ABSTRACT

Thesis: An Examination of the Pantheistic Monism of Shankara and Radhakrishnan

The content of this thesis focuses on the writings of Shankara (788-820 AD) and Sarvepali Radhakrishnan (1898-1975). Shankara was an interpreter of the Upanishads, the Hindu scriptures. Years before Shankara lived, groups of commentaries on the Upanishads had been assembled, the Vedas. Both of these writings are viewed as authoritative scripture by different groups of Hindus. Shankara's interpretation of these expressed a pantheistic, monistic view of reality. In modern times, Sarvepali Radhakrishnan commented on the works of Shankara and desired to bring this philosophy to the Western world. Radhakrishnan's efforts contributed to the prominence of Eastern thought in the West today.

Drawing on the works of Shankara, Radhakrishnan set forth a world-view that sees all of reality as one kind of thing, and this unified whole is God. God is Brahman, and man at his essence is Brahman. The reality of the material world is denied, and the aim of life is said to be to reach a state of enlightenment whereby man becomes one with the Absolute.

This thesis examines the truth claims of Radhakrishnan's pantheistic monism from the standpoint of logic, metaphysics, and axiology. Pantheistic monism consists of assertions that are either necessarily contradictory, or are themselves in contradiction to other truth claims of pantheistic monism. The result is a view that is internally inconsistent, and therefore false; pantheistic monism is an incorrect view of reality.

Proof of theism was not the aim of this paper. However, the conclusion of this research shows the falsity of one of theism's major contenders as a viable option in the arena of thought.
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF RELIGION

THESIS:
AN EXAMINATION OF
THE PANTHEISTIC MONISM OF
SHANKARA AND RADHAKRISHNAN

BY

NEILL A. McFARLAND III

Submitted to
Thesis committee

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA
MAY, 1995
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BASIC STATEMENT DEFINING PANTHEISTIC MONISM</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CURRENT INFLUENCE OF PANTHEISTIC MONISM</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANTHEISTIC MONISM AND THE TEST OF LOGIC</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANTHEISTIC MONISM AND THE TEST OF METAPHYSICS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANTHEISTIC MONISM AND AXIOLOGY</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CONSULTED</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the first book written after his conversion to Christianity, C.S. Lewis traces the steps of John as he journeys back to Mother Kirk. The chapters cover John's inquiries into various false philosophies as he searches for the truth. One scene depicts a dialogue between John and Vertue, both of whom feel as if they have finally begun to understand the nature of reality. Vertue concludes that "this Spirit (God) . . . is somehow also me." John speculates that perhaps "this world corresponds to the Landlord's castle. Everything is this Spirit's imagination."¹ John and Vertue decide that the world is "mere appearance," and "everything, properly understood, is good and happy."² Through this new perspective, John thinks back on his sexual debaucheries with Savage, one of the "brown girls": "It is true that she had a dark complexion. And yet- is not brown as necessary to the spectrum as any other color?"³

Such ethical relativism is one implication of pantheistic monism. There are many other implications touching on other subjects as well, but this example is given to demonstrate several things about pantheistic monism: When all of reality is viewed as "one," certain conclusions are inevitable. Vertue realized that somehow he was identical with God. John decides that this world is not "real," and evil is actually "an element in the good." Here is a view antithetical to the facts of both science and Christian theism. Pantheistic monism recognizes neither the reality of the world around us, nor the validity of empirical observations. The presuppositions and attending doctrines show this view

²Ibid.
³Ibid., 134.
to be an irreconcilable opponent of orthodox Christianity.

The purpose of this thesis will be to examine and critique pantheistic monism, one non-theistic world-view that has made recent advances into popular thought. The position of this paper is that pantheistic monism fails.

The failure of pantheistic monism would not guarantee that theism is established. The scope of this thesis will not include proofs for Christian theism, but it is in the interest of theism that this non-theistic world-view be critiqued. This paper does not aim to present classical arguments for God's existence or an evidential apologetic for an aspect of Christianity. This thesis will focus on a philosophical critique of pantheistic monism as set forth in the writings of Shankara, but to a larger degree his contemporary interpreter Sarvepali Radhakrishnan. The philosophies of these two men have been especially influential in bringing Hindu thought to a large audience in the West. Eastern thought in general and pantheistic monism in particular have found increased reception in North America for the last several decades. This is due in large part to the work of Sarvepali Radhakrishnan. He led a varied life, and utilized many avenues in his quest to interpret Shankara in a way that would make Hindu teachings accessible to newer and larger audiences.

Speaking for the Hindu world-view, Radhakrishnan claimed that dogma was to be shunned; the Hindu view of life is inclusive, such that all systems of belief should be accommodated. Radhakrishnan wrote that what actually differentiates one religion from another are the superficial intellectual beliefs:

Hinduism sets no such limits. Intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realization. Religious experience is of a self-certifying character. It carries its own credentials.  

\[4\]

---

Such a plurality is often advocated today, the result being confusion about what is true or false, right or wrong.

The basic premise underlying pantheistic monism is that reality is a unified whole, a "oneness that underlies, penetrates, and infiltrates" everything.\(^5\) God is viewed as the "ultimate reality," and the temporal world around us is viewed as either illusion or is somehow a lower level of reality.

From the Vedas and Upanishads Radhakrishnan distilled Hindu teachings and put them in accessible form. His aim was to describe Brahman in a manner understandable to Western readers, and the content of his message was diffused slightly by repeated references to this Ultimate Reality as "God" and "Lord."

When the Absolute is regarded as the basis and explanation of the world, he is conceived as the lord of all, the knower of all, and the inner controller of all. The Svetasvatara Upanishad speaks of the one God, beside whom there is no second, who creates all the worlds and rules them with his powers, and at the end time rolls them up again.\(^6\)

Contained in this previous quotation is little with which a person raised in the "Christian West" would have a problem. In describing Brahman as living, dynamic, "Being" itself, Radhakrishnan recommends Exodus 3:14 as a source of comparison and insight. Investigation quickly shows that Brahman and the One who said, "I AM THAT I AM" cannot be metaphysically equivalent, despite apparent similarities. The Hindu and the Christian each espouse irreconcilably diverse views of God and reality. It is a complete misconception when Radhakrishnan writes:

The fundamental difference between Christianity and Hinduism consists in this, that while the Hindu to whatever school he belongs believes in

a succession of lives, the Christian believes that "it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment." 7

The differences between Christianity and the Hinduism of Radhakrishnan far outweigh the points he sets forth as alleged similarities. The scope of this work is limited to a philosophical refutation of the pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan, as he presented in his writings. Radhakrishnan wrote much concerning the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the relation between the two. For many in the English-speaking world Radhakrishnan made Hindu ideas not only more understandable, but, for some, made them appear more plausible and convincing. Many educated persons in the West have concluded the Judeo-Christian world-view to be incorrect and part of what is pejoratively called the "old paradigm." Embracing Hindu ideas, some Westerners would believe Radhakrishnan's claim that this view, "... will be found equal to any emergency that the future may throw up, whether in the field of thought or history." 8

Central to the world-view defined by Shankara and Radhakrishnan is the concept of the oneness of reality. This reality is Brahman, which Radhakrishnan routinely terms God. This thesis will provide a statement of what pantheistic monism entails (chapter two), reveal some of the ways this view has impacted Western society (chapter three), and provide a philosophical refutation related to several key areas (chapters four through six). Having established what pantheistic monism is and taking note of the influence of the view, the importance of a critical analysis becomes apparent. The failures of pantheistic monism will be examined as they relate to logic, and this chapter will include evaluations of Hindu teachings on reason, intuition, language, and our knowledge of reality. The chapter focusing on metaphysical issues deals with the Hindu view of God, man, doctrine,

7Ibid., 114.
evil, salvation, and pluralism (related to the concept of "advaita"). Axiological concerns will be covered in the final chapter of critique. Pantheistic monism is a view with definite existential implications. This part of the critique will address where pantheistic monism fails as it relates to morals, individual personhood, and the fact that pantheists are "practical realists."

The three-pronged critique constructed in this thesis will show that pantheistic monism is an incorrect view of reality. The conclusion of this research (chapter 7) includes the observation that this alone does not establish theism, but it hopefully shows the falsity of one of theism's major contenders. One may hope that over time, Hinduism will lose its newfound foothold in the West, its failures becoming increasingly obvious.
A BASIC STATEMENT DEFINING PANTEHISTIC MONISM

Pantheism is a form of philosophical monism, understanding all of reality to be of one essence. Reality is an integrated whole, and this unified whole is God. Monism is a view that sees everything as reducible to one kind of thing. Pantheistic monism ascribes deity to the ontological One, and holds that all things then necessarily share in that divine nature. This is the underlying world-view held by Radhakrishnan, and is presupposed and expressed in his writings.

A significant point that distinguishes all forms of pantheism from, for example, Christian theism is pantheism's denial of God's transcendence. Pantheistic monism recognizes only God's immanence, and goes so far as to identify God with the universe. The pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan, formed by the Vedas and Upanishads, sees God as the ultimate reality, or "inner essence" of all things. Radhakrishnan denies that God is transcendent or "other" in any way.

This one, immanent, ultimate reality is called Brahman. Concerning the teachings of the Upanishads, Fritjof Capra writes:

The multitude of things and events around us are but different manifestations of the same ultimate reality. This reality, called Brahman, is the unifying concept which gives Hinduism its monistic character. The idea that the individual and the ultimate reality are one is the essence of the Upanishads.9

Reality is seen by the pantheistic monist to be "one kind of thing." Brahman is one, and is impersonal, though we seem to be aware of "three tendencies or developments, God, world, and self."10 The Upanishads remind the reader that whatever distinctions

we attribute to things, the apparent differences are reflective of our imperfect perceptions. The Upanishads emphasize that the three aforementioned elements (God, world, and self) are somehow subordinate to the "supreme Brahman above the changing world, beyond space, (and ) imperturbable."\(^{11}\) The elements comprising the world, however diverse they may appear, are "not ultimately different."

One may view reality in monistic terms, and not necessarily be a pantheist. The pantheistic monism which is the subject of this study views reality as one, and that this unified whole is God. The writings of Radhakrishnan take this position, but monism does not necessarily require pantheism. Michael Levine writes, "Monism does not entail pantheism if it denies divinity to the ontological or evaluative "one."\(^{12}\) Non-theistic monism is a logical option, but the more pervasive view equates God and the "one."

The pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan may be distinguished from other forms of both pantheism and monism. Many schools of thought have existed within the Hindu culture from which Radhakrishnan's philosophy originated. Vedantic philosophy takes its inspiration from the Upanishads. Radhakrishnan held to the "advaita" interpretation, which is a non-dualist view. This view had existed since around 600 AD, but Shankara of the eight century was the most influential and prolific exponent of "advaita vedanta.\(^{13}\)

Radhakrishnan's monistic interpretation of the Vedas, an extension of ideas set forth by Shankara, posits an impersonal "God." An alternative view is found in the works of Ramanuja (1056-1137). Ramanuja's monism, a school of thought called "vishishtadvaita Vedanta," was more theistically inclined than that of Shankara. Here Brahman is described as a personal God, "immanent in all souls and the world, but without

\(^{11}\)Ibid.
obliterating the differences among them.\textsuperscript{14} Ramanuja viewed reality as one kind of substance, but he criticized Shankara's theory of Brahman as impersonal "pure consciousness."

Hindu thinker Madhva (1238-1317) may be termed a "metaphysical dualist." He founded "Dvaita" (dualist Vedanta) in which differences between God, world, and souls are fully recognized. This is a philosophical orientation quite different than the pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan, though they shared common starting points in the Vedas and Upanishads.\textsuperscript{15}

The Vedas and Upanishads have yielded a broad range of interpretations. Pantheistic monism is one of these, yet other brands of pantheism are possible. In fact, a precise definition of the term "pantheism" is somewhat difficult to ascertain. George Galloway wrote:

> When we speak of pantheism, however, it is needful to remember that we are dealing with an elusive word, a word whose specific significance is not well-defined. Consequently, it would be impossible to say that the general notion of pantheism conveys a clear and consistent doctrine, whose spiritual and ethical value can definitely be determined.\textsuperscript{16}

Galloway notes that there is materialistic pantheism and idealistic pantheism; some pâñhântenic systems of thought posit an unconscious God (such as that of Radhakrishnan), while others set forth God as being self-conscious. Some pantheistic systems deny the reality of the external world, and some do not. The pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan does not view the temporal world as completely real, but calls this sphere of existence a different level of reality. Brahman is the highest and only reality, the realm of sensory experience is a lower (unreal) level of reality.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15}Potter, "Vedanta."
Varieties of pantheism exist, and there are also types of monism other than that of Radhakrishnan. George Galloway examined monistic idealism, which in some ways is similar to pantheistic monism. Both views hold that there is an all-inclusive Absolute. In a general way, the pantheism of Radhakrishnan and monistic idealism view reality as a single entity, but they differ as to what each understands this "One" to be. Monistic idealism may understand the "One" to be one's own mind (in which case all that is apparently perceived is actually a state of oneself). Other forms of monistic idealism would view reality as one "Absolute Thought," in which are included all other minds and thoughts. Pantheistic monism holds that the Absolute is Brahman, to which all of reality can ultimately be reduced.

Providing a concise definition of what is meant by pantheistic monism, Michael Levine writes, "Shankara's Brahman is ontologically all-inclusive and is part of a metaphysical account of the nature of Reality that is religiously significant." Levine's term, "all-inclusive," refers to the monism that is inherent in this world-view. Varieties of pantheism and monism exist, and there are various representatives of these views that form branches of Indian philosophy. Yet the common factor present is that of philosophical monism. Radhakrishnan presented pantheistic monism in a somewhat personalized way, but he recognized points of agreement common to all of Indian philosophy:

Almost all Indian philosophy believes that reality is ultimately one and ultimately spiritual. Some systems have seemed to espouse dualism or pluralism, but even these have been deeply permeated

---

18 Levine, "Monism and Pantheism," 98.
by a strong monistic character. If we concentrate our attention
upon the underlying spirit of Indian philosophy rather than its
variety of opinions, we shall find that this spirit is embodied in
the tendency to interpret life and reality in the way of monistic
idealism.19

Radhakrishnan held that all existence constitutes a "unity," and into this onto-
logical category everything must fall. Radhakrishnan's pantheistic monism and similar
belief systems were examined by H.P. Owen, who stated: "They believe that there is only
one Being, and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it,
or identical with it."20

Pantheistic monism emphasizes that there is only one kind of substance, no matter
what the external world seems to be telling us. Our experiences might lead us to believe
that real plurality exists among beings, and "types of being." One writer, sympathetic with
Radhakrishnan's position, stated: "Yet for all these imaginary entities, there must be
some substratum."21 This "substratum" is said to be a single "kind," and nothing apart
from this may accurately be considered as being real.

