

APPENDIX

On the concept of 'Species' and 'particulars' and the Concrete Universal in Rama, uja's Sri Bhāṣya.

The idea of species or genus or concept, and intuition or individual or particular, have been the moot point in all philosophies in the East as well as the West. Towards the unravelling of this problem so far as the Śrī Bhāṣya is concerned only slight hints are thrown out, and those scanty hints are enough to reveal to us, the real opinion of the author regarding this problem.

To trace the history of the 'concept' in the West, we have to start with Plato, to whom the concepts or ideas have a real but non-existent character, or more truly, the ideas for Plato are the archetype of the individuals and have a one-to-one correspondence, living elsewhere from the actual. They are more real because less pliable to change, that is, to put it more bluntly, less existent, and more universal because absorbing or rather subsuming a very great, if not all intuitions within it or under it, as the 'idea' God does. Further, from this idea, the actuals take existence. Plato had treated ideas as causes of things and the highest of them as the ultimate cause of all reality and of all knowledge¹.

Aristotle had made the idea or concept the 'form', and the individual the 'matter', and rightly opposed the separate existence of 'form' somewhere else as Plato had done,; the existence of 'form' is no where else than in the 'matter' and there is no 'matter' without 'form', though here he falters just like Bergson, as he maintained quite unjustly to logic, that Absolute 'form' or God could exist without 'matter', or 'spirit' without matter.

When we come to Scotus Erigena, we find that he postulates that 'God is the supreme unity and that by a process of evolution from the general to the particular, the individual things were produced by him. First come forth the highest genera, then the lower and finally individuals. God alone truly is; he is the essence of all things; they do not exist outside of him, but he is their very substance².'

Spinoza's 'fixed and eternal things'—the idea—are universals, abstractions, but universals treated as though they were in some sense concrete things, (Spinoza's view was that Being is the highest concrete entity, for out of abstract the concrete can never arise) and are real causes. The highest universal being that from which every individual character has been deprived was of highest perfection, because least limited in universality. To be limited means, to be limited in universality to the

¹ Pheado 96 et sqq.

² Ueberweg's Hist of Philosophy Vol.1 sec. 90

exclusion of some qualities (even negative) which a true universal must subsume. This line of argumentation culminates in giving rise to a Being that is an abstraction.

The concrete Universal and abstract Universal.

The identification of concrete universal with an abstract universal no one should tolerate. I agree with Prof. Fullerton when he says that ‘the attempt to make universals (abstract) causes, yet, keep them universals (abstract) has been the source of much vague and loose reasoning³’. I also agree with him when he says that “it is simply the attempt to make them concrete and abstract at the same time.” Causes are always concrete, and can never be abstract, and the so-called universals or ideas or thought or generic characters are not concrete at all, being so, how could they act as ‘causes’ of individual concrete existence? To make generic quality or even thought or concept, the cause of the actual individual is simply meaningless. When a ‘form’ is said to be the cause of ‘matter’, thought said to be the cause of intuition, we are left with a doubt whether these reasoners could not derive the impossibles from the absolutely non-existent or sunya. To produce a concrete existence, a concrete alone could be capable; to even will a concrete existence, only a concrete existence would be capable. This ‘ideas’ as Aristotle clearly understood, are not anything but the ‘form’ coincident and inseparable from ‘matter’; they are the specific ‘forms’ of the individuals, and there could be no causal relation between ‘form’ and ‘matter’, species and individual, for the attempt is to make ‘form’ or species something concrete which they essentially are not, the which they must be, if they out to the causes at all. It is meaningless to speak of ‘causing’ as if there is an actual ‘evolution’ as Scotus Erigena definitely suggests, between ‘form’ and matter, or even between spirit and matter, except in the sense indicated by the first chapter, viz. the conditioning relation or inseparable (aprathiksiddha) relation of dependence between the higher and the lower distinct in the relation, for they belong to two distinct orders of existence. Concepts belong to the sphere of ‘thought’, the particulars to the sphere of ‘fact’, in spite of the fact that thought or concept finds its ground nowhere else than in the ‘fact’, the species in the individual, and no true logic should attempt to keep them resident elsewhere than in the fact or sensum. Benedetto Croce realised this fact so clearly that the concept is, he maintained⁴, resident in the fact, as such only is it concrete; it is universal, because being in each and every ‘representation’ it is not exhausted by any one of them.

