

## Chapter V

### IMPLICATIONS AND SIMILITUDES

The argument from design throws up many suggestions. One of these is that the God supposed to be proved by the argument is a finite one. The idea of a finite God has been argued for by Plato (*Philebus*, 23C), and Hume (Part V of the *Dialogues*). He makes Philo analyse the argument of Cleanthes, who had deduced God from the facts of nature, and declares that Cleanthes must renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity. Philo finds the whole view of Cleanthes too anthropomorphic, and in Part XI of the *Dialogues*, we find Cleanthes take up the idea that God is “finitely perfect”.

Kant also has contributed to the idea of a finite God in an indirect way. In the course of his famous refutation of the traditional proofs of God in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 627, B 635) he expressed highest respect for what he called “physico-theological” argument, but complained however that it does not prove a “*world-creator* to whose idea everything is subjected”, but at most a “*world-architect*, who would always be greatly limited by the suitability of the staff with which he works”, I have put emphasis on the ideas of “world-creator” and “world-architect”. Willy nilly, we may ask Udayana, the author of *Nyayakusumanjali*, what does he intend to establish; an *Isvara* as world-creator or world-architect. Kant might tell Udayana that the *Isvara* of his conception “would always be greatly limited by the suitability of the staff with which he works”, in this case the atoms, and *adrsta*. Udayana’s *Isvara* is a metaphysical logician’s God. Just as a formal logician depends upon his set of axioms, rules of replacement and inference, so is Udayana’s *Isvara* dependent upon co-eternal atoms and their properties. And since perfection does not necessarily imply omnipotence, as McTaggart has argued in *The Nature of Existence* (Vol.II, 1927, pp.176-187). There is one insight in McTaggart worth our attention in respect of Udayana, for whom time (*Kala*) is real. McTaggart suggests that if time were real, it might be hard to prove a creative God. Either time were unreal, or there is a God who controls and governs without creating.

Udayana comes closer to the argument from design in maintaining that a non-intelligent cause like *adrsta* cannot produce its effect without the guidance of an intelligent spirit. *Isvara* supervises the work of *adrsta*. The world cannot be explained by the atoms or the force of *Karma*. Nor can the individual soul be the controller of *adrsta*, since then it would be able to avert unwished for miseries. So the unintelligent principle of *adrsta*, which governs the fate of beings, acts under the direction of God, who does not create it, or alter its inevitable course, but renders possible its operation.

Udayana is taken to establish that the maker of the world is an intelligent being, possessed of that combination of volition, desire to act, and knowledge of the proper means which sets in motion all other causes but itself set in motion by none. It is significant that Udayana mentions that the traditional arts imply an intelligent inventor (*Kusumanjali*, V.I).

The Nyaya theism as presented by Udayana has been the subject of great discussion in the history of Hindu thought. Its critics however have not been wanting in number. A critic might say that *adrsta* constitutes only a limit of explanation. It is supposed to call for an intelligent controller for the remarkable regularity with which events happen. But everything that are there are not products, and Nyaya admits several eternal entities, and with the Naiyayika, of the eternal thing. There is no production. Eternal things do not have causes. So the causal argument made so much of by them will overshoot its mark since the law of causality has not universal validity. It has no other signification than uniform and concomitant variation.

Even if we grant the validity of the arguments employed to establish the reality of God, The *Isvara* of The Nyaya philosophy is not the comprehensive spiritual reality. He is outside us and the world too, however much he may be said to cause, govern and destroy it. He is not the creator of atoms, but only their fashioner. His reason works on the elements of the universe from without, but does not operate as a power of life within. Radhakrishnan has brought out the finiteness of the Nyaya conception of *Isvara* in the following manner : "We

cannot maintain the dualism of an infinite creator on the one side and the infinite world on the other. The two limit each other. Things which are defined each against the other cannot but be finite". (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, 1951, p.172).

The problem at hand concerns, in Mill's words, "the Omnipotence of the Designer". In his *Three Essays on Religion* Mill comes to the conclusion that there is a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence. But he maintains that all evidence for design, for the use of means to attain ends, is "evidence against the Omnipotence of the Designer". Therefore the author of the cosmos worked under limitations and was obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will. Those conditions Mill takes to be provided by the eternal and uncreated factors, Matter and Force. Recall the atoms and *adrsta* of Udayana.

Beginning with Plato's conception of a finite God the arguments for there being a finite God have been offered by such diverse thinkers as Bradley (*Essays on Truth and Reality*, pp.428-451), Bergson (*Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, pp.249-251), A.N. Whitehead (*Process and Reality*, especially, pp. 67-68, 519-533), for of course different reasons. These need not detain us, the point worth nothing is the fact that the finite God, taken as having been implied by the argument from design is a person.