The monistic world-view leads to certain inevitable conclusions. The monist
asserts that all of reality is of one kind. Despite appearances, all entities are entirely
the same in such a scenario. Concerning the "objects" which surround us, "in waking
empirical experience . . . there is only an appearance of externality."22 Of necessity,

19Sarvepali Radhakrishnan, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. (Princeton, New Jersey:
1971), 74.
21Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*. (Columbia, Missouri:
South Asia Books, 1976), 80.
22Ibid., 81.
pantheistic monism denies full reality to the external world. Anything less would mean lending support to a view that mitigates against monism.

One who holds such views may not be an actual pantheist. The monistic "One" may be conceived of as an ontological or evaluative unity, but the view becomes \textit{pantheistic} when divinity is ascribed to the "One." If divinity is ascribed to this One, ultimate Reality, then everything else shares in that divinity. The essential divinity of man is an unavoidable conclusion, and it is one that Radhakrishnan supports.

Salvation for the pantheistic monist may be found in knowledge. Radhakrishnan warns not against escaping moral judgment from God, but against escaping the unenlightened state of ignorance about the true nature of reality. He advocates an awakening based upon knowledge, which gives, "... a vital realization of God. Ignorance is the center of the soul, and it must be burned in the fire of knowledge and annihilated."\textsuperscript{23} The result will be contact with the ultimate reality (of which we are a part), enabling a person to be "one with God."\textsuperscript{24}

Monistic "oneness" and unity with the Absolute are conclusions that involve elimination of the distinctions between infinite/finite or Creator/creation. Individuality is not desirable, since one is an individual only as long as he is alienated and unenlightened about his true status in the larger scheme of reality. The Absolute is unified, and recognition of this means liberation from the confines of fragmented, dualistic thought. The "consummation," writes Radhakrishnan, is when "liberated individuals

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 50.
lapse into the stillness of the Absolute."\textsuperscript{25}

Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Shankara and the Upanishads has been called "mutli-level pantheism." This is in reference to Radhakrishnan's understanding of the world as "levels... different grades or phases of reality."\textsuperscript{26} All is Brahman, but this world which appears so real to us and so divergent, is simply a different manifestation of the Absolute. Radhakrishnan is reluctant to call the world around us "mere illusion," but specifies that it is a lesser level of reality than that of the Absolute: "The world of everyday events and things is not ultimate reality, to be sure, but neither is it unreality."\textsuperscript{27} The precise nature of the temporal world is unknown to man, according to Radhakrishnan's view. We live in a level of reality that is not ultimately "real."

The enlightened person need not understand exactly what this world is, just that it is not real. The temporal world, our "level" that we see around us, is \textit{maya}. The world is not what it seems to be, but it is maya, an appearance of Brahman. Though he dislikes the term "illusion," for want of a better word Radhakrishnan sometimes uses it when explaining what is meant by "maya:"

\begin{quote}
Maya (is) illusion or appearance; That in which the world resides, when divested of name or form, some call \textit{prakriti} (matter), others maya... The real is not the universe extended in space and time, for its nature is becoming and not being. There is something deeper than this--Brahman.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Radhakrishnan holds that this world of maya is, "The unreal, in which we ignorantly live."\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{25}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 46.
\textsuperscript{26}Clark and Geisler, \textit{Apologetics in the New Age}, 62.
\textsuperscript{27}Radhakrishnan, \textit{A Sourcebook of Indian Philosophy}, 610.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., 353-354.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 355.
\end{flushleft}
Another major aspect of pantheistic monism's world-view is the apprehension of knowledge through mystical intuition. The intuitive is to be trusted over the rational. What is ascertained by reason is held to be merely the viewpoint of an individual, and while Radhakrishnan claims to allow for divergent views, the intuitive must take precedence over the intellectual. Radharkishnan writes,

Reason is subordinated to intuition. Life cannot be comprehended in its fullness by logical reason. There is something transcending the consciousness of self, to which many names are given: Intuition, Revelation, Cosmic Consciousness, and God-vision. The philosophy of India takes its stand on the spirit which is above mere logic.30

Pantheistic monism asserts that God cannot be limited by concepts, so our language and analogies are not accurately reflective of the reality that one is attempting to understand. God is to be apprehended and experienced, not discussed or confined within terminology that is hopelessly inadequate. Such comments by Radhakrishnan reflect the view that both language and logic are ineffectual tools for knowing (or knowing about) God. To arrive at truth about God via reason or to speak about God in conceptual language compromises the absolute unity and infinity of God (Brahman).

In pantheistic terms, "knowing God" means to experience Brahman. This occurs apart from specific doctrine, but by the pathways of intuition and direct experience. To "know God" is to achieve a mystic state in which one realizes his or her identity with the Absolute. This is said to be an experience that transcends doctrines or mental divisions which may be erected as a result of personal beliefs. Radhakrishnan commented on the mystic experience, which is available to all who truly desire enlightenment:

30Ibid., 353.
When we dispute over dogmas and definitions, we are divided. But when we take to the religious life of prayer and contemplation, we are brought together. The deeper the prayer, the more is the individual lost in the apprehension of the Supreme. The hardness of the ego melts; the tentativeness of the creed is revealed; and the intense focusing of all souls in one utter being is grasped. We then understand the essential unity of all religious quests, and discern the common experience under the different labels.\textsuperscript{31}

The transmigration of souls, or "reincarnation" is a central concept in the pantheistic understanding of death and the afterlife. At best, death would result in a person's absorption into Brahman. However, most find themselves reborn (reincarnated) for the purpose of purging, according to the law of karma. The deeds done in the course of a lifetime have a cumulative effect that determines one's state in the next rebirth after death.

Bliss is found in escape from this world of unreality. However, pantheism often produces in its adherents a pessimistic view of life. Johannes Vos observed:

The ordinary person must face the dismal prospect of thousands of rebirths, most if not all of these being to a life of misery and suffering. This belief has cast a pall of unhappiness and pessimism over the emotional life of the people of India.\textsuperscript{32}

In spite of the previous description about the gloom that characterizes the outlook of many Hindus, Radhakrishnan was optimistic that eventually all peoples of the world would accept his view. He felt that the struggles and oppressions of the world were to be blamed upon the desires that are an outgrowth of individual personality:

To know that reality is not apparent to us, and in our blindness


we mistake appearance for reality, is easy. But to cure the blindness, to recover true sight, requires purgation of the self. We must free the consciousness from the distortion of greed and fear, and from the illusion of egotism.\(^{33}\)

Radhakrishnan surmised that personality and the accompanying desires are manifestations of ignorance, or unenlightenment. In many of his articles and books, he reiterated his belief that world peace would ensue if all persons could forget themselves and be purged of individualism, and rather dwell on their oneness with Brahman. The transcription of the lecture, "Religion and the New World Order," contains the following quotation by Radhakrishnan: "By liberating the human spirit (from individuality) we make the world better in the only way in which it can be made, the interior way."\(^{34}\)

This basic definition of Radhakrishnan's pantheistic monism has attempted to show the core assumptions that characterize the view. Radhakrishnan quoted Mahatma Ghandi's succinct summation of pantheistic monism: "All is one, though we seem to be many."\(^{35}\) That is basically the point being made. Our eyes and senses deceive us; all is one. And to pantheistic monists, this one is God. The truth of this position will be analyzed in the pages that follow.


\(^{34}\) Ibid., 78.

THE CURRENT INFLUENCE OF PANTHEISTIC MONISM

After years of slowly-growing acceptance, pantheistic monism has become a view that is currently popular in the West. The view is held by large numbers of people at both the scholarly and popular levels, as evidence presented in this chapter will indicate. The Western popularity of pantheistic monism can trace its origins largely to the efforts of men such as Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Ghandi, and Sarvepali Radhakrishnan. It was Radhakrishnan's intent to bring his understanding of pantheistic monism to the Western world. At least to some degree, his aim has been realized.

All of these men espoused the teachings of Shankara (788-820 A.D.), who presented pantheistic monism in a sophisticated manner. Shankara's commentaries on the Vedanta-sutras have done much to help express Vedantic philosophy as a viable viewpoint among the branches of Indian philosophy. Radhakrishnan labored to make this interpretation of Hinduism a viable viewpoint for Westerners. Hendrick Kraemer and Stephen Neill concluded:

Radhakrishnan is the most important of the great creators of modern Hinduism. In a whole series of books he has set himself to commend Eastern wisdom to the materially-minded people of the West. With a perfect command of English and an attractive style, he is almost the ideal showman for the purpose.\textsuperscript{36}

Radhakrishnan's presentation of Shankara's teachings to the modern world, and his goal to specifically develop Hindu thought within the English-speaking world, led writer R.C. Zehner to describe him as a "tireless propagandist."\textsuperscript{37} Zehner said that Radhakrishnan,


"presented Hinduism to the Western world in largely Western terms and in a manner that is easily comprehensible to the Western mind."³⁸

Radhakrishnan was a prolific writer and public speaker on behalf of Hinduism until his death in 1975. Radhakrishnan also argued for improvements within the caste system, but not for abolishment of the castes completely. He wrote, "In the beginning there was only one caste. We were all Brahmins."³⁹ The castes were ripe for reform, but he felt their existence was justified as they reflected the varying states of enlightenment in which people find themselves. Other efforts of social beneficence included Radhakrishnan's work at ridding Hinduism of child marriage, polygamy, and suttee (the burning of widows). This would also help rid Hinduism of the considerable stigma such activities would carry in the West.

Radhakrishnan also endeavored to show that the teachings of Hinduism were compatible with the teachings of Jesus. Radhakrishnan felt that adoption of either faith did not require a denial of the other. His desire for pluralism necessitated a denial of certain key Christian doctrines, such as the deity of Christ. But the "Christianity" that Radhakrishnan presented as being able to mesh with pantheistic monism was doctrinally far removed from historic orthodoxy. Radhakrishnan wrote that

It does not matter whether a particular dogma like the incarnation was realized in the person of Jesus or not. The Christ of experience, the metaphysical and theological Christ, is not in any matter affected by the Jesus of history.⁴⁰

For all of his purported "openness," Radhakrishnan often included thinly-veiled remarks

---

³⁸Ibid.
³⁹Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, 129.
against Christianity. An example is found in his denial that a vicarious atonement could meaningfully occur. He says that karma alone adjudicates, and "past guilt cannot be wiped away by the atoning suffering of an outward substitute."\textsuperscript{41}

In a chapter entitled "God-Realization and the Way to It," virtually any path is condoned except that of orthodox Christianity: "The saving knowledge of God is not knowledge of and faith in Jesus as a historic person portrayed in the Gospels. Christ is not to be equated with the historic Jesus."\textsuperscript{42} The desire for pluralism prompted comments such as, "God is Buddha to some and Christ to some others."\textsuperscript{43} Interestingly, Radhakrishnan laid out an absolute standard under which his pluralism would operate. "It does not believe in any statutory methods of salvation. Such an exclusive absolutism is inconsistent with an all-loving universal God. Religion is not correct belief but righteous living."\textsuperscript{44}

Radhakrishnan seemed to anticipate that only careful strategy would succeed in establishing pantheistic monism in the West. His writings could give an initial impression of tolerance and congeniality, and in calling for pluralism he sometimes made favorable comments about Christianity. But in the effort to further his own world-view, Radhakrishnan wrote so as to undermine Christian doctrine. Consider the following statement from Stephen Neill in response to Radhakrishnan:

For all the attitude of generous tolerance which Radhakrishnan assumes and attempts to maintain, the careful reader can hardly fail to receive the impression that much of what he writes is the expression of a dislike, amounting at times to a passionate hatred, of Christianity. Christianity must not be allowed to score a point, all the trump must be in the hands of the Eastern thinker.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 54.
\textsuperscript{43}Radhakrishnan and Moore, editors, \textit{A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy}, 612.
\textsuperscript{44}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 37.
A forerunner of Radhakrishnan, Swami Vivekananda worked to bring the monism of Shankara to Europe and America. In the late 1800's he preached many times in England, and began to gain listeners in the United States. In something of a religious coup, Vivekananda was invited to speak for Western religious leaders at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Hinduism had always been labeled a pagan religion by Western missiologists. The Hindus of India were the focus of missionary effort by prominent organizations. At the Parliament of Religions, a change occurred in the perception of Hinduism on the part of Western religious leaders. Vivekananda eloquently defended Hinduism as the "universal faith, the mother of religions."\(^{46}\) Vivekananda's message there and elsewhere was as follows:

"He proclaimed the absolute divinity of man and the sinfulness of the Christian preoccupation with sin. Man is by nature free, his liberation is permanently with him, and it is he who binds himself in illusion."\(^{47}\)

Like Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda had sought to bring the ancient beliefs of Shankara to the West. Their degree of success may be indicated by the fact that the following quotation sounds current, though it was uttered by Vivekananda almost 100 years ago:

> We have no devil to lay our blame upon, no Personal God to carry our burdens. When we are alone responsible, we shall rise to our highest and best. I am the Pure and blessed one . . . I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute; I am the Blissful One, I am the Blissful One.\(^{48}\)

Swami Vivekananda espoused a doctrinal system made up of the same core beliefs as those of Radhakrishnan. Vivekananda's quote could be an apt description of the religious

\(^{45}\)Neill, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths*, 81.
\(^{47}\)Ibid.
\(^{48}\)Ibid.
perspective of many Westerners today who have imbibed his and Radhakrishnan's pantheistic outlook.