But such a concreteness and universality is due to either the inseparable residence or immanence in the ‘fact’, and such a residence or immanence is merely an organic bond, or rather, it is the nature of the fact itself, as Croce would maintain

³ Spinoza; Prof Fullerton’s trans. (brackets my own)

⁴ Logic part I. sec. III.

and as Aristotle suggested, and that is merely nothing. Laws or the body of truths, called mathematical laws, and now, perhaps, we may add the physical laws of the world, despite the relativity theory of today, are “recalcitrant to such a mode of treatment as connected with concrete reality” and cannot be “confined to brute fact”, for they “are completely and unconditionally true, independently of their place in this or that particular mind..”, though “truth is not truth if it be not real.” And though “they are brought into some sort of relation to and bearing upon reality.”⁵ In a sense and in a very concrete sense, being independent of particular minds and things, they are truly abstract, and only concrete in this sense of always in function as ‘form’ of all things. To give concreteness in a sense, is to take away the implicate of universality in some sense or other, and to give them the universality is to tinge them with the air of an abstraction of thought. All the same, it is concrete, that we can admit. Let alone the concepts of Pure Mathematics, even the very Crocean concepts of time, space, quality, development, final cause etc., are eternally necessary for anything to be or to exist. They, like the Kantian categories, are very necessary for the world of experience to be. In a word, these are ‘formal’ categories that have to be eternally and cannot exist elsewhere than in the things for them to be. Neither could they themselves be considered apart from the world which they form, (I dare not put in the word ‘manifest’ as that would mean more than what one could grant), for ballasted from existence they could not be, not to speak of being true concepts.

Thus the Crocean ‘concept’ does not escape the ‘formal’ character, though to do justice to his concept, formal character is not limited to cow, horse, etc., and such like generic ‘ideas’, but is truly universal and immanent in the real and in A Priori Synthesis with the intuition. In the formal constituent of reality, it resembles the generic character, which character is a surface similarity. The ‘concept’ is a fundamental universal formal character; the generic character is a similarity of ‘Form’ between a large number of particulars. In either case, they being merely the form of the individual, are not concrete. In fact, the concreteness of the concept is a borrowed character, because of residence in the fact and not in itself though Croce would stoutly oppose such a characterisation of his concept. This is what Ramanuja says, when he defines, or rather accepts the definition, that ‘species is the form of the Individual,’ and does not “manifest” the individual as the absolutists and Platonists suggest. Therefore in the last resort, the universality of the concept is not and cannot claim the concreteness that is claimed by its votaries; it is an abstract character, and the attempt to make it the ‘cause’ of the individual is justly condemned by Prof. Fullerton.

⁵. Philosophical Problems, Lindsay.

Spirit or intelligence is no abstract entity; it is concrete to its core and inmost essence. Its universality is a universality that goes along with its concrete character. It is no borrowed character. And how?

Existence has different meanings according as to whether we predicate it of the body or mind or spirit. “When we say that a body exists, we mean that it adversely occupies space, during some intervals of time, when we say that a ‘mind’ exists we mean that it is an activity enduring through continual change. There are no spatial outlines which limit minds and prevent their interpenetration.”⁶

Thus spirit has the pervasive character or the interpenetrative capacity, which is the same as the capacity to utilise, to subsidise every material entity, it knowing no spatial outlines and temporal barriers. The spirit, or “mind” (to adopt the western terminology) is the active principle, be it ever so much as an active pacific principle (as it is in the case of withdrawal from activity), which endures through all the changing directions or contents, never essentially undergoing transformation of character or annihilation of itself due to absorption in matter. Change in substantial character it never has, as is the case with matter, for its nature is to inflict its purposes through all the changing flux of experience or matter as it evolves in time. Thus it has been said by Ramanuja that “the origination and so on are the characteristics of the material objects and do not belong to the subjects” or souls (which are the spiritual entities which have the pervasive capacity) and “the latter are eternal”. Spirit or intelligence is thus characterised by activity in its own nature, and in its direction, it is intelligent. This character of the spirit determines its pervasive ‘presence’ or existence is that of an entity rather than of a concept; its residence in ‘matter’ is not like its ‘form’, which ‘form’ is an idea, a volition of the intelligence itself and these ‘forms’ or species may be as many as there are things, and we have said also that there are a few ‘forms’ to which everything in existence must conform and they form the body of ‘true concepts’ or ‘categories’, universal in range as distinguished from the species or generic ‘ideas’, The concreteness of spirit is not mainly in its residence but in its power to use, to change, to construct and to manifest itself, in matter, or existence or intuition. The concreteness of the species or concept is only its ‘presence’ as against ‘manifesting’ of the spirit. Mere ‘form’ is certainly not capable of “manifestating” the individual; on the other hand, spirit is capable of ‘manifesting’ the ‘form’ in matter. Whilst it may truly be said that the individual soul is incapable of “manifesting” ‘forms’ in matter, in its released state it may do that with the help of the will of God. The supreme spirit is that which ‘manifests’ the ‘forms’ and through them his own purposes; it is that which is called the creative activity of evolution. And his pervasive capacity as Antaryāmin of everything that exists determines the concreteness to an extent that is not merely ‘formal’ but supremely organic. God or spirit pervades the

⁶ Prof. W.Carr: The Theory of Monads.