Now that God is shown to be a person in virtue of being an intelligent designer, a great religious demand is thereby fulfilled. Omnipotence of God is perhaps not the decisive divine attribute. One loves God, not because he is Omnipotent, but because he is good. Theism requires that God is personal, and that the eternal reality which is the ultimate source of everything good in the universe is a conscious spirit, a mind that is eternally rational and good. Eternal values are essential to the character of God, whether he he absolute or finite. Whatever limits may or may not restrict the power of God, his will is eternally directed towards the realization of ideal ends. Hoffding's thesis about conservation of values, and Ramanuja's concept of God as *sakala-guna-gana-akara* answer this description. Among the

religions of the world, Islam uniquely emphasizes Omnipotence of Allah. And it is not without a reason that Frisk has typologized Islam as the worship of absolute Might. Everything fades into insignificance before Allah's Omnipotence. So if Hume and Kant have sought to play down the God sought to be proved to exist as finite because lacking in Omnipotence, so serious harm could have been done to the religious sensibility. For the loving and good God persists.

There could be two senses of "finite". God could be said to be limited in at least two senses : namely, by the principles of reason and by his own self-limitation in his creation of free beings. The laws of reason can not be thought of as created by an arbitrary fiat of will. Reason is an eternal and uncreated attribute of God, not dependent on his will. The famous prayer to the Sun in the *Rg Veda* (III.62.10) seeks the highest power that man is capable of possessing, *dhi*, higher intelligence of which the adorable glory of the Deity is the source. As for the other ground of God's limitation, i.e. man's free will is bound to raise more questions than it can perhaps solve.

In spite of Ryle's debunking of the concept of Will, following of course Hume, the concept is deeply embedded in the Judaic-Christian tradition of religious consciousness, and has kept surfacing in religious and moral contexts. If God were Omnipotent *simpliciter*, then no man could be free, and the concept of surrender to God would have become vacuous. Nor could the phrase "Amen" could be significantly spoken. A loving God sets his creatures free, he is never adored by slaves. Rabindranath Tagore makes this point in an epigram that deserves quoting : "I am able to love my God because he gives me the freedom to deny him" (*Fireflies*). It could perhaps be argued that Islam images Allah - man relationship in terms of that between Master and slave, and Hegel was enamoured of this imagery. But an hermeneutical point would be in order, whether the relationship is ontological or devotionally metaphorical remains to be seen. The *Gita* speaks of puppets revolving on the cosmic wheel (Chapter XVIII.61) as a metaphor for ontological rootedness of the human

agent, and yet there is no denial of freewill. In the verse no.63, the listner is told that having been given the metaphysical description of actions worth performing, he is now free to decide whether he would go by that. Both freedom and reason are accommodated therein. This of course is no context for deciding in favour of either freedom or determinism. Religious life has something important to do with salvation. And if that be so, then the idea that God limits himself by creating souls endowed with from will need not be taken literally. As St. Paul has said, the letter kills, it is the spirit which enlivens. Created as we are in His own image, we cannot be wholly antagonistic to God, however much we take a flight from Him. Herein comes in the relevance of the typology of Christianity as the religion of love. The argument from design does justice to the type.

## II

I should now like to exhibit some of the scriptural passages which delineate the wisdom at work in the argument from design. We have earlier mentioned that the argument had its sources in the insights of the Book of Wisdom. The Book is specifically the Wisdom of Solomon in the *Old Testament*. It should be noted that the Book is one of the *Deuterocanonical Books* in the Catholic edition of the Old Testament.

The author confessingly asks “who can ever learn the Will of God ? Human reason is not adequate for the task, and our philosophies tend to mislead us, because our mortal bodies weigh our souls down” (No.13). More specific is the *Ecclesiasticus* or The Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach. The author was Joshua (or Jesus). There is God’s wisdom in creation. Sirach 26-27 states : “In the beginning the Lord did his work of creation, and he gave everything a place of its own. He arranged everything in an eternal order and decreed that it should be that way for ever”. Now, says the author, “I will remind you of the works of the Lord”. He goes on to say that “The words of the Lord brought his works into being, and the whole creation obeys his commands ... The orderly world shows the greater of his wisdom; ...

Nothing can be added to him, and nothing taken away. All his works are beautiful, down to the smallest and faintest spark of light. All these things go on for ever, and all of them have their purpose” (No. 42). The glory of God in Nature is expressed more eloquently in the following piece. “How beautiful is the bright, clear Sky above us ! What a glorious sight it is !” There is a glowing appreciation of the beauty of nature as the handiwork of God. The natural scene is captured in its varying moods and states, sombre as well as joyful. What strikes one is the admission of mystery felt at the perception of nature in all its forms. Rightly should we say that the argument from design is born of a sense of mystery at the splendour emanating from God’s creation. Sirach concludes by remarking that “Mysteries greater than these are still unknown : We know only a fraction of his works. The Lord made the universe and then gave wisdom to devout men”. (No. 43).