The efforts of Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan came at a time when German liberalism was beginning to erode the orthodox standards which had been held in the West more firmly up until then. Human sinfulness was a doctrine in the process of being rejected by many. The exclusivity of Christian soteriology was being replaced by universalism. The audience at the Parliament of Religions was composed of many who were marginally Christian to begin with, and many left beginning to view Hinduism as being "on par with their own beliefs."\(^{49}\)

The pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan and Vivekananda was embraced by notables such as Aldous Huxley, who read much of Radhakrishnan's writing, and was impressed by what Hinduism seemed to offer. One writer said of Huxley, "His distress over the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern world led him toward Eastern mysticism, and later the use of hallucinogenic drugs."\(^{50}\)

Perhaps as a direct result of Radhakrishnan's books, the influential Huxley incorporated some of the Hindu concepts into his own writings. Pantheistic monism is depicted in the 1936 work *Eyeless in Gaza*, and the central character is converted to pantheism.\(^{51}\) In the novel *Island*, the hero strives for and experiences "union with the universe." The thoughts of the main character are reflective of certain conclusions Huxley had arrived at in his own mind. The following quote from *Island* carries the tone of Radhakrishnan's writings, and is a description of what mystical enlightenment is like: "a knowledgeless understanding, union

\(^{51}\)Ibid.
with unity in a limitless, undifferentiated awareness, poured upward from unpersonality into a yet more absolute transcendence of selfhood.\textsuperscript{52}

Also lending much publicity to the view was Radhakrishnan's friend, Mahatma Ghandi. His Hindu doctrine was in obvious disagreement with the essential tenets of orthodox Christianity, but his actions seemed so "Christ-like" that in many minds the pluralism that Hindus called for began to appear more plausible. In the early years of this century, pantheism's foothold in the West began to grow.

Pantheistic monism engenders an interesting reaction in the minds of those to whom the view is presented. Fritjof Capra states that people are turning to the East for spiritual "liberation." Hindu-based philosophies such as pantheism appear to offer a comprehensive, so-called "organic" means of understanding the world, and this is "one of the main reasons for the immense popularity they have recently gained in the West, especially among young people."\textsuperscript{53} The public has been instructed that pantheistic monism somehow the "pinnacle" of religious viewpoints. New Age writer Marilyn Ferguson's teachings presuppose a pantheistic, monistic world view, and she asserts that unlike other religions, this offers "transcendant knowledge, a domain not limited to time and space."\textsuperscript{54} Radhakrishnan quotes Louis Renou in support of his contention that Hindu-based pantheistic monism is the highest and best religion:

There is in it a great stream of mystical power; it manifests all the conceptions of religion, and its speculation is continually revealing them in a new light. It combines powers of constant renewal with a firm conservancy of fundamental tradition. It has perfected unrivalled techniques of spiritual initiation, that


\textsuperscript{53}Capra, \textit{The Tao of Physics}, 25.

\textsuperscript{54}Marylin Ferguson, \textit{The Aquarian Conspiracy} (Los Angeles, California: J.P. Tarcher, 1981), 176.
contrast strongly with the frequently haphazard methods of spiritual training in the West. There is an underlying principle that, given favorable conditions, may well lead to a new integration of the human personality.55

An understanding of reality as One seems sublime; the simplicity of it all, as opposed to the antiquated, confusing theologies held by the dozens of Christian denominations, makes one feel that it is obviously true. Intuition nudges one to conclude (subjectively) that this non-complex, apparently comprehensive explanation of reality must be correct.

C.S. Lewis examined this very phenomenon. He observed that far from being the pinnacle of religious evolution, pantheistic monism is possibly the most primitve of all religions. Lewis noted that the view has existed in India from time "immemorial." Greek philosophers only at their best were able to rise above it, but their successors "relapsed."56

Lewis chronicles how European philosophers made the concept of pantheism acceptable to the educated and cultured classes. But he emphasized that despite appearances, pantheistic monism is not the progressive view that some think:

Pantheism is certainly congenial to the modern mind; but the fact that a shoe slips on easily does not prove that it is a new shoe—much less that it will keep your feet dry. Pantheism is congenial to our minds not because it is the final stage in a slow process of enlightenment, but because it is almost as old as we are . . . . So far from being the final in religious refinement, pantheism is in fact the permanent ordinary level below which man sometimes sinks . . . . Yet, by strange irony, each new relapse into this immemorial "religion" is hailed as the last word in novelty and emancipation.57

An examination of the attitudes exhibited by those who disseminate the pantheistic view reveals just what Lewis described. Persons in diverse fields are currently spreading the

57Ibid., 83.
news that pantheistic monism is the grid through which one may accurately understand himself and the world. Sociologist Geoffrey Ahern echoes the theme of pantheistic monism is words similar to those of Swami Nikhilananda: "Humankind is . . . a microcosm of the universe or macrocosm. Humankind is of the same spiritual essence of the cosmos."58 Any viewpoints that seem to mitigate against a pantheistic, monistic, "holistic" understanding of the world are pejoratively labeled as being of the "old paradigm."

Many entertainers exhibit a unique (some would say insidious) influence over a public that attaches great credibility to what famous persons say and do. In addition to providing entertainment, some celebrities feel it necessary to share their spiritual experiences with the public. Certain entertainment figures such as John Denver, David Carradine, and Shirley MacLaine have become proselitizers for the view of pantheistic monism. MacLaine emphatically states that the problems of earth started "when we understood the divine to be outside ourselves." Just as the Upanishads would say it, MacLaine states: "The reality of God is within us . . . . Our souls contain the same divine character as God. We are made of the same stuff . . . the God and the human are one."59

At the popular level, many have picked up on the pantheistic theme of humans as divine, conveying the view to others after having put their own individual "spin" on it. Popular speakers teach of the inherent sacredness of all things, not because God created all things, but because "God" is allegedly locally present in all things. Daytime talk shows frequently exhibit guests that have experienced great religious awakenings, moments of union with God that are

described with an eloquence that parallels that of Indian mystics.

Betty J. Eadie may frequently be found addressing audiences on and off television. She is also a best-selling author. Her book Embraced by the Light has been on the New York Times bestseller list for over a year, for a while enjoying the number one spot. Her book describes her near-death experience, as well as other mystical experiences. Her descriptions of God are said to be authoritative, because she experienced it. Her views and her basis for verification (subjectivism) are in accord with those of Radhakrishnan: "Experience of the Supreme is a direct and active participation in the truth. The experience is self-authenticating."  

Eadie's near-death experience and subsequent visions reveal a God such as would be envisioned by the pantheistic view. Eadie talks of the union she experienced with God. Much of what she had been taught about God and Christianity was found to be untrue once she entered the state of enlightenment.

In her visions, Eadie discovered that God is in all people, and all people are a part of God. Like the mystics of the East, Eadie learned from her visions that Jesus Christ is not deity in the sense that orthodox Christians use the word. Rather, he was an enlightened one with a "divine purpose." Her explanation as to why there are such divergent religious viewpoints in the world is remarkably reminiscent of Sarvepali Radhakrishnan:

Each of us is at a different level of spiritual development and understanding. All religions upon the earth are necessary because there are people who need what they teach. No one church can fulfill everybody's need at every level.

Eadie's understanding of reality expresses the pantheistic, monistic world view. It is therefore

---

60 Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 110.
61 Betty J. Eadie, Embraced By the Light (Placerville, California: Gold Leaf Press, 1992), 41, 60.
62 Ibid., 45.
 ironic and troubling that where ever she goes, she is billed as being a "born-again Christian."

The pantheistic viewpoint has been offered to, and imposed upon the public at many levels. The view has been promoted not only by public figures who are "lay people," but also by those from professional disciplines. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed many churches, including a large number for the Unitarian Universalist denomination. His designs were attempts to convey what he believed about God and man. Wright's sanctuaries usually had a large plate glass window behind the pulpit, and sometimes all four walls were glass. This enabled all to see that the building, its occupants, and the trees outside are "brothers." Wright made no distinction between the creation and a Creator. His church designs were a vehicle by which he could express his pantheistic view of reality.63

Other professional persons who have aided in the spread of pantheistic, monistic concepts include medical doctors, such as M. Scott Peck and Deepak Chopra.64 These men espouse a philosophy of medicine that views the person in terms of Hindu holism, unlike the (allegedly) inferior approach that "is interested only in disease and has no compassion for the whole person."65 The writings of Peck and Chopra repeat the buzzwords common to any work on the subject whose author has pantheistic monism as a presupposition: "Wellness," "oneness," and "preventative, person-centered" care are but a few of the phrases indicative of a monistic approach to medicine. Such "alternative approaches" to health care are borne out


Medicine in America and the West has for some years now been impacted by Eastern thought in general and pantheistic monism in particular. Elizabeth Hillstrom writes about the trend:

> In the late 1970's a loose confederation of health professionals began to use aberrant (Eastern based) approaches to medicine. Widespread growing dissatisfaction with traditional medicine argued for a totally different approach to healing.\(^6^6\)

The Association for Holistic Health was organized by physicians who have adopted this viewpoint. Their publication, the *International Journal of Holistic Health and Medicine* explains the basis of their model, with which they hope to benefit the public:

> The Eastern philosophy/spiritualism movement has contributed to holistic health by its appreciation of a unifying invisible force within and around the human body that is called "prana" (the sheath of life) by the yogis. Unlike the word "spirit" in the West, the words for this energetic force in the East generally have a very practical meaning and have direct and specific influences upon health.\(^6^7\)

Doctors such as Peck, Chopra, and practitioners of Eastern holism openly question the value of medicine that relies strictly on the "old" methods that were honed in an era when science and empirical data were the authoritative starting points. Unorthodox medical treatments, based on pantheistic presuppositions, are offered to a pragmatic public. Anxious for almost anything that "works," Hindu-based therapies are presented to patients who come away having been exposed to the view of pantheistic monism. This is one way that this worldview has spread: A 1991 Time magazine poll showed that 33 percent of Americans had tried


Eastern, non-traditional medicine.\(^{68}\)

Medicine that incorporates ideas related to pantheistic monism may include "meridian therapy." This is based upon the Hindu concept of the "chakra." The material world is said to be unreal, and our atman (soul) inhabits a bit of unreality we call a body. Within this body are seven centers of energy, and dissonance between these centers may be the cause of physical infirmities.\(^{69}\) The presuppositions at work here include that ultimate reality is one, and is something other than this world. The problems found in this world are not due to physical forces at work, but to nebulous and indescribable "forces." Physical health and spiritual peace is found in one's transcendence of this world, and even of himself. The physician assumes the role of mystic or shaman, urging the patient to unite with the Absolute and "become God."\(^{70}\)

Space does not permit an exhaustive account of all who have contributed to the rise of pantheistic monism in the West. Pantheistic monism has grown, and now spiritually-hungry Westerners often look Eastward for guidance. Taking a cue from influential public figures, "nearly 10,000 Westerners a year now flock to India in search of spiritual truth."\(^{71}\) Many persons have used their influence and notoriety as a platform by which to convince others to view reality in this manner.

This is not a criticism of the fact that these persons expressed individual opinion; they

---


are quite at liberty to do so. The data of the previous pages has been included in an effort to show that pantheistic monism is a world-view currently spreading in the West. Pollsters such as George Barna and Russell Chandler, sociologists such as Eileen Barker, and those who chronicle religious movements note that the spread of this Eastern world-view is part of a larger trend of change in the West.  

A book by Herbert Schlossberg includes a section entitled, "Assault from the East." He writes that the West is experiencing "a shift toward religious mysticism." This is evidenced by a growing mindset which views empirical knowledge as outmoded and denies the materialism of the external world. Schlossberg comments on the growth of this view and its basic characteristics:

There is a rejection of the common-sense notions of the hardness and ultimacy of physical matter, (due to) "the revolution in physics." Radically monist, pantheism does not recognize any ontological difference between man and other living beings; between living and the non-living; between God and the universe.

Those who study religion from a sociological viewpoint note that, "since the middle 1960's, "harmonal religions" have greatly expanded their numbers, and exist apart from exclusive Jewish and Christian denominations." By "harmonal religions," Barker explains that this means religions derived from Buddhist and Hindu traditions. Research indicates that, "(There has been) a historic, generational shift in religious orientations." The harmonal

\[\text{References:}\]


74 Ibid.

religions that stress oneness and unity over individuality "rely on a dualist-to-monist shift, a monistic identification with all living beings." These ideologies stress that within each person is a reservoir of sacred power. The aforementioned summary provided by one writer is presented to the public again and again: "Humankind is of the same spiritual essence as the cosmos." Attempting to show the timelessness and veracity of his religious persuasion, one pantheistic monist asserted that his beliefs are "in the tradition of the ancient Upanishads; we find the oneness of our atman (soul) with the all. We discover the higher self that unites us at a mystical level." From the same book, another initiate to the world of mystical enlightenment described pantheistic monism in a very accurate fashion:

Over against the dualisms of God/nature, God/us, and body/spirit that have so long engulfed Western thinking, holism offers a balanced and integrated vision of reality. The self is the indwelling of God. The world is the abode of God. All is one, and one is all.

Like all belief systems, pantheistic monism is a world-view composed of propositions. Anyone should consider it important to know if such propositions are actually true, and if they fit together logically. But for the Christian, the propositions of pantheistic monism are worthy of notice also because they are antithetical to all that is contained in theism's truth claims.

Pantheistic monism has survived and spread in the West, possibly even more so than

---

76Ibid., 224.
77Ibid., 276.
78Ibid., 166.
80Ibid.
Radhakrishnan could have dreamed. Sensing the incongruent characteristics of Hinduism and Christianity, Radhakrishnan hoped that one day "the meeting of the two may pave the way for a firm spiritual unity." He noted that this would be possible, only "if mutual appreciation takes the place of patronizing judgment." 81

Too many people have accepted pantheistic monism uncritically. The critical analysis that follows is not intended to be anything other than a test. We have already found that Radhakrishnan fails his own standard for tolerance. He called for religious pluralism but rejected the views of those who would critique pantheistic monism. A reasoned critique is only fair; the same rules of logic by which pantheism is judged would apply to the world-view held by a critic.

The goal of any such endeavor should subject "mutual appreciation," to truth. A view with the influence currently had by pantheistic monism must be examined to see if it is indeed the correct view of reality. The critique that follows is such an examination.

---

PANTHEISTIC MONISM AND THE TEST OF LOGIC

Pantheistic monism claims for itself an attitude of inclusion regarding other viewpoints. A superficial look at the claims makes it appear logical, appealing in its simplicity, and indeed sublime. Despite attempts on the part of Radhakrishnan and others to affirm the validity of all sincerely-held views, the fact is that pantheistic monism makes truth claims, and the accuracy of these claims is open to investigation. The attitude of plurality and inclusion of opposing views ultimately fails in itself. When contradictory truth claims are put forth, both views cannot be true. It is possible that neither view accurately represents the truth. What is important is the content of the claims inherent to a view. If the views are representative of any truth at all, and each view stands for a respective pole, then reconciliation and accommodation of both views simultaneously is impossible. One must stand and another must fall.