individuals, persons and things, in the same way as the metaphor goes as ‘oil pervades the seed’. From Brahma to a blade of grass अबहास्तम्बपर्यन्तम् everything has its self in that. His transcendence again is not limited to the non-exhaustibility of the ‘formal’ character by any of the ‘representations’, but more fully in the sense of non-exhaustibility of activity and power. And more truly, therefore, than what Croce means of his Concept, “every blade of grass represents God, but any number of images however great it be, does not suffice to represent him”, the spirit or God suffuses all things with fullness of power and sustaining capacity which even in their aggregate, they can never possess. The transcendence implied by the statement of unequal power, perfection, and fullness of auspicious qualities as applied to the Highest Spirit or God, in the sense of his being the Sole Self, who controls, sustains, and uses every existence for his own purposes absolutely and without reserve, is a transcendence quite different and alien to the transcendence of the concept over the individuals. If this fact is once recognised, there can be no “vague and loose reasoning” of which Prof. Fullerton rightly charges Spinoza for trying to make spirit or God the grand Idea, or else the inexplicable synthesis of Matters and Thought, the Universal, the Cause. But such a concrete universal is God only and absolutely and there can be no other ‘pervasive’ principle. In a word, the absolutely concrete universal, at once cause of the ‘universals’ (formal characters) and the universe is one only (Ekobahunam), and He is the highest concrete entity of which the world (jagat) with souls and Prakriti are modes, they being of less pervasive universal power as Rāmānuja through out his Śrī Bhāṣya maintains. Universals there are many, but the Real concrete Universal is only one.

As the Śrī Bhāṣya definitely states its position, “If Brahmatva constitutes the logical genus, Brahman becomes a mere abstract generic character inhering in the Īsvara, sentient souls and non-sentient matter, just as the generic character of horses (asvatva) inheres in concrete individual horses and this contradicts all scriptural teaching (according to which Brahman is the highest concrete entity)” (Śrī Bhāṣya III. ii. 28), and that is nothing other than Absolute Spirit. एवं तद्विद्वान्स्वगोस्ववद्दहाणीक्षरो चिगचिद्दस्तुनोक्षानुवर्तमान समानयमिति सकलक्षुतिस्मुतिव्यवहारविरोध.

We have pointed out that the real concrete universal is Spirit, and that is the Absolute. The individual Jīvas or spiritual finites in that case would be, that they (Brahman and Jīvas) are both absolute and concrete, in this peculiar sense that these souls or selves cannot have the same extensive pervasive capacity, Śakti, as the highest or God, nor the same universality of Absolute, though the Sutras admit the universal knowledge to be capable of attainment by the Jīva, though they warn that the jiva cannot have the ultimate power of using the world as it likes towards its own ends. Further its abstraction, as also perhaps we may add the abstraction of the prakṛti, consists in their being incapable of coming into contact with each other, and therefore their remaining ineffective against their own existence, (that is what it means,

for to be is to persist or act), as contact between the two entities alone makes them, the souls⁷ on the one hand, become cognising centres or kshetragnas, and the prakṛti on the other hand the evolving Śakti of Brahman under the immediate direction of Brahman, till the Absolute wills their out-going or emergence from the passivity of the Cosmic Night. But it must be clear that this abstract existentiality of these two modes of God (that is what Rāmānuja calls the two existences) is not the same as the abstractness of the ‘formal’ elements or concepts, nor their ‘concreteness’ either. The concreteness is there in the selves in essence or by Svabhāva; but that concreteness is not universal as we have pointed out; this concreteness is individual; but be it noted neither is this concreteness of the same kind as that of the sensum or Nature or Prakriti which we recognise as the Existence, which lives under the light of the pervasive principle of the Highest, its own existence being an “adverse occupation of Space”. That these selves even though having the same kind of concreteness as that of the Brahman do appear to be in the Praḷaya condition even as the stones, as the Atomistic logicians of India, the Vaiśeṣikās, say, is the denotation of their incapacity to exist in their own right as pervasive principles unless endowed with the stronger flow of elan vital of the highest. They are impotent enough to be inactive but potent enough to subsist as impotent, but all the same never merged in existence, though to be correct, their existentiality as existence would be meaningless. Understood thus, we could understand that existence is a predicate as Signor Benedetto Croce affirms in his Logic.