It must not be supposed that the ‘wisdom’ at work in the argument from design is confined to Judaism or Christianity. The *Koran* reminds us that Allah speaks to mankind in allegories (Surah 24, Light). Strains of teleological thinking are quite in evidence : “He sendeth herald winds to make you taste His mercy”, and “Look, therefore, at the prints of Allah’s mercy in creation” (Surah 30, 46 and 50). The concept of creation is prominently important in Islam, and it shares the Judaic tradition of the prophets of the *Old Testament* in a large measure.

When we look at the Vedas we struck by an abundance of material for an argument from design. The concept of ‘The poetry of God’, *devasya Kavya* is so very striking, and the world at large is referred to as that. The primal chaos is said to be reduced to cosmos by *Rta* or Law Divine. It is said to uphold the earth, as the Atharva Veda (XII. 1.1) puts it. *Rta* upholds the heavens (*Rg Veda*, X.85.1). *Rta* in its moral aspect includes justice and goodness, besides being the unmutable law of nature (*Rg Veda*, VI. 39.4). In Vedic thought natural law and the moral are coordinated, a task which Kant, in the final paragraph of the second *Critique* left to feeling to do ! the starry heaven and the moral law within come

together in awe and wonder. The design supporting the transcendent and yet immanent Existence brought out through beguiling metaphors : in obedience to law the rains break, the fountains, that bubbling steam forward are young virgins skilled in Law (*Rg Veda*, IV. 19.7.) The Lovely Dawn is true to Eternal Order, is sublime by Law (*Rg Veda*, V.80). The following may be taken as the Vedic argument from design :

Thou who by Eternal Law has spread about  
flowering and seed-bearing plants, and  
Streams of water!  
Thou who hast generated the matchless  
lightnings in the sky,  
Thou, Vast, encompassing vast realms,  
art a fit subject for our song.

This is from *Rg Veda*, II. 13-17, Now God is thought of as ‘the Form behind all forms’, *rupam rupam pratirupa vabhava* (*Rg Veda*, VI, 47-48). The *mantra* runs on to declare that for every form He has been the Model, that form of His is the one to look on everywhere! *tad asya rupam prati caksanaya*, Samkara read this *mantra* as part of *Brahadaranyaka Upanisad*, and in his commentary thereon he wrote : “why did He come in so many forms ? Were name and form not manifested, the transcendent nature of Atman as pure intelligence would not have been known” (commentary on *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*, 2.5.19). This is precisely what the argument from design seek to establish. The *Gita* simply elaborates the argument in the tenth chapter, called *Vibhuti-yoga* when Arjuna asks, in what aspects art God to be contemplated by him ? The answer is an elaboration of the Vedic version of the argument from design.

### III

The reason for treating the argument from design with respect on the part of Hume and Kant has been that the argument (or is it an awareness ?) comes most naturally us. And

it will be expected that poets would often express the conception in deeply moving verse. Rainer Maria Rilke is one of the great modern poets who expressed the argument from design very movingly in his *Sonnets to Orphans*. In our own country, Rabindranath Tagore's drama *The King of the Dark Chamber*, (which had captivated Wittgenstein) is built upon the argument from design. People do not see the King, and the sceptic asks, is there at all a king? He is told to look at the business of the state, how they are carried out in details, justice is done, festivities are observed, and the King's standard is held high. How could all these be there if there were no king. Finally, it should be observed that the argument from design is less an argument, and more an assertion of faith. Faith, as St. Paul writes in one of his letters to the Romans, justifies belief in God and we have peace (*Romans*, V.1). And in Hebrews (II.1) he writes, "faith is the substance of things is quite decisive an assertion in matters religious. Otherwise we simply know in part.

Following his Vedic ancestry, Tagore wrote in his later years a defence of the argument from design. And I close by quoting the testament;

A poet, I cannot enter such arguments  
 I look at the world  
 In its true, full essence  
 At the millions of stars in the sky  
 Carrying their huge, harmonious beauty —  
 Never breaking their rhythm  
 Or losing their truth  
 Never deranged,  
 Never strembling.  
 I can only gaze and I see, in the sky,  
 The spreading layers  
 Of a vast, radiant, petalled Rose

The analogy is based squarely on an argument. Simply, beauty presupposes design. Beauty is truth.

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