Pantheistic monism argues for the veracity of all world-views, apparently overlooking the fact that their truth claims prohibit the possibility of them all being true at the same time. Radhakrishnan wrote of the tolerance and freedom that is extended to divergent viewpoints by pantheistic monism. Yet within his explanation one may detect flaws that make this view fallacious:

An extensive application of the principle of liberty, equality, and fraternity has made Hinduism the most elastic of all religions. It is less dependent on historical facts, is freer from authority. Its pantheon has stood wide open for the admission of new deities who are always naturalized as aspects of the Supreme Godhead.82

82Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 338.
Liberty and fraternity are terms that can have positive connotations. Initial response would seem to tell each of us to react charitably when confronted with opinions which differ with our own. Courtesy and diplomacy are appreciated when ideas are being exchanged. Yet the pursuit of truth must not be hindered by a misguided congeniality that leads to unjustified inclusion, and ultimately skepticism.

An evaluation of pantheistic monism must consider what laws or principles underlie its thought and reasoning process. Radhakrishnan attempted to minimize the value of "first principles" as they applied to Hinduism. He wrote, "Logic cannot dictate or set limits to the course of nature and progress of discovery."\(^8^3\) In response to critics of his epistemology based on mysticism and subjectivism, Radhakrishnan countered,

> Those who have known God by acquaintance (mystical union) and not by hearsay have known him not as a valid conclusion from logical reasoning, but by the constraining authority of experience. Both sense knowledge and logical knowledge are recognized as inadequate to the real which they attempt to apprehend.\(^8^4\) (emphasis added)

This thesis will show that pantheistic monism fails, and that this is demonstrable from a clear uncovering of its internal inconsistency contrary to what we know about the world around us. In an attempt to vindicate its own position, pantheistic monism transgresses the law of non-contradiction. Just as "A is not non-A," it is not possible that contradictories all be true at the same time, which is the position of pantheistic monism. Norman Geisler wrote, "No position that generates contradictions can be considered true. Something that is (or generates) a contradiction cannot be true."\(^8^5\) Radhakrishnan's pluralism is one example of

\(^8^3\)Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 130.
\(^8^4\)Ibid., 134.
an internally contradictory position. It is impossible that viewpoints as diverse as Hinduism and theism both be equally true at the same time and in the same way (as an accurate interpretation of reality).

Indian philosophers are aware of the criticisms that are pointed out to them by critics as being flaws within their systems of thought. But Hindu philosophers such as Radhakrishnan did not see these criticisms as a problem. Radhakrishnan attempted to downplay the applicability of first principles to Hindu thought: Speaking of logic, he said: "Intellectual activities are a deformation of true knowledge."86 For Radhakrishnan, what matters is the religious experience itself rather than any doctrine inferred by it. Religious experience has nothing to do with "the acceptance of academic abstractions, (or) the testing processes of logical thought."87

Radhakrishnan asserted that religious experience somehow verifies itself. Certitude is found experientially, and not through any rational process. Throughout Radhakrishnan's writings he emphasizes that experience takes precedence over content. Adherence to logic is evidence of "avidya or ignorance, (and is) the source of our anguish."88

Logic is applicable to Hinduism or any system of thought, and it is often pointed out that one must employ logic in any attempt to deny the validity of logic. Radhakrishnan's rejection of logic is expressed in his writings, but this does not divorce his world-view from the realm of logic. He affirms logic in the very same words with which he attempted to deny logic. Calling such claims "epistemically self-defeating," philosopher Keith Yandell writes:

86 Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 28.
88 Ibid., 43.
It clearly seems a defect in a view that, were it true one could not reasonably believe it to be so. It is the case with some propositions that if they are true, no one can know that they are true, such as Nothing exists and There are no conscious beings. Presumably there is no problem or mystery about such cases. No one can know that they are true, for if they were true there would be no one to know them.89

In much the same way, it is "epistemically self-defeating" when Radhakrishnan writes that assertions about God, "are not the result of logical reasoning or systematic philosophy."90 He further stated that religious experience,

Does not appeal to external standards of logic or metaphysics. It is self-established, self-evidencing, self-luminous. It is beyond the bounds of proof and so touches completeness. It comes with a constraint that brooks (or tolerates) no denial.91

Pantheistic monism seeks to portray itself as above scrutiny by the laws of logic. Shankara wrote that "Brahman is above logical distinctions," and that a law such as that of non-contradiction does not apply at the "ultimate level."92 Radhakrishnan expressed his rejection of logic numerous times in print, but such statements fail. The propositions invoke the logic they attempt to deny. Geisler and Feinberg asked, "How can the One be beyond all thought (and the law of non-contradiction) when every thought the monist has about the One is subject to the law of non-contradiction?"93 Radhakrishnan's declarative and reasonable statements show that pantheistic monism is not beyond logic.

Aristotle wrote about "contraries," and he pointed out that paradoxical propositions would not both be true simultaneously. He wrote, "It is impossible that it should be at the

90Radhakrishnan and Moore, editors, A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, 615.
91Ibid., 618.
92Clark and Geisler, Apologetics in the New Age, 123.
93Geisler and Feinberg, Introduction to Philosophy, 174.
same time true to say the same thing is a man and is not a man." Aquinas felt the principle of "contradiction" was a fundamental of philosophy, a preamble, as the "affirmations of faith" stand in relation to Christianity. The law is pervasive throughout all thought and reasoning. It cannot be circumvented, or "gotten around," unless one is content to utter statements that are ultimately vacuous. The law of non-contradiction is applicable to pantheistic monism (and all other world-views). The law needs no justification; it justifies itself by being undeniable. The law applies to all of reasoning, because if two contradictories are both true at the same time and in the same way, "all would be right, and all would be in error." 

Pantheistic monism views reality and the world around us in one of several ways. Representing the extreme view are those who teach that this world is strict and total illusion, the only "real" reality being that of the Absolute. Shankara said that this world is maya, an illusory appearance of Brahman. Shankara, the Upanishads, and Radhakrishnan agree that the precise relationship between Brahman and the world (whatever it is) cannot be known.

Radhakrishnan views this world, as "viraj," not exactly illusion, but still a somewhat different level of reality from that of Brahman. How it is that this world of maya does not encroach upon or mitigate against the oneness of Brahman is unknowable. Radhakrishnan simply wrote that, "Its inexplicability is a gap in our knowledge." Elsewhere he stated the problem, "From where we are, we can only say that it is a mystery (maya)."

---

95 Ibd., 1008.
97 Ibd.
multiplied contradictions becomes clear: Brahman is Absolute Reality, and Brahman is all. But there exists a world that is not fully real. It is maya, but maya is Brahman. So Brahman is divided, and one distinct sphere (of which this world is a part) is not real. But there can be no division in Brahman. So we have what Radhakrishnan calls a "mystery."

The solution to this paradoxical state of affairs (maya) becomes a convenient hook on which to hang logical problems that are cultivated by pantheistic monism's basic premises. The only means by which pantheistic monism could attempt to overcome its inherent contradictoriness would be by relegating all logical objections to the realm of maya. Yet Radhakrishnan inadvertently invoked the law of non-contradiction when he wrote, "The Absolute is incomprehensible, and the world hangs on it somehow" (emphasis added).\(^{100}\) The statement is contradictory; he has comprehended something about that which he said was incomprehensible. Radhakrishnan's own words reinforce the notion that logic is applicable to this or any belief system.

Radhakrishnan asserts that the world is properly viewed in terms of maya, and pantheistic monism relegates all logical opposition to this realm of unreality. Consistently applied, maya becomes a shield intended to protect pantheistic monism from any sensory or cognitive operations that mitigate against its presuppositions. But Radhakrishnan invokes the laws of logic, fatal to his view, when he explains that there is a reason for the concept of maya and its applications: "These are devices to understand the nature of the relation of God to the world."\(^{101}\) This is fallacious; How can maya be a device for understanding that which is said to be unknowable? Understanding is an operation involving logic, which Radhakrishnan

\(^{100}\) Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, 50.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
says is inapplicable. He uses logic selectively. There is reasoning behind the concept and application of maya, but the same reasoning which serves to reveal the contradictions within the pantheistic view is denied on the grounds that it is illusory, ignorance, and part of maya.

Spokesmen for Hinduism propose various understandings about the nature of reality at the temporal level, but all seem to minimize the implications of what actually takes place here on earth. There is the personal consideration of karmic merit and demerit, but a frequent charge against Hinduism is that it is a system with less than ideal ethical import. Logic and illogic, and real distinctions between good or evil are lost in such a system of thought. Swami Nikhilananda quotes from the Upanishads:

Words and mind are powerless before Brahman . . . . From the standpoint of Atman (Brahman, or God) neither good nor evil exists. When avidya (ignorance) is destroyed, both good and evil, like all other phenomenal categories (such as reason) merge in Atman.¹⁰²

In this way, Nikhilananda tries to impress upon the reader that moral guilt, feelings of fear of judgment, and confusion over reasoning are not important. Such things "torment the ignorant person."¹⁰³ Examination of the previous assertions show their inherent falsity: The quotation begins with transgression of the undeniable law of non-contradiction. Both language and intellect were operative in the formation, and present in the content of, his proposition that "words and mind are powerless before Brahman." Nikhilananda made an assertion about Brahman, using the words which he said do not apply to Brahman. The above statements about reality cannot accurately reflect reality; they are self-contradictory (meaningless) assertions. Thus, examination of even this one quotation shows that pantheists themselves

¹⁰³Ibid., 63.
cannot live without or apart from the logical laws whose validity they consistently seek to deny. In arguing for the moral neutrality that characterizes the nature of Brahman, Nikhilananda resorted to use of the logical law "excluded middle" (in this case, neither A nor non-A).

Further contradiction is present in the description of the merger of good and evil into Atman. It is said that good and evil do not exist, but when enlightenment happens, the two will be eradicated. The very process by which these nonentities will somehow be removed is in opposition to the nature of Brahman. "If Brahman itself were to change then it would cease to be Brahman," says a prominent pantheistic monist philosopher. Yet here the Upanishads authoritatively speak of "destruction" and "merger" within Atman. And, "Atman is Brahman."

It is invalid for one to attempt to dodge the issue by arguing for a nebulous sphere of reality, of which we know nothing except that it possesses immunity from logical rules we wish to avoid. Certain Hindu thinkers have argued that to invoke the law of non-contradiction is to recognize only one kind of logic. Aristotelian logic, sometimes called "Western logic" is the school from which the first principles come. There are non-Aristotelian kinds of logic, but the basic laws of logic are the same for all logic. The precise rules drawn up by Aristotle are not arbitrary contrivances of his own mind. He did not invent logic, but he did help to discover it.

The law of non-contradiction is the initial logical tool that uncovers pantheistic monism's

---

104 Saravati Chennakesavan, Concepts of Indian Philosophy, 123.
105 Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 77.
internal contradictions. Radhakrishnan attempts to deny the law by stating that there is no difference between being or non-being: "The opposites which understanding breaks reality into are opposed to each other, but not to the whole. Mere being and mere non-being as understanding takes them is meaningless."\textsuperscript{107} He stated that being or non-being were simply "one concrete movement seen from two points of view."\textsuperscript{108} Such a denial of the law of non-contradiction (being is not non-being) is self-defeating. Radhakrishnan called such logical scrutiny, "intellectualism, (which) would separate the dissimilar and shut them up in different compartments."\textsuperscript{109} He further stated that stress upon reason was "bias of the mind."\textsuperscript{110} It is fallacious to dismiss an insistence upon sound reasoning as intellectual prejudice against ideas that are "dissimilar" to those of his own. To pejoratively assert that an opponent's disagreement is borne out of aversion to ideas which are dissimilar is to dodge the issue.

Another area in which pantheistic monism may be evaluated is in its view of religious language. Language is the vehicle by which human beings communicate and express individual propositions. If one allows that language is capable of communicating content, then one has assented to the fact that we may employ language in making valid assertions about reality. To say that "language cannot adequately describe reality," is to utter a self-defeating statement (for language was used in making a truth claim about reality).

Radhakrishnan writes, "The mystery of divine reality eludes the machinery of speech and symbol," yet he expends page after page in description of the same.\textsuperscript{111} He assumes the adequacy of what he says about God. In one volume he wrote that Brahman, "is that from

\textsuperscript{107}Radhakrishnan, \textit{An Idealist View of Life}, 150.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 44.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., 20.
which our speech turns back, being unable to comprehend its fullness. It is that which the
tongue of man cannot truly express.\textsuperscript{112} Radhakrishnan says that our words cannot
capture a correct description of God, anymore than a child could "exhaust the waters of the
deep in a seashell."\textsuperscript{113} But following this, his explanations about God and reality are prolific.
He writes that God is \textit{like} a great sea, a father, a mother, wine, among other comparisons.\textsuperscript{114}
Like any attempted denial of the law of non-contradiction, statements such as these assume
something is true in order to say that it is false. And this is contradictory.

The denial of language's adequacy in describing reality stems from the pantheist's
understanding of reality. This world is understood to be either illusion or some lesser aspect
of "the real." Salvation involves not absolution from moral guilt, but realization and union.
"Realization" is that awareness of one's true self that is viewed as correct only when seen as
a manifestation of God. "Union" refers to one's mystical "merging" with Brahman once all
hindrances (i.e. "avidya," ignorance), are eradicated. Such an enlightened state is the only
exposure to the "real" that one gets in this life, the pantheist contends. And language is hardly
adequate to describe such a state.

The Upanishads teach that we cannot "find reality and certainty in the unrealities and
uncertainties of this world."\textsuperscript{115} One might ask, "Is this a statement about which we may be
certain?" If it is, then the assertion is false. If it is not, then we may disregard it. Here we have
another self-contradictory statement. An experience of union with the Absolute cannot be,
and need not be authenticated by a linguistic defense. Radhakrishnan wrote, "(Religious)

\textsuperscript{112}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Principal Upanishads}, 67.
\textsuperscript{113}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 27.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 28-35.
\textsuperscript{115}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Principal Upanishads}, 78.
experience itself is felt to be sufficient and complete. It is its own cause and explanation."116 Thus, language is limited and is transcended by reality.