When we consider that existence as we understand it, that is as existing in temporal and spatial systems, for that is what we should call existing, we have to grant the formal elements and the generic characters the ballasted existence of abstractions. Existence would mean to them a different order of existentiality from that of the things or sensum. We would be forced to distinguish between existentiality and existence as applied to things, and ideas and formal elements that make up the form of the universe. The ideas exist as the volitional thought of the highest at all periods of time (anādikāla) Unless these infinite multitudinous generic characters, the amazing variety of forms, are present in the thought of the highest, how could they be capable of being manifest in the world of existence or pass from existentiality to existence? The infinite totality of generic characters, or Ideas to use the Platonic expression, the eternal truths of the constitution of the universe true of every system of the universe, the destiners of the different order of existence, are all at the beginning in the thought of the highest. So much so, the Vedas which are said to be the eternal truths were first in the thought of the Brāhmaṇ, and when the world was called into existence, the Vedas were, as it were, put into operation, and the world was constructed in the same serial order and not in any other order. These Ideas or

Sabda are eternally in the thought of God or Spirit. “In the beginning was the word and the word was God.”

The way of the realisation of the ideas in the thing or matter may imply a descent may imply a decent of them into the world which only means coming into contact with matter as Plato postulates, or it may be that it is evolutionary, or it may be that every grade of existence evolved in ever so many grade so as to seem that the previous grade of existence begot the next in the series or that the Brahman by a single act of volition set all these to evolve in the spatio-temporal system in a series. Sabda thus are the eternal truths or ideas, which includes every generic character “rūpa” every ‘concept’ (tattva), and finally every ideal (puruṣārtha), and all these eternally exist as a śabda and only in the periods of pravṛtti realise their existence in the world of experience. Their existence is true, but belong to quite a different order and kind.⁸

We have pointed out that the real concrete and universal existence is only spirit, and cannot pertain to any other thing of existence. The nature of the individual finite existences of things on the one hand, and the individual finite intelligences on the other, would be that they are both abstract and concrete at the same time, in this peculiar sense, that these souls or Jīvās cannot have the pervasive capacity with the same universality or intensity of the Absolute, but are really so capable of becoming relatively in so far as ‘knowing’ is concerned, and not in so far as using the whole world is concerned. The things have an abstract character in so far as they exist apart from and cannot have the pervasive (vyāpakatva) capacity is considered. They are, as much an a priori Synthesis as the form and existence which we may agree in calling along with Croce as the History of Spirit. In some such sense perhaps Sri Rāmānuja accepts the intimate relation between the Concrete Universal and Sabda—an inference based upon his consistent acceptance of the three Continuums, namely, cause-effect, Substance-attribute and the psycho-physical or mind-body.

In commenting on Ramanuja for this criticism of the Bhaskara theory, it is but legitimate that we should point out that whilst his criticism questions the foundations of the qualities of a thing taken as entities, cannot be legitimately compared to the individual thing itself, and that we should rather maintain that the individual is a thing

⁸. There is a parallelism between our knowledge of universals and our knowledge of other minds or selves. But a distinction is necessary because their order of existence is quite different from that the concrete existences of the selves. “We cannot contemplate a universal (abstract) in and for itself apart from its relation to particulars and we cannot contemplate a mind apart from a body of some sort.” But the reason why we cannot do so is different in the two cases.”A universal cannot be perceived apart from particulars, because its very nature as a universal implies a relatio to particulars, while there is nothing in the nature of mind, so far as we can see, which renders its connexion with a body logically necessary; the connexion is simply an empirical fact.” N. A. Duddington. Knowledge of other minds. Aris. Soc. KPro. Vol. 19. (p. 165).

not to be reduced into the ideas of relations which the non-difference or difference involves and which, as he justly points out, leads to the infinitum ad regressus, by called into the bargain the unknown entity called the bare substrate into which these two aspects are introduced—we are forced to ask whether after all Ramanuja did justice to Bhaskara? For whilst we can agree that ‘similarity’ or identity of constitution might legitimately be said to be the identical character, and the distinguishing character that which marks out the thing as semblent with or distinct from other things in general, we do not see the absurdity underlying such an identification of predicatory attribute as an introduction of entities into the substrate called the necessary third entity which, Ramanuja suggests, should be presumed. Further, one does not easily understand why the two so-called contradictory attributes cannot inhere in the same thing, for after all, the individual, as Ramanuja himself says, is the primary entity, and the similarity of character is said to be merely the attribute of such an entity. The difference is not an attribute at all but merely the numerical point of difference in the existence which cannot be dissolved at all, a difference which is all the same difference, in spite of the identity of nature between the several entities. As such, the argument is futile because it is the statement of real fact of existential individuality. So much so, we are led to ask whether Ramanuja is speaking of the two words that have opposite connotations or whether the two words apply to two references of different kind between two objects and might legitimately (a question of comparison being involved in such a reference of identity and difference) be referred to the same entity, in which case, no contradiction or infinite regress, anavastha, could take place. Ramanuja instead of entering into such dialectical disquisitions, might have refuted the school of Bhaskara by pointing out the fallacy underlying the assertion of non-eternality of the selves, and that single argument would suffice to make the theory of Bhaskara unacceptable. The criticism of Ramanuja of the Saptabhangivāda of Jainas needs must also be surrendered for the self-same reason of being merely futile and pointless.