

The Abstraction of Reality and the Concretization of Appearances - The metaphysical measure of the golden cane -

«Without what can be intuited, there cannot be intuition, and without intuition, there cannot be what can be intuited...»¹

What appears before our eyes?
What is realized through what appears?

Reality cannot appear. It can only be realized. Nor should It be idealized as what is idealized is nothing but appearance. Reality only can be realized; that is, surrendering oneself to the presence of Consciousness which, by its own Nature, cannot be expressed in any forms. As Reality cannot be grasped through the senses, because, as Vyāsa suggests, its appearance is the absence of form, it is not an abstract idealization.

«The following objection could be raised: If *Brahman* cannot take two different resemblances, as it is non-dual, this doesn't prove it is devoid of forms, In fact, it could have the resemblance of many forms.»

In reply, Vyāsa suggests (*BS*: III, ii, 14) that the Scriptures indicate that *Brahman* is formless because the absence of forms in *Brahman* reveals its nature.

“Neither it [*Brahman*] is rough, nor is it subtle; neither it is short, nor is it long...”
(*Br. Up.*: III, viii, 8)

“It is devoid of sound and form, and it is immutable.” (*Ka. Up.*: I, iii, 15)

“The *ākāśa* only manifests names and forms: what is the foundation of everything is *Brahman*, it is the *ātman*.” (*Chā. Up.*: VIII, xiv, 1)

“That is not touched by cause and effect, without inside and outside, That is the *ātman*, the omni-perceiving. Such is the teaching [of the *Veda*]” *Br. Up.*: II, v, 19)

If it is so, argues the objector, what is the purpose of the Scriptures which describe *Brahman* as being endowed with forms? In reply Vyāsa says (*BS*: III, ii, 15) that as the luminous sun and moon, when they are reflected in the water, or similar substances, appear under different resemblances, so *Brahman*, reflecting in the *upādhi*, appears under various forms. These forms associated with *Brahman* help the beginners...»²

Speculative knowledge of forms that can be associated with a Principle is conventional, and it can be generalized as well as particularized. Non-speculative

¹ Caldaic Fragment

² Śaṅkara, Preface to *Śvetāśvatara Up.* Excerpt from *Aparokṣānubhūti*. Edizioni Āsram Vidyā, Rome. Italian ed.

knowledge, instead, is knowledge of the fundamental principles within Unity, devoid of any formal compositions. It is identity knowledge.

Gauḍapāda summarizes it as follows:

«Non-conceptual knowledge, which is without birth, is not different from the knowable. Brahman, eternal and non-born, is then the sole object of knowledge; thus, only the non-born knows the non-born

The knowers of *Brahman* describe *jñānam* (knowledge), which is *akalpam*, as being devoid of any imagination and, thus, *ajam*, without birth, as *jñeyābhinnam*, not different at all from that identified with *Brahman*, that can be known, absolute reality.

This is also argued by the *Veda* in the following passages: “Knowledge doesn’t escape the knower...as heat doesn’t escape fire;” “*Brahman* is knowledge and bliss...” (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*: IV, III, 30; III, IX, 28, *śloka* 8); “*Brahman* is reality, knowledge and infinity.” (*Taittirīya Up.*: II, I, 1).

The expression *brahma jñeyam* means that the content of this consciousness doesn’t differ from *Brahman*, as heat doesn’t differ from fire.

The essence of the ātman, that is the object of knowledge, truly knows itself only by means of an innate knowledge whose nature is that of the ātman. Brahman, which is unity of eternal consciousness, does not derive knowledge of itself through external instruments, as the sun which, emanating constant light, doesn’t need any means to enlighten itself»³

What is the process of perception?

«An object-form is perceived, but it is the eye which perceives. This is perceived by the mind which becomes the perceiving subject. Then, the mind, with its modifications, is perceived by the Thinker-Spectator which cannot be object of perception.

Between the observed and the observer there must be a link-instrument, a binding factor, otherwise they would be completely disjointed from one another with no possibility of “knowing each other”. This instrument is the individual consciousness. And this, being a mechanism of contact causing awareness, is the connection that unites the observer and the spectacle. Thus three data come to the discerning attention of whoever wants to begin deepening his knowledge of *realizative* philosophy: observer (subject), consciousness and object ... The spectacle is first perceived by the eye – of course the eye here represents all the five senses – the eye itself is also the object of perception; and finally the mind, as thought, presupposes a thinker – thus thought too becomes the object of perception and part of the spectacle. Can we perceive him who perceives? For *Vedānta* it is not possible to perceive the subject because by being perceived it would not be a knowing subject but a simple *object* of knowledge.