Pantheistic monism's reluctance to acknowledge the validity of language is not simply an attempt to evade critique on the basis of logic. It is the position of Hindu thinkers that predication of concepts about God and reality is in some way limiting, due to the nature of language itself. In one sense, a desire not to diminish God or to compromise the infinity of Brahman seems noble. No theist would aspire to "de-value" God through the use of less-than-ideal terminology. But such fears ascribe to language more power than is rightly due. Norman Geisler wrote, "Language does not define reality, but declares it."117

Radhakrishnan shunned the ascription of any positive concepts to God: "He (God) is above all that can be seen or imagined, known or named. To ascribe any qualities to Him is to limit Him."118 The seers would only say that God is "not this, not this."119 H.P. Owen observed that because of such a position, "pantheism is equivalent to atheism."120 By their refusal to acknowledge language or ascribe any positive concepts to God, pantheistic monists diminish God to the point of non-existence.

Ignoring his own rule, Radhakrishnan actually does ascribe concepts to God. His use of the masculine pronoun when referring to God is one example of this. But more than that, he describes God using the words "like" or "as." He says that the Absolute Reality "suggests to us the image of the burning fire."121 Radhakrishnan said, "God is too great for words to

116Radhakrishnan, An Idealist View of Life, 92.
118Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 146.
119Ibid.
120Owen, Concepts of Deity, 69-70.
explain." But he immediately added, "He is like light, making things luminous but himself invisible."^122

D.T. Suzuki observed what this thesis contends is a logical flaw inherent to the pantheistic view, that language is inadequate to describe reality: "The contradiction so puzzling to the ordinary way of thinking comes from the fact that we have to use language to communicate our inner experience, which in its very nature transcends linguistics."^123 Suzuki correctly observed that it is contradictory to employ language (an implicit acceptance of its validity) in describing what one at the same time holds to be indescribable. Indian philosopher R.D. Ranade gives a detailed explanation concerning the mystical and intuitive "apprehension of God," and concludes the lengthy discourse by reminding the reader that such things are ineffable. He quotes Plato in support of his conclusion that "these things could not be adequately written down."^124

If one accepts that language is a valid vehicle by which content may be conveyed, certain inevitable outcomes arise that prove undesirable for pantheistic monism. The first principles are assented to if one acknowledges that language can accurately describe reality. By claiming to speak with meaningful content, Radhakrishnan has acknowledged the veracity of the laws of logic. But at the same time, Shankara, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, and other Hindu writers seem to view language about God and reality as equivocal, that our terms have an entirely different meaning when applied to Him. Yet, they discuss God and ultimate reality at length

---
^122 Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 97.
^124 R.D. Ranade, quoted in Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, 558.
using human language. This constitutes an endorsement of the first principles, and acknowledgement that the law of non-contradiction applies to reality. But the Hindu thinkers have no other recourse. Denial of language is self-defeating. If reason does not apply and language is inadequate, then the discourse offered by the pantheist consists of "concepts without content, empty forms."\(^{125}\)

An example of the previous assertion is found in the way that language relates to reality. To concede that A is not non-A is to recognize the undeniable. Yet, this goes "against the grain" of a basic premise of pantheistic monism: that all of reality is one, a unified and undifferentiated whole. The pantheistic monist must reject the law of non-contradiction and the validity of language, even though such rejections are self-contradictory. To waver on these positions would imply that the Hindu is conceding on his view of reality (and further, conceding on his view of God). To allow for an "either/or" state of affairs at the ultimate level is to allow that all of reality is not one. So the pantheistic views on logic, language, and reality are all inter-related.

Radhakrishnan held that none of this really matters. At the fragmented, dualistic, and unenlightened level at which man thinks, one might construct categories through which the image of the Absolute is distorted. To stumble over such incongruencies is attributable to ignorance. At the level of ultimate reality (which pantheistic monists would say is the only kind there is), "thought and language is transcended, and all opposites appear as a dynamic unity."\(^{126}\) Radhakrishnan observed that this world is full of what seem to be changes, and there is a strong inclination to think in terms of "either/or." Radhakrishnan wrote,


\(^{126}\)Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 149.
"Change is the pervading feature of the world." At first, this appears to be a surprising admission. "Immutability is the criterion of reality," states Radhakrishnan. But he adds, "The world of manifestation has no claim to reality." No explanation is advanced as to why the world has no claim to reality. We are told to resist the urge to think logically, and to bear in mind that what seem to be changes are not. As mentioned, Radhakrishnan calls this a "mystery," and a "gap in our knowledge." The inadequacy of this explanation is magnified by the fact that Radhakrishnan's solution for the problem is logically derived: He urges that we not think logically because the problems we discern are mere "appearances," traceable to ignorance. Do not analyze the world by strict reason, because it is an unreal, "pale abstraction." The pantheistic monist uses logic to explain his position; is not the same logic a valid tool for critiquing the view? Significant problems within Radhakrishnan's view present themselves. "Maya" and "mystery" are insufficient answers to rectify such contradictions. Either language and thought do apply when speaking of God, or your message is vacuous. And as Aristotle observed about such a state, "all would be true and all would be false."

A further consideration related to how pantheistic monism views language is found in the concept of predication by analogy. Pantheistic monists speak as if religious language is equivocal; our words about God have an entirely different meaning when applied to God. But in their statements, pantheistic monists seem to implicitly assert that religious language is univocal. In the statement, "Atman is Brahman," "being" is understood to mean the same

127Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, 86.
128Ibid.
130Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, 52.
thing for a person as it does for God. This is univocal predication.

The univocal position maintains that the terms used of man are used of God in the same way. Pantheism's refusal to recognize language is a form of equivocation, the result of which must be rightly viewed as skepticism. Yet Shankara and Radhakrishnan often wrote about salvation through knowledge. Enlightenment comes not only by one knowing things about God, but by one learning that he essentially is God. "The unity of man and God is the fundamental thesis which has come down to us from the Upanishads and Shankara," writes Radhakrishnan.\(^\text{131}\) Radhakrishnan taught that, "God is Being itself. The Supreme is non-dual, free from subject-object distinctions."\(^\text{132}\) In the same work Radhakrishnan is quoted as saying, "The Supreme Reality Brahman is one with the deepest self Atman."\(^\text{133}\) This is an instance of "being" predicated of both man and God in the same way, univocally. So pantheistic monists use religious language inconsistently; sometimes it is viewed equivocally, and sometimes it is viewed univocally.

Predication by analogy appears to be a model that succeeds where others fail, yet pantheistic monism teaches that "concepts" do not apply to God. Pantheistic monism rejects analogical predication, apparently out of desire not to limit or finitize God. Radhakrishnan writes that God is beyond description, knowable through experience and not concepts. Our words and concepts, ". . . deal with relations and cannot grasp the relationless absolute. (Brahman) cannot, like inferential knowledge, be communicated to others. It is impossible to give a formal exposition of it. The mystic insight is inarticulate."\(^\text{134}\) Radhakrishnan emphasizes

\(^{131}\) Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 106.

\(^{132}\) Chennakesavan, *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*, 250.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., 252.

\(^{134}\) Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 178.
that because God's glory is beyond measure, "definitions of the intellect . . . are inadequate to the highest." Radhakrishnan emphasizes that analogical predication is not the proper means through which knowledge of God is to come, but he comments that an unfortunately large number of his Hindu brethren do "acquiesce, (accepting) unsatisfactory conceptions of God."  

It is laudable that Hindus wish not to reduce God, or lessen the glory rightly due Him. But it is not possible that God be diminished by our descriptions of Him. Our understanding of who God is might be impaired by a wrongly-held concept, but God's essence cannot be impinged upon by us. Despite the aversion to analogy, pantheistic monists "break their own rule" by routinely disseminating pantheistic truths in this manner.

*What* these concepts entail will be discussed in the next section of the critique. *That* these conceptions exist is the focus here. After warning against ascribing concepts to God, Radhakrishnan writes, "We can describe this experience (knowledge of Brahman) only by metaphors." "Description" and "metaphor" are forms of predication by analogy. When one describes and compares with the aim of clarification, either his efforts are accurate or they are not. If the metaphor is inaccurate (and a devout Hindu would probably add the disclaimer that it is), then the description is essentially meaningless. If the concepts employed are accurate, in that they convey a notion similar to that which is being described, you have analogically predicated something of God.

Radhakrishnan repeatedly uses phrases that include the words, "God is like . . . "

---

135 Ibid.
137 Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 178.
or "as if." He writes about our "descriptions of God" and "notions."\textsuperscript{138} Shankara wrote that God is like "what appears to be a snake, but on closer examination turns out to be a rope."\textsuperscript{139} In the introduction of his book \textit{The Upanishads}, Swami Nikhilananda explains that each of the chapters contain "descriptions." Brahman (God) is compared to fire, food, water, intellect, and many other things. What is the purpose of these illustrations? To "help purify the mind, and reveal the true nature of objects."\textsuperscript{140} Radhakrishnan's friend Mahatma Ghandi, said that such "sparks of truth" led him daily nearer to the "indescribable as-yet-unknown-truth, which is God."\textsuperscript{141} This is a statement laden with implications contradictory to other points of pantheistic monism.

Conceptualities and analogy are freely used in asserting the Hindu views about God and reality. Yet the spokesmen for pantheistic monism disavow any relation between concepts of God and Brahman itself. The logical dilemma is summarized in the following quote:

\begin{quote}
Pantheists are stuck. If they allow concepts, then according to their principles God's unity and infinity are compromised. But if they allow no concepts to describe God, the word "God" becomes void of meaning; like an empty plastic bag, it may have potential for content, but the potential is unfulfilled.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

Further discrepancies surface when one examines pantheistic monism and epistemology. Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know. Pantheistic monism affirms two \textit{different} epistemologies, yet these yield contradictory conclusions about the nature of reality.

\textsuperscript{138}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 20.
\textsuperscript{140}Swami Nikhilananda, \textit{The Upanishads}, 109.
\textsuperscript{141}Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, \textit{Contemporary Indian Philosophy}, 21.
\textsuperscript{142}Clark and Geisler, \textit{Apologetics in the New Age}, 143.
Knowledge is often divided into two categories, rational and intuitive. The position of pantheistic monism is revealed even in the labels attached to "kinds" of knowledge: Intuition is called "higher" knowledge, and rational, scientific knowledge is referred to as "lower." Given pantheist's low view of the "realness" of this world, empirical data is predictably looked upon as of little value. Therefore, intuition and mystical "seeing" is given credence over what we discern from sensory data that confronts us at each moment of our lives. Writer A.C. Mukerji admits that during the course of this "scientific age," "The modern mind has given ample evidence of its power to reach staggering heights of learning and scholarship."144

Our acquisitions of knowledge during modern times seems vast. But this apparent endorsement of empirical learning is not to be taken as such: Mukerji says that reliance on the empirical has "led to some of the gravest and most disastrous aberrations in the history of philosophy."145 This may be arguable, but the reason that pantheistic monism views intuition as the "most valid" way of knowing is because of its "self-certifying character."146 Subjective reflection is thought to supersede any external data or empirically-based conclusions. If one attempts to distinguish between so-called "mystical knowledge" and sensory knowledge, certain other factors must be considered. The conclusions arrived at through sensory input are said to be colored and distorted by cognitive processes. Our sensory deductions arise out of interaction with the world around us. An overly-literal understanding of our environment itself is a form of "avidya" (ignorance). Worst of all, our

---

143 Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 27.
144 Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, 434.
145 Ibid.
empirically-based knowledge is blemished by its inseparable relationship to logic.

On the other hand, knowledge that comes from mystical union with Brahman is viewed as somehow "purer." The reflective, intuitive knowledge that comes from "mystical consciousness" is said to be free from the impurities that taint rational thought. Consider the following quote from Radhakrishnan:

> We have to pass beyond thought, beyond the clash of oppositions, beyond the antinomies that confront us when we work with the limited categories of abstract thinking, if we are to reach the real where man's existence and divine being coincide. It is when thought becomes perfected in intuition that we catch the vision of the real.\(^{147}\)

Radhakrishnan has asserted that logic does not apply to pantheistic monism. Yet here, as in many other places, he makes *reasoned assertions* about reality, the realm where thought and logic supposedly do not apply.

In discussing epistemology, Radhakrishnan attributes conflicting ideas to the lingering effects of maya on our thoughts. A polarization of opinions is evidence that a discussion is yet rooted in this world, and has failed to focus itself on the real. Intuitive knowledge lifts one above the difficulties that arise from empiricism and logic. Radhakrishnan asserts that mystical knowledge helps one understand that, "The real is neither true nor false."\(^{148}\)

Out of this distinction between empirical knowing and intuitive knowing, several further problems arise. Firstly, mystical experiences are alleged to provide knowledge of a higher plane, knowledge that soars above the limitations of logic. It is said to be truer knowledge because it is imparted through union with the Absolute, of whom it is said (though

---

\(^{147}\)Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 176.

\(^{148}\)Ibid.
self-defeatingly) that logic does not apply. However, pantheists arrive at these conclusions logically. The intuitive experiences that supposedly transcend logic are explained and categorized by the pantheists themselves in logical terms. One advocate of pantheistic monism describes this "higher knowledge:" "In the tradition of the ancient Upanishads, we find the oneness of our atman with the all. We discover the higher self, the transpersonal self that unites us at a mystical level."\footnote{149} Mystical knowledge is purportedly different than empirical knowledge because it circumvents reason, presuppositions, and transcends language. But is it really any different? Intuition is characterized by all of the qualities that pantheism says disqualifies empirical knowledge.

It becomes clear that mystical experiences and intuitive knowledge do involve sensory operations. The practitioners of mysticism are quick to interpret their experiences along lines that coincide with their strongly-held views about reality. For instance, Radhakrishnan discusses the "seers," holy mystics who were so enlightened that they "recorded in the Vedas the eternal truths . . . They are the pioneer researchers in the realm of spirit who saw more in the world than their fellows."\footnote{150} Radhakrishnan's interpretive bias is evident when he claims that Jesus was like one of the seers:

\begin{quote}
The baptism in the Jordan by John was to Jesus the occasion of vivid and intense religious experience, so much so that he had to go for a time into solitude and think it over. He obviously spoke of the ineffable happening.\footnote{151}
\end{quote}

However "pure" mystical knowledge is said to be, the fact is that no one is entirely devoid of interpretive bias. The Hinduistic bias of Radhakrishnan (and his high personal tolerance

\footnote{149}Roof, A Generation of Seekers, 76.  
\footnote{150}Radhakrishnan and Moore, editors, A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, 615.  
\footnote{151}Ibid., 616.
for contradiction) is manifested in his interpretation of Genesis 2. Throughout his writings, Radhakrishnan states that man's problem is ignorance (avidya and maya), and the solution is enlightenment. The account of Adam and Eve partaking of the tree of knowledge could be construed by the Hindu to symbolize their concept of enlightenment. But Radhakrishnan's understanding of the event is as follows:

Man tastes the fruit of the tree of knowledge and the result is his fall. Intellectual knowledge is a leap forward in man's awareness but it is said to be a fall since it produces a fissure or a cleavage in man's life. Their (Adam's and Eve's) state is said to be a fallen one, as they search for light as something lost, which they are able to glimpse dimly.  

