism supports Vivekānanda when he disagrees with his guru, Rāmakṛṣṇa, by affirming a theological libertarianism that recognizes that everything is a manifestation of God, that each manifestation is God, and that God's manifestations have free will. Vivekānanda's concept of *māyā* must be rejected, however, as it has no place in his ontology. *Māyā* can be located neither in God's essence nor in God's manifestation. That means that the self-veiling and self-limitation which occur when God manifests as the cosmos and its entities are part of God's essence. God is essentially, not contingently, veiled from God. As God's manifestation, the cosmos is real. God transcends the cosmos by not being determined by it. God pervades the cosmos by creatively responding to it. This is Nondual Panpsychism's Panentheism.

9. How God Manifests: Ontologically, Politically and Morally

It is often believed that God manifests more fully at times and in spaces regarded as sacred. It is also frequently believed that God especially manifests in that which is alive and, even more, in the human. Nondual Panpsychism is in sympathy with these general sentiments. Yet, it immediately adds that all times and spaces are sacred, and that everything is alive.

The *Bhagavadgītā* maintains that the cosmos is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. It further claims that Kṛṣṇa manifests most fully as those things which are magnificent and glorious, as the highest, the exalted, and the best. Nondual Panpsychism

extends and corrects this, turning to the crucified God. [72] Ontologically, God manifests as everything. From the perspectives of politics and morality, however, God manifests most fully as those who are despised and rejected. Those whom Jesus refers to as "the least of these", [73] Agamben as "*homo sacer*", [74] and Wilson as the "truly disadvantaged". [75] Those who are in society but are not regarded as its members: people who are undocumented or irregular migrants, who are houseless, elderly, sick, imprisoned, disabled, afflicted, who are discriminated against because of their race, gender, ethnicity, or class. The Pratyabhijñā believes that everything should be valued as a manifestation of Śiva. Agreeing with this, Nondual Panpsychism emphasizes that Śiva manifests as those who have no place in society and that those persons should be especially valued.

10. Why God Never Laughs at My Jokes

Although the cosmos is Śiva's manifestation, it has relative autonomy and agency. In this panentheistic metaphysics, Śiva pervades and transcends the cosmos. Since the cosmos has relative autonomy and agency, that aspect of Śiva which transcends the cosmos can be genuinely surprised, pleased, or disappointed by the actions of those aspects of Śiva which manifest as the cosmos. "I love you despite your convictions / That God never laughs at my jokes". [76] If those convictions are correct, it's only because the jokes aren't funny.

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[72] See Jürgen Moltmann, **The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ As the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology**, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, 40th anniversary edition, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2015.

[73] Matthew 25:40.

[74] See Giorgio Agamben, **Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life**, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1998.

[75] See William Julius Wilson, **The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy**, second edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2012.

[76] Tin Machine, "Bus Stop", Track 9 on *Tin Machine*, EMI America Records, Los Angeles 1989, compact disc, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZegGx7JzAuI [11.03.2026].

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Acknowledgments

Earlier versions were presented to the Midsouth Philosophy Conference at Rhodes College on 29 March 2025 (B. Keith Putt is thanked for his commentary) and to the Northwest Philosophy Conference at Lewis & Clark College on 1 November 2024 (Katharine Loevy is thanked for her commentary). Timothy Lord, Jay Odenbaugh, William A. Rottschaefer, Kirke Wolfe, and Martin Zwick are thanked for comments that led to useful revisions. Several of the points discussed in the first section are developed in Fritzman ("Metaphysical Grounding and Being's Incompleteness", *Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* 2024, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 329–345, http://doi.org/10.30687/Jolma/2723-9640/2024/02/001; "Nondual Panpsychism: From the Extended Mind to Universal Consciousness and Śiva", *Filozoficzne Aspekty Genezy* [*Philosophical Aspects of Origin*] 2024, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 109–150, https://doi.org/10.53763/fag.2024.21.2.243) and several points in the second section are developed in Berger, Fritzman, and Vance ("Thinking With, Against, and Beyond the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy — and Back Again", *Asian Philosophy* 2018, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/09552367.2018.1432281). Grzegorz Malec, Vice Editor-in-Chief of *Philosophical Aspects of Origin*, is thanked for encouragement. Two anonymous reviewers are thanked for suggestions. Lewis & Clark College provided a sabbatical leave in 2026.

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