³ *Māṇḍūkya Up.*, *kārikā* 33 and Commentary by Śaṅkara. Edizioni Āsram Vidyā, Rome. Italics is ours

We can sensorially see, hear, and touch everything except that which unveils itself through these aspects. At this level the Spectator lives in Silence. As long as there is a spectacle-object, there is space-time and duality; when the spectacle is no longer there, Unity emerges rotating on its own axis; when Unity merges into the Unconditioned, it discovers itself to be *Brahman-without-a-second*⁴

From this perspective, we can understand Plato's sacred words:

«...In actuality, knowledge of such truths cannot be communicated as other types of knowledge, but, after many discussions on these subjects, and after actual experience, suddenly, as light that starts from a sparkle, it is born from the soul and in the soul it finds its nourishment.»⁵, «...What can be intuited that in itself contains that Who can intuit»⁶

What do we perceive and what do we realize through the mental impressions of the so-called appearances? Perception is a nominal qualification in the sphere of forms which persists for the duration of our idealization-imagination-projection. Perceptions, however, are not an absolute nothing; if we perceive something, there must be a participation of Reality which is, after all, the very Reason of appearance; the absolute and constant datum, the One and Only that permeates all substances. By discerning the mental object, Reality from what is not real, we take ourselves in the realm of the Being that must be realized: What can be Intuited of the very one that Intuits.

How do we get to it?

«This ātman is not realized by chanting [the Veda, etc...] neither with intelligence, nor by listening. For the very reason it is sought, it becomes realizable. Of this very one, the ātman reveals the essence.

... It is said: “For the very reason it is sought”, that is because the sage aspires to realize the supreme *ātman*, “for this”, by means of such [inquiry], this supreme *ātman* “can be realized”, and not by any other practices, because due to its own nature it is eternally realized.

What does realization consist of from the perspective of the knower?

It is said: “Of this very one, the *ātman* reveals his supreme essence (*tanu*) [before] enveloped in ignorance; that is, it reveals one's own nature, one's reality as *ātman*. In other words, once knowledge of oneself is realized, the *ātman* becomes self-evident, as vases or other [objects] when light is shed on them. The meaning of this teaching, therefore, is that the practice that leads to realization of the *ātman* consists in *invoking* the very realization of the *ātman*, and in abandoning any other means.»⁷ The invocation to which the *sūtra* refers is synthesis; that is, reduction to unity of the ascetic means «... [spiritual] vigor, absence of distraction and asceticism, united with their characteristic signs and associated with renunciation... because this *ātman* is not

⁴ *Dr̥gdr̥ṣyaviveka* and Commentare by Raphael. Aurea Vidyā. New York, 2008

⁵ Plato VII Letter, D

⁶ Caldaic Fragment

⁷ *Muṇḍaka Up.*, 3.2.3 and Commentary by Śaṅkara Edizioni Āśram Vidyā, Rome.

realized by that who has little vigor... that is, by that who doesn't have the innate vigor of uniting with the *ātman*, “nor is realized as a result of distraction”...»⁸ It is, thus, evident that in invoking the *ātman*, *the renunciation of the mundane objects is a prerequisite in order to accomplish such invocation. In fact, it represents the essence of it; it is the very invocation.*

It is the very Being imagined in this body, composed of five layers, starting from the one made of food, the metaphysical height, the *emptiness* of the “golden cane” which undergoing the *winds* dissolves the boundaries. We are in Him the measure and the evocative *mantra* that separates us from Him himself.

Do not look at the simulacra of the profane mind, to the shadows of the egos. To invoke is not to passively prey, nor to ask for with the ego, nor any other thing that requires emotional, wishful participation of *That*.

To invoke is blissful abandonment to Him who is imperceptible, unspeakable and inadmissible by the sensorial mind. It is consciential abandonment in It Who will never be met through the senses. He can only be realized in us.

Stop then, catch a glimpse in the moment present only to yourself and you will be Bliss in the crystalline Silence of the Being.

⁸ Commentary by Śaṅkara to *sūtra* 4 *Muṇḍaka Up.*, 3.2.