This account shows several things: Interpretive bias is present. The immediate context and content are ignored so that the interpretation yielded coincides with presuppositions of pantheistic monism. Radhakrishnan handles other portions of the Old and New Testaments in this manner also. In addition, the "fall" contradicts what he elsewhere prescribes as the means of enlightenment-- attainment of knowledge. Further, this "fissure" or "cleavage" in the Atman (soul of man) is incongruent with the unified nature of Brahman.

Other examples of the Hindu world-view being superimposed over Christian theology can be found in Radhakrishnan's commentary on the Upanishads. Matthew 11:25 is construed so as to imply that Jesus taught his disciples about mysticism and enlightenment. One can extrapolate that Jesus endorsed a religious experience like that of the Hindu seers only by divorcing the accounts in the New Testament from all context. One would also have to disregard Jesus' own words, which set forth religious claims diametrically opposed to those of any strain

152Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 92-93.  
153Ibid., 166-117, 148.  
154Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 227.
of Hinduism. Claims for the purity, primacy, and exclusivity of intuition above empirical knowledge appear unfounded.

Another difficulty presents itself, demonstrating further that intuition is not a distinct and higher means of knowing. This relates to the allegedly "ineffable" character of mysticism. Mystical perception is thought to be a higher means of knowing, partly because it transcends language and logic, both said to be tethers that impede empirical knowledge. The ineffability of intuition is emphasized; such experiences are not describable in words. Intuitive knowledge is "that from which our speech turns back," and "that which the tongue of man cannot truly express nor human intelligence conceive."\textsuperscript{155} Evelyn Underhill was greatly influenced by Hindu thought, and has in turn influenced many others. Underhill writes that through mystical intuition, all who desire may experience "ecstatic vision, communing with its source, the Absolute One."\textsuperscript{156} This is genuine reality, experienced firsthand, according to Underhill. And this "inward subtle understanding" is man's only vehicle by which to know about reality.\textsuperscript{157}

It is striking to notice how much is written about a subject that is allegedly beyond words. The Zen maxim was previously quoted, "The instant you speak about a thing you miss the mark." The intuitive that is said to transcend words and explanations is frequently described at length by those who espouse pantheistic monism. One writer observed that despite claims of ineffability, mystics are "rarely at a loss for words."\textsuperscript{158} Mystics can sometimes be a quite verbose group!

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{158}Clark and Geisler, \textit{Apologetics in the New Age}, 177.
The distinctions between so-called "lower" and "higher" modes of knowing seem to disappear upon closer scrutiny. Sensory input, the presence of logic, and the fact that both are understood and related verbally indicate that empirical and intuitive knowledge are not unrelated. David K. Clark writes, "Mystical knowing is not strictly ineffable or indescribable, for mystics do describe their experiences and others (including non-mystics) do understand their descriptions."\(^{159}\)

In an attempt to make distinction between types of knowledge, "higher" and "lower," the pantheist inadvertently affirms that reason is inescapable. The rational principles whose value and applicability the pantheist seeks to minimize, are shown to be unavoidable. In attempting to isolate intuitive thought and defend its superiority, logical distinctions are made. The employment and necessity of reason is obvious. It is logically inconsistent to disavow reason, and later invoke the same principles in effort to make one's point.

It is interesting to note that pantheistic monism uses the word "intuition" in two ways. Just as religious language is used by pantheists in two opposing ways, so is the concept of "intuitively known" truth. The common usage of "intuition" by Radhakrishnan is when speaking of enlightenment, or *religious experience*. Elsewhere he uses "intuition" to refer to truths we know by instinct. Man is said to be aware of God and his own spirituality by "instinct." Man desires God because of "an incurable dissatisfaction with the finiteness of the finitude, the transiency of the transient."\(^{160}\) Radhakrishnan calls religious desires "integral intuitions," the veracity of which is immediately grasped.\(^{161}\)

\(^{159}\)Ibid., 228.
\(^{160}\)Radhakrishnan and Moore, editors, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, 615.
\(^{161}\)Ibid.
The problem with Radhakrishnan's usage of "intuition" in this way is that elsewhere he denies the validity of truths that are obvious and instinctively known. The truths of logic are immediately known to be true, as soon as the terms are understood. But Radhakrishnan says that apparent "logical validity" does not mean that such axioms apply to reality. He admits that yes, there are principles that "we cannot help assenting to as soon as we intuit them."\(^{162}\) But such is the product of unenlightenment: "Logical knowledge is non-knowledge, avidya, (ignorance)."\(^{163}\) It is fallacious that he allow for and reinforce one conclusion because it is instinctively known, but reject another because it is instinctively known.

Related to the subject of epistemology is the position that pantheistic monism takes regarding science. As noted in previous pages, the Hindu worldview rejects the validity of sense knowledge. Fidelity to other tenets of their belief system would require that this be so. The external world is not wholly "real." Brahman is true reality, and whether the Hindu thinker views the world as illusion or a nondescript "lower" level of reality as does Radhakrishnan, the approach toward empirical knowledge is the same. Sensory data does not lead one to true and correct knowledge.

In light of this point, it then appears strange that one such as Radhakrishnan would recognize the validity of scientific knowledge. Radhakrishnan asserts that science is a useful tool for understanding the lower realm, this world. He wrote, "Science dispels the darkness oppressing the mind, and shows the incompleteness of its own world."\(^{164}\) It is asserted by Radhakrishnan that science answers the questions germane to this world, but in order to understand ultimate truths, "science has to be supplemented by another discipline."\(^{165}\)

---

\(^{162}\) Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 146.

\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 550.
Again, a very logical distinction has been made between allegedly different realms of knowledge.

Hindu philosopher S.K. Maitra wrote an interesting statement that touches on several relevant areas: "The development of science is undoubtedly one of the greatest achievements of mind." The statement is interesting because of its assent of several things: Science is a legitimate means of knowing, the external world provides tangible data, and the mind is capable of making interpretive (though valid) judgments about such. Use of the words "development" and "mind" are implicit endorsements of the scientific method. Here we have one who supports pantheistic monism, yet is affirming that there is an external world that is observable and understandable. And data could not be assimilated and interpreted if not for laws of logic that govern sound thought.

It appears contradictory that pantheistic monists such as Radhakrishnan and Maitra would endorse science, a discipline rooted in empirical observation. Science concerns itself with the objective, while the intuitive epistemology preferred by pantheistic monism is subjective. Science and mysticism are simply incompatible. The "purists" of these two disciplines view the world, knowledge, and truth in ways that are diametrically opposed. One could endorse both only by holding to two incompatible epistemologies.

Radhakrishnan writes that the world we see and touch, "carries no explanation of itself. It is a world reflecting the conditions of our minds." He further notes that "difference and multiplicity is not real." Researchers whose work depends upon the scientific method

---

165 Ibid.
166 S.K. Maitra, quoted in Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 403.
167 Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 87.
would disagree sharply with both of those points. Pantheistic monism would disagree just as strongly with many presuppositions of science. As mentioned, these include beliefs that the world is real and observable, and that our empirical observations provide an accurate starting point from which rational judgments can be made. Pantheistic monism, with its epistemology reliant on intuition and mysticism, has presuppositions contrary to those of any scientific discipline. In fact, modern science had its birth in an environment that espoused a Christian world-view.\textsuperscript{169} The scientific method could only have developed among those who (unlike pantheistic monists) view the world as real, and make logical judgments based upon "the orderliness and predictability in the universe."\textsuperscript{170}

One example of Radhakrishnan's acceptance of modern science can be found in a discussion about the "natural equality of men." He writes about the observations of science that human beings are all equal (at least from a biological standpoint). Radhakrishnan asserts that the discoveries of science as related to genetics and heredity were assumed earlier by Hindu thinkers.\textsuperscript{171} The findings of modern science supposedly underscore what pantheistic monism held all along.

Elsewhere, Radhakrishnan states that as religion brings us nearer and nearer to truth (as he sees it), so modern science brings us into a progressively clearer understanding of the world around us.\textsuperscript{172} He recognized the obvious differences that distinguish religion,

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171}Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 73.
\textsuperscript{172}Radhakrishnan, An Idealist View of Life, 19.
philosophy, and science. Radhakrishnan saw the work of science as follows: "Science is purely descriptive . . . . It brings certain events under well-known laws. Science gives us a general history of what happens without raising further questions of why things are the way they are."\footnote{173}

It is unclear how a world-view can deny the full reality of the material world, deny that our senses provide accurate and meaningful data, and yet accept as valid the findings of modern science. Pantheistic monism cannot (logically) deny all that is the basis for science, and then appeal to science as a support for its truth claims.

In conclusion of this chapter, the logical discrepancies that permeate pantheism provide substantial support for the claim that the view fails to give an accurate account of the nature of reality. Pantheistic monism is internally inconsistent, failing the tests of logical scrutiny.

Logic, language, the concept of "being," and epistemology are among the topics that were covered in this portion of the critique. Those that follow will also fall under the general term "logical" critique, but will deal with other areas in which pantheism's truth claims prove to be problematic.

As issues related to metaphysics and axiology are examined, new inconsistencies come to light. Just as the beliefs of any world-view that attempts to be comprehensive are interrelated, certain aspects of the critique will appear to overlap. The presence of repetition is due to the connection of a truth claim in one area, to connection with a claim in some other area. Though certain key points may be reiterated, each subheading deals with individual and unique areas of critique.

\footnote{173}{Ibid., 223.}
PAN THEISTIC MONISM AND THE TEST OF METAPHYSICS

In continuing a logical evaluation of the truth claims of pantheistic monism, this section will examine how Radhakrishnan's view answers metaphysical and theological questions about the nature of reality. The content of any world-view has theological import. Even a view that may strive to remain secular could not call itself completely "a-religious." A world view purports to explain the ultimate questions of life, and by faith the claims are embraced by adherents of the view. Whatever our station in life, we all have an "abstract of principles" by which we live.

Likewise pantheistic monism, though it makes claims about its pluralism and lack of dogma, actually does have "core beliefs" and doctrines that characterize its positions. In his interpretation of Shankara and the ancient Upanishads, Radhakrishnan has written works that are very interesting and educational reading. But doctrinally neutral they are not.

Radhakrishnan claims to shun creeds and the "strait-jacket" of dogma. He proudly asserts that Hinduism is "wholly free of the obsession that acceptance of a particular religious metaphysic is necessary for salvation."174 Radhakrishnan claims that dogma divides people, while true devotion to God (whomever you understand God to be) brings persons together: "Eastern religions are non-dogmatic and their adherents possess as a rule what may be called spiritual good manners. In heaven there are not only many mansions but also many vehicles to reach them."175 Union of people and hearts is fitting, considering the "seamless whole" which Hinduism understands reality to be. Radhakrishnan maintained that dogmatic beliefs

175 Radhakrishnan, East and West in Religion, 52.
and "non-negotiable" doctrines were simply "notions of God, framed by men." 176

Radhakrishnan writes, "Blind belief in dogma is not the faith which saves." 177 He criticizes Christianity as having a "legacy of mechanical adherence to authority." 178 He stated that his interpretation of Hinduism was free from such creedal burdens. "The purpose of religion is not intellectual conformity to inherited doctrine," Radhakrishnan says. 179 Religious experience (which is said to be self-authenticating) and union with the Absolute (which Hindus happen to call Brahman) are the aims of true spirituality, according to Radhakrishnan. Not the perpetuating of mental and spiritual bondage by the handing down a rigid doctrinal code from one generation to the next. But in the writings of its spokesmen, we find Hinduism and pantheistic monism to be as dogmatic as other religions at which they have leveled this criticism. Radhakrishnan ponders the potentially volatile situation presented by the conflict between the world's religions. He says that any attempts to "obliterate every other religion than one's own is a sort of religious bolshevism." Paradoxically, he writes that the only answer is that every one accept the "Hindu solution." 179 This "solution" is "the comprehensive and synthetic spirit of Hinduism." 180 He adjures others to relinquish dogma, while at the same time insisting they "see it my way."

In fact, far from being "wholly free" of dogma, pantheistic monism comprises a very specific body of strongly-held beliefs. By virtue of their emphasis on mystical intuition, Radhakrishnan calls Hinduism an "open religion." The faithful are free, enjoying the ex-

176 Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 194.
177 Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 14.
178 Ibid.
179 Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 158.
179 Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 42.
180 Ibid., 43.
perience of God rather than attempted conformity to an objective standard. Speaking of
Christianity, Radhakrishnan writes: "The closed religions are the creedal, ritualistic ones which
give a sense of security to frightened children."\textsuperscript{181} Radhakrishnan faults Christianity for being
"intolerant," and "absolutist."\textsuperscript{182} He asserts that religions other than Hinduism have a basic
operation, "demanding loyalty to arbitrary, unverifiable, warring creeds."\textsuperscript{183}

Radhakrishnan assumes in favor of his own neutrality, but present in pantheistic
monism is the exact fault that he finds in religions such as Christianity. Pantheistic monism is
actually a very doctrinal religion. The \textit{Vedas} and \textit{Upanishads} are viewed as scripture by
Radhakrishnan. Although token recognition is given to other sacred writings, these are viewed
as superior. The interpretation of life and salvation set forth in the writings is viewed as
\textit{authoritative}. Radhakrishnan \textit{presents} and \textit{argues for} the truth of his view about God and
reality. Radhakrishnan says that Hinduism sits at the top of the "ladder of spiritual perfection."\textsuperscript{184}

Despite a self-perceived openness, pantheistic monism does possess doctrine, and dogmatic
adherence to it is exhibited. Radhakrishnan asserts that the world must eventually turn to
Hinduism, which alone can save humanity.\textsuperscript{185}

The essential beliefs of pantheistic monism lead to the unavoidable implication that
humans are divine. Radhakrishnan was dogmatic in his insistence that denial of this is simply
a manifestation of spiritual ignorance. "The assertion of the self as something other than the
ture reality of God is the fall or the original sin (avidya)."\textsuperscript{186} Repeatedly he emphasizes that

\textsuperscript{181}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Eastern Religions and Western Thought}, 63.
\textsuperscript{182}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Recovery of Faith}, 38.
\textsuperscript{183}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184}Ibid., 142.
\textsuperscript{185}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Eastern Religions and Western Thought}, 63.
\textsuperscript{186}Radhakrishnan, \textit{An Idealist View of Life}, 111.
man is of the same essence as God: "Man is not a spiritual being temporarily confined within the prison of the body . . . the divine seed is in us."\textsuperscript{187} He writes, "The divine enraptures us because the divine is in us."\textsuperscript{188} We are at our essence, atman. And atman is Brahman. It is a strictly-held doctrine that man and God are one. "There is perfect correspondence between the inner nature of man (atman) and Brahman."\textsuperscript{189} Radhakrishnan dogmatically emphasizes that "the unity of God and man is the fundamental thesis" of all branches of Hinduism.\textsuperscript{190} This belief is an outgrowth of their doctrine that no distinctions are found in reality.

Further doctrines held by pantheistic monism are found in their denials of what appear to be obvious truths about the world around us. It is firmly held that this world is not ultimately real; individual consciousness and sensory awareness are also something less than the reality that characterizes the "One." Pluralism and religious tolerance are affirmed, while overt exclusivity are condemned. It is thus evident that pantheism is capable of doctrinal exclusion, despite claims to the contrary. Those whose opinions differ will have the veil of ignorance lifted at some point. The implication is that erroneous beliefs are tolerated for a time, but enlightenment will ultimately bring all persons around to the "correct" view, i.e. Hinduism. This is accomplished by the "principle of karma . . . Karma is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity."\textsuperscript{191} Here we have a point of doctrine, which Radhakrishnan has labeled "principle" (a term that presumably does not imply dogmatism). The veracity of this principle and its influence in our lives is said to be "necessary." However this is a dogmatic

\textsuperscript{187}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Recovery of Faith}, 169.
\textsuperscript{188}Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{189}Ibid., 136.
\textsuperscript{190}Radhakrishnan, \textit{An Idealist View of Life}, 106.
\textsuperscript{191}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 53.
assertion. Pantheistic monism unsuccessfully affirms both sides of the issue, attempting to espouse an exclusive view and yet remain tolerant.

The fact that pantheistic monism does possess doctrines while at the same time denying the veracity of any belief held with inflexibility, does not by itself prove that the view fails. But it does reveal several things, most noticeably that pantheistic monism is content to allow glaring contradictions to exist within its structure of claims. Also, despite any claims to the contrary, Hindu doctrine exists and its content may be rationally examined within the arena of ideas. Success or failure of a view is partially defined by the rules of logic, and on those lines win or loss may be determined.

Of paramount importance among the assertions of any world-view is what that view teaches about God. The countless peripheral issues that a world-view may or may not speak out on are of minor importance in comparison to what the view actually teaches about God. A world-view touches on many things, but at its core are propositions about God. Thus the world-view of pantheistic monism presents teachings about God that are inconsistent. Radhakrishnan writes that God is impersonal: "God is beyond image and concept, (God) can be experienced but not known."\textsuperscript{192} Pantheistic monism teaches that God is not an entity with which one may enter into personal relationship. That would imply a duality which is not an option for monism. God is not "known" as in a relationship, but rather "experienced." "The absolute being is not known in the logical way, it is realized by all who strain to know the truth."\textsuperscript{193}

Fundamental to orthodox Christian teachings is the belief that the Creator is a personal

\textsuperscript{192}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Recovery of Faith}, 188.
\textsuperscript{193}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Indian Philosophy}, 34.
agent. God acts in history, and Jesus Christ is God incarnate in time and space. Such doctrines are irreconcilable with the views of pantheistic monism. Brahman is not a personal agent, but is the ultimate reality to which our soul (atman) may be united. So for Radhakrishnan, Christ is not a person but the experience of union through enlightenment. This view overlooks the implications of what the actual person Jesus did and said in history. The words and deeds of Jesus are informative; the resurrection potentially provides authentication, and through it all God is presented as personal. Radhakrishnan dismisses any doctrinal conclusions that one might draw from a study of Christ's life and ministry:

> It does not matter whether a particular dogma like the Incarnation was realized in the person of Jesus or not . . . . The Christ of experience, the metaphysical and theological Christ, is not in any manner affected by the Jesus of history.\(^{194}\)

Like many others, Radhakrishnan glosses over the explicit and unavoidable conclusions rendered by a study of Jesus Christ, in favor of personal bias. Jesus is given token recognition: "The great lights in human form, the Buddha, Socrates, Zoroaster, Jesus, reveal to us the divine possibilities of human nature."\(^{195}\) As a "great light," Jesus and the others supposedly knew what all sages knew, that "salvation" is: ". . . perception of the Divine Reality . . . . Mental images are necessary to bring Godhead into human understanding but they are only images and symbols, historical, inadequate.\(^{196}\)

The names of Jesus and others are invoked by Radhakrishnan in order to give support to a pre-determined conclusion. The Absolute Spirit of pantheistic monism allegedly defies conceptual depiction, and is without personality. To understand God otherwise is dismissed

\(^{194}\)Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 73.
\(^{196}\)Ibid., 194.
as acceptance of what man says about God, rather than to genuinely experience God: "As an essentially human phenomenon, religion insists on the "otherness" of God. We seek union with God . . . the Absolute is pure consciousness and pure freedom and pure infinite possibility."\footnote{Radhakrishnan, \textit{An Idealist View of Life}, 343.}

God is not \textit{magnified} by the negation of all predicates about Him, but is essentially \textit{eliminated}. Pantheistic monist Balbir Singh writes, "The one God is hidden in all beings, all pervading, the only one \textit{devoid of all qualities}" (emphasis added).\footnote{Balbir Singh, \textit{The Philosophy of the Upanishads} (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1983), 72.} It follows that in addition to being "not this, not this," as the seers claim, the pantheistic God is also "not-existent."

David Clark and Norman Geisler observe that pantheistic monism reduce the word "God" to meaninglessness, and its object to non-existence.\footnote{Clark and Geisler, \textit{Apologetics in the New Age}, 142.}

In the face of such rejections of conceptual language, it is ironic and contradictory that when necessary, a pantheistic monist will proceed to ascribe concepts to God. Radhakrishnan writes that, "Brahman can be alluded to but not described."\footnote{Radhakrishnan, \textit{Recovery of Faith}, 87.} He writes that knowledge of Brahman "cannot be verbalised."\footnote{Ibid., 134.} Yet the Upanishads variously describe Brahman as being \textit{like} an unvanquished army, a drum that is beaten, a conch shell, and an egg.\footnote{Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Principal Upanishads}, 186, 198, 399.} Elsewhere in the Upanishads qualities are attributed to God that directly imply personhood: Brahman is described as being just, desiring things, and being "crowned with jealousy."

Brahman is described as the universe's "supervisor."\footnote{Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Hindu View of Life}, 53.} Radhakrishnan himself diverts from
the usual contentless conception of God and makes the following comparison, stating that
the enlightenment of the Atman "is like a blind man whose lost sight is restored as by the
grace of God." Here we have a fragmented concept of God (because Atman is Brahman).
We are presented with a God that is personal, and sovereign. Radhakrishnan has described
a God who acts.

Perhaps anticipating the discrepancy between these descriptions and Brahman's
supposed indescribability, Radhakrishnan wrote,

Unfortunately, different aspects have been exclusively emphasized so
as to give rise to the impression that the Upanishads do not give us
any single coherent view. The true doctrine is that the Real, the thing-
in-itself, is empty of all content and all positive views are deviations
from it caused by the inability of man to remain at a high level of
abstract thought. . . .

Radhakrishnan rightly called the incongruencies "unfortunate," because they point out the
contradiction present throughout this view. But the Brahman of pantheistic monism cannot be
both impersonal and personal; if this One is indeed "devoid of all qualities," then no qualities
may be ascribed to "it." Consider the following quote:

Pantheists cannot have it both ways. They want the wonder and mystery
of the absolute One beyond all description as well as a God with determinate
religious qualities. We claim only that the indescribable One and the describable
God cannot both be ultimate. If God is really indescribable, it is entirely
inappropriate for pantheists to then smuggle in a word like God and use it
for religious purposes.

The essence of Brahman is said by pantheists to be pure "mind," but this is different
than the theistic concept of God as "all-knowing." Brahman is "mind." Brahman is, "pure
consciousness, immune from all changes in the physical universe." The Upanishads teach

---

204 Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 515.
205 Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 137.
206 Clark and Geisler, Apologetics in the New Age, 148.
that God is "beyond knowledge." Brahman is said to be a form of consciousness, but not
divinely intelligent, as theists would assert. The ultimate reality is: "... universal conscious-
ness, which is not to be confused with the bodily (consciousness), or the dreaming con-
sciousness or the consciousness in deep sleep. The point being made is that we normally
conceive of knowledge in terms of a "knower" and a thing "known." God is not like that
according to pantheistic monism:

The subject-object relationship has meaning only in the world
of objects, in the sphere of discursive knowledge. The supreme
intelligence who dwells in the sleeping state holds all things in
unmanifested condition. The divine wisdom sees all things, not
as human reason does in parts and relations, but in the original
reason of their existence, their primal truth and reality (emphasis
added).  

In this somewhat esoteric description of God's intellect, it is asserted that God knows,
but He doesn't know. The God of pantheistic monism is not an all-knowing Sovereign, as is
the God of theism. But even pantheistic monists, who posit an impersonal, ethically-relative
God sense personal culpability and moral duties. Radhakrishnan attributes characteristics
to God, and at points these conflict. Brahman is said to be beyond morality, beyond the
ethical distinctions of right or wrong. Such things are part of this "lower "level, maya, and
are not absolutely real: "Evil, error, and ugliness are not ultimate (reality). Error is a stage
on the road to truth." Yet elsewhere Radhakrishnan teaches that men ought to practice
dhrama, or right actions, because dhrama is part of God's very being.  

---

207 Singh, Concepts of Indian Philosophy, 73.
208 Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 75.
209 Ibid.
211 Ibid., 56.
Brahman is presented as being devoid of qualities, to the point of being amoral. At other times Radhakrishnan seems to contradict these images. In tailoring his message for Western readers, Radhakrishnan may have compromised his own beliefs in his description about the blessings or perils which are contingent upon our obedience to the law of dharma. He wrote,

If we deliberately fall into sin, shutting our eyes to moral and spiritual light, we may be sure that in God’s world sin will find us out. A just God cannot refuse to any man that which he has earned. God cannot be bought over, and sin cannot be glossed over.\textsuperscript{212}

In contrast with other of his writings, Radhakrishnan here describes God as \textit{just}, rewarding righteous action and punishing evil. Also, clear distinction is made between man and God. Absolute morality is presupposed, as well as human free will and sin. Radhakrishnan’s descriptions of God and dharma are in contradiction to other teachings that are set forth as the basic and irreducible premises of pantheistic monism. From such writings we get conflicting information about God. Radhakrishnan answered objections by simply saying that in Brahman, "we find a complete union of opposites."\textsuperscript{213}

Pantheistic monism also presents a view of creation that is inconsistent. Pantheistic monism teaches that creation is \textit{ex Deo}, out of God. Creation is an emanation of God, therefore the universe and God are of the same substance or essence. Radhakrishnan writes, "This world is a manifestation of the cosmic Lord (Brahman)."\textsuperscript{214} The Upanishads declare the origin of the created order: "Creation was pushed out of the atman."\textsuperscript{215} Expanding on this,

\textsuperscript{212}Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{213}Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{214}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Recovery of Faith}, 86.
\textsuperscript{215}Sarvepali Radhakrishnan and P.T. Raju, editors, \textit{The Concept of Man} (Lincoln, Nebraska: Johnsen Publishing, 1960), 240.
Radhakrishnan explains that the world is composed of and made manifest by, maya: "The Lord projected the universe by his wondrous power, called maya, which is capable of making the impossible possible."\(^{216}\) The words "pushed out" and "projected" describe a process, and a change. Yet Brahman, which permeates everything, cannot change.\(^{217}\) There is a problem in the order of events in Radhakrishnan's account of creation. How could creation be "pushed out of the atman," when we humans are said to essentially be atman? It is not possible that atman be the agent of creation, if atman was non-existent prior to creation.

The pantheistic doctrines of both God and creation are closely related, given the fact that all things are said to be of the same essence. Radhakrishnan's doctrine of creation speaks of potential that is actualized, but he elsewhere described Brahman as, "Absolute Reality, with no admixture of matter, with no possibility of change or becoming."\(^{218}\) In conflict with this statement, Radhakrishnan writes, "The creative process, though orderly and progressive, is unpredictable. There is real indetermination, and God Himself is in the make."\(^{219}\) This view of creation contradicts some of the basic premises of Radhakrishnan's pantheistic, monistic, world-view. The word *creation* is used by Radhakrishnan as a verb and as a noun, describing both the act and the product of creation. These uses imply that some new thing, previously non-existent, is brought into existence. This mitigates against his presupposition that reality is comprised of only one kind of thing, a monistic whole. The assertion that God is "in the make" is in contradiction to Radhakrishnan's numerous and emphatic assertions that Brahman is immune to all change.

\(^{216}\)Swami Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads*, 53.
\(^{217}\)Sarasvati Chennakasavan, *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*, 123.
\(^{219}\)Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 336.
Pantheistic monism teaches that creation is God's "eternal emanation" of Himself. Radhakrishnan argues for the eternity of creation, stating that "the world is perpetual," and that God's creative work in it is "continuous." Here Radhakrishnan's view of creation conflicts with findings of modern science, which he also endorses: He wrote that science is one of the greatest achievements of the modern times, and further stated, "Science brings us into a progressively clearer understanding of the world around us." Radhakrishnan had predicted that the findings of science would progressively reinforce the Hindu world-view. However, conclusions of science have proven added to the case against the his pantheistic concept of God. For instance, the "space-time theorem" presented by British astrophysicists Stephen Hawking, George Ellis, and Roger Penrose demonstrated that space and time originated in the same act that brought matter and energy into existence. Further, the theorem tells us that the dimensions of length, width, height, and time have existed only for as long as the universe itself has existed. Considering these findings, Hugh Ross writes:

Pantheism claims there is no existence beyond the universe, and that the universe has always existed. But all the accumulated data of the twentieth century tells us that a transcendent Creator must exist, for all the matter, energy, length, width, height, and even time suddenly and simultaneously came into being from some source beyond itself.

These findings are in direct conflict with the views of "ex Deo" creation. Based upon the accumulated data and recent study in light of the space-time theorem, it has become evident that creation was affected by a pre-existent and independent entity. Ross continues,

---

220 Geisler, Knowing the Truth About Creation, 64.
221 Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 88.
222 Radhakrishnan, An Idealist View of Life, 223.
This conclusion is powerfully important to our understanding of who God is and who or what God isn't. It tells us that the Creator is transcendent, operating beyond the dimensional limits of the universe. It tells us that God is not the universe. Pantheism and atheism do not square with the facts.224

In addition to problems with the view of creation, a further metaphysical problem is found in the way that pantheistic monism approaches the problem of evil. Evil is viewed primarily as an illusion in the pantheistic system of thought. Inordinate concern over evil may rightly be attributed to ignorance, according to the seers. This raises some significant problems: If evil is actually "maya," then evil becomes a part of God, since "all is one." The monist insists that reality is a seamless, unified whole." Taking note of the world's evils, it is a repugnant option to view such things as "part of God." If the pantheist asserts that evil is not part of God, but somehow outside of God, then monism and unity are compromised.

Radhakrishnan writes that evil is simply a denial of the "supremacy of the whole" through one's conduct. Perhaps as a qualifier, he reminds the reader, "Evil is unreal in the sense that it is bound to be transmuted into good."225 What is meant, is that even overt acts of evil are just manifestations of ignorance. After all,

Life is a place of torment, where the human spirit wishes to possess the eternal. Veil after veil is to be withdrawn. The illusions of life are to be torn away and our cherished dreams dispersed before the divine life can be reached.226

And if your freedom from a veil of blindness is accomplished through what appears to be some violent tragedy, remember that it is simply karma at work.

This is an especially implausible and insensitive position to hold. Radhakrishnan

224Ibid., 70.
225Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 242.
226Ibid., 244.
asserts that "ignorance is the source of our anguish."227 Likewise, Shankara's position states, "The pain we experience is imaginary, not real. It is caused by the failure to distinguish Brahman from the body, the senses, and other limiting concepts. The concepts arise out of ignorance."228 It seems unlikely that reminding ourselves of these things would provide any consolation in the face of great pain or tragedy. "Ignorance" and "maya" are not objective grounds to justify hope, nor do they provide incentive for right action. Given the pantheistic denial of absolute morality, there could be no such thing as dharma or "right action." It becomes futile for Radhakrishnan to formulate an answer to the problem of evil, given the pantheistic denial of objective morality. Likewise, it is meaningless when Radhakrishnan describes personal judgment based upon the rightness or wrongness of a person's deeds. A concept of such judgment presupposes an objective standard to which personal deeds either conform or violate. Pantheistic monism denies that any such standard exists.229

The Upanishads depict life after death as follows: "The unenlightened go after death to sunless demoniac regions. The good are said to go up to regions which are sorrowless, through the air, sun, and moon."230 Notice that punishment is not based upon moral guilt, but upon ignorance. Since evil is not viewed as "real," people are not morally culpable, but unenlightened, in need of transformation by the principle of karma: "Rebirth is the lot of man until he obtains true knowledge."231 Pantheistic "soteriology" has for its aim not moral purity, but "knowledge."

227 Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 43.
228 Clark and Geisler, Apologetics in the New Age, 54.
229 Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 65, 88, 92.
231 Ibid., 117.
Also, the principle of karma and the way that it "works" on man is problematic. As noted, karma is a "force" independent of Brahman, "not subject to control, even of God." Man at his essence, is understood as Brahman. yet here we have an apparently greater force operative upon him. Metaphysical dualism would be ruled out by pantheistic monism, yet the view seems to teach that two forces are at work. Further, one may ask, "How did Brahman lapse into the current condition, so that karma was necessary?" "Is the formative influence of karma endured willingly by Brahman." These are serious questions, and in light of pantheism's larger body of truth claims, credible answers do not materialize.

The explanation of evil set forth by pantheistic monism and its attempted incorporation into the larger scheme of Hindu doctrines, is an unsatisfactory solution. It does not account for the apparent reality of evil, and is contrary to our experience of ourselves as real beings. The relegation of evil to the sphere of unreality is existentially unsatisfying. Suffering, physical pain, emotional pain, and death are experienced by all of us as piercingly real. This is true also for the most devoted of pantheistic monists. With a determination to enable people to see otherwise, Radhakrishnan reiterates that insecurity, anxiety, error, and suffering are not actually real: "Unawareness has to be replaced by awareness. Man is ignorant and from ignorance evil ensues."233

It seems that pantheistic monism tries to support two positions. On the one hand, the problem of evil is answered by the assertion that it is unreal. People err in perceiving their experiences as either good or evil: "From the standpoint of atman, good and evil do not exist."234 Belief in good or evil, "torments the ignorant person."235 Radhakrishnan says that

morality is part of this world of unreality, simply "a pale abstraction." On the other hand, Radhakrishnan made ethical valuations and appraisals concerning events that were current in his lifetime. He categorized certain actions, praising some as noble and condemning others as evil. Radhakrishnan answers the problem of evil as being due to man's choices, made out of selfish desire. Giving an answer totally incompatible with his statements about the illusory nature of evil, Radhakrishnan states that the world's problem's are due to man's free choices: "By the employment of freedom, man can raise himself to the divine status or degrade himself to animal life." His explanations conflict, evil cannot be both unreal, and at the same time be the tangible, damnable results of human action.

Illusionism does not account for the origin, universality, or the persistence of evil. Pantheistic monism teaches that all change is unreal. The absolute is immutable. Even if evil is ignorance, where did this ignorance originate? Is not God "pure unlimited consciousness?"

How did evil (however it is viewed metaphysically) extend itself to all parts of the world? Further, if karma is the means by which evil is purged from the universe, what is karma's origin? Radhakrishnan writes: "Karma is a blind unconscious principle governing the whole universe. It is not subject to control, even of God." If this be the case, then back of Brahman exists a greater self-determining being, namely karma. So Brahman is not the Absolute if, this is the case. The philosophical problems mount if the pantheistic solution to the problem of

235Ibid., 63.
236Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 32.
237Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 88.
238Ibid., 91.
240Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 248.
evil is accepted.

A final observation is relevant. Most are reluctant to assert that evil is a part of God, yet to make evil outside of God would negate monism. Pantheistic monism at this point appeals to their teaching about maya and illusion. But this position is self-defeating. If unreality does characterize this world, then their view itself is actually illusion. (This criticism presupposes the law of non-contradiction. As has been shown, pantheistic monists assent to this law in their own assertions). So pantheistic monism offers no workable solution for the problem of evil.

A further metaphysical failure exists in pantheistic monism's view of man. Radhakrishnan asserts, "I tell you this, the secret of the Brahman: there is nothing higher than man." Remaining true to the belief that the universe is comprised of only one real and pervasive "thing," he states, "God is not somewhere above and beyond us, he is also in us."242 The pantheistic anthropology can rightly be faulted as ultimately affirming that man is deity.

Humans are cognizant of themselves as real, finite, changing persons. We are cognizant of ourselves as conscious and individual. These factors are in opposition to the notion of reality as an "immutable whole." Norman Geisler writes:

The existence of finite, limited, changing beings is not rationally inescapable, but it is existentially undeniable. We do experience finite existence. To deny this is to affirm the obvious absurdity that we are God. That is, pantheism, if true, reduces to self-deification.243

Intuition is the preferred epistemology of pantheistic monism. Subjective insights are accepted as valid, and mystics are undaunted by the criticisms of logic. Why not then accept as equally valid what instinct and intuition tell the uninitiated: that I am not God. To

241Radhakrishnan and Raju, editors, The Concept of Man, 9.
242Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 55.
243Geisler, Philosophy of Religion, 217.
most it appears patently obvious, "intuitively true," that whomever or whatever God is, is something other than myself. Pantheistic monism is learned, having been drummed into the head of the unenlightened one by another who allegedly has escaped the confines of maya. The claims of pantheistic monism mitigate against our initial intuitions.

The pantheistic view of man also fails in that it compromises the attributes of both God and man. The intricacies and evils of this world can be denied (illusionism) or explained away as a lower level of reality, but such speculations add up to a disorderly universe. The attributes of God are compromised when His infinitude is mingled with man's finitude. If reality is a unified whole, and this One is the changeless Absolute, then how and why is God involved in such a debacle, maya (illusion) versus moksa (enlightenment)?

The changeless nature of reality is undermined if the Hindu concept of man and "satori" is true. Satori is the experience of enlightenment, and moksa is the state of enlightenment. Given the changeless nature that is said to characterize reality, it is hard to understand how avidya (ignorance) and unenlightenment ever encroached upon reality. Suddenly, Brahman, and karma are joined by another potent force, warring against the other two: God/man (all reducible to Brahman) is impinged upon by maya, which is purged away by karma. Rather than a universe devoid of change, it appears that the universe is deadlocked in a three-way metaphysical power struggle!

A Hindu may object and say that maya is a force under the control of Brahman. If so, then God's attributes are again compromised. God is all-powerful, but does not do what is contrary to His nature. It is meaningless to ask if God could end His own existence, for it is His nature to exist. God does not have a "self-destructive" bent within Himself. If maya
is also Brahman, then God possesses internal conflict. This view is untenable.

As with other Hindu truth claims, much hangs on the assumption that there is only one kind of "being" in the universe. Even if all of reality is "one," Hinduism’s extrapolations taken individually may appear plausible, but viewed as a whole manifest inconsistency and contradiction. Besides this, the initial premise (reality as one) appears false. The following quote, though lengthy, is worthy of consideration:

The very way in which monistic theory is formulated establishes its falsity. Beginning with the facts of consciousness, the monist in epistemology attempts to find correlates for these facts in the real, external world. But this very procedure assumes that the fact in consciousness is distinct from the fact as independently existing in the external world. Otherwise, the monist would have no motivation to formulate his theory, since it attempts to correlate the two. Thus when perception is said to be the identical presence of the object in the mind, what is said would be unintelligible if it were not false; for since my only knowledge of the external world springs ultimately from perceptions, if the percept and the object were numerically one, I would never have any reason for saying so (emphasis added).  

Pantheistic monism is self-defeating, assuming that finite beings exist in order to deny the same.

The pantheistic concept of salvation is inextricably linked to their concept of God. The Hindus resist ascribing concepts to God, and verbal articulations about God's nature are always qualified so that no one may mistake the fact that God is not limited by our descriptions of Him. The theist concurs with this noble aim. God's character is not to be slighted or diminished.

Shankara described salvation as knowledge, "He who knows Brahman becomes

Knowledge and the accompanying union with Brahman equals deliverance from the dreaded cycle of rebirth that takes place as illusion is stripped away in lifetime after lifetime. Radhakrishnan writes,

Perfection is a state of mind, not contingent on change of time or place .... Liberation is the destruction of bondage, which is the product of ignorance. Ignorance is destroyed by knowledge and not by works. Freedom is not a created entity; it is the result of recognition.

The Upanishads teach that when ignorance (evil) is stripped away, a mortal "attaineth to Brahman." The knowledge through which salvation comes has been described as a realization: One "comes to know that they are God." The assertion is contrary to the belief that reality is changeless. The "moksa" or "release" from unenlightenment is itself a change.

The process of enlightenment is described as a "ladder," the top of which enables one to rise above viewpoints, and simply experience God. This goes against their desire to not finitize God through the use of concepts, however. Concerning the way of salvation, Radhakrishnan writes about one's personal "evolution of (his) knowledge of God." On climbing the ladder of truth, Nikhilananda observes: "In spiritual evolution, one cannot skip any of the stages." Each stage is punctuated by further "understanding." All of these are descriptions of operations that require change.

This process of salvation as described by the Hindu spokesmen is fraught with contradiction. The use of analogies such as truth being a "ladder" implies that some concepts

---

245 Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 118.
246 Ibid., 118, 120.
248 Nikhilananda, The Upanishads, 6.
are truer than others. Spiritual evolution is a concept that connotes change and progress. Radhakrishnan said that words and ideas are used to affect enlightenment, "in the resemblance of a raft that is of use only to cross a river."249 This implies that some concepts are more "seaworthy" than others. He argues for the purity of what he calls "this graduated scale."250 Without the concepts and the knowledge of God they impart, we could not climb the ladder or cross the river to reach truth. The pantheistic soteriology assumes the accuracy or correctness of the conceptualities.

The process of salvation entails something that is argued against elsewhere-- the ascription of finitizing concepts to God. Yet in dissemination of pantheistic doctrine, pantheists revert to the use of concepts. If challenged, they are likely to insist that their conceptualities are not to be seen as literally true. If so, then what is their value?

The attainment of knowledge and its attendant religious concepts are part of a real spiritual progress. Hinduism attaches to it a real and tangible significance. Radhakrishnan wrote about the Hindu scriptures (on which his pantheistic monism is based) and the men by whom they were written:

The Veda is the accepted name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. The truths of the seers are not evolved as the result of logical reasoning or systematic philosophy, but they are the products of spiritual intuition. (The seers) were able to discern the eternal truths by raising their life-spirit to the plane of the universal spirit (emphasis added).251

Here we have endorsement of things that Radhakrishnan's view says cannot be:

Description of the Vedas as "highest" again implies that some talk about God, which includes

249Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 191.
251Radhakrishnan and Moore, editors, A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, 615-616.
conceptualities about God, is *truer* than others. This is incompatible with his other assertions, previously cited, saying that all religions are valid and words are "powerless" to describe or convey accurate knowledge about Brahman. Also, Radhakrishnan's description of the seers "raising" their life spirit would appear to be incongruent with a basic premise of pantheistic monism, that all change is unreal. Humans, in their "deeper self," are said to have the same essence as Brahman.\textsuperscript{252} The term "raising" presumably does not connote spatial change, but it would indicate ontological change of some sort. This is contradictory if the seers life spirit is indeed the seamless and unchangeable Brahman. Elsewhere, union with the Absolute is described as an enlightened state that is to be reached. This in itself implies change and *degrees of correctness*. All religions are said to be correct, yet Radhakrishnan asserts that all need and will eventually achieve enlightenment as he describes it. The oneness of reality is compromised by his descriptions of maya and the ontological change required by the *process* of restored union with the Absolute. Radhakrishnan's soteriology involves actions that argue against both the pluralism and the monism of his world-view.

Concerning salvation, Radhakrishnan wrote, "We are working steadily *upward* to improve our knowledge of God."\textsuperscript{253} By the knowledge attained, the ignorance lost, and the *eventual* unity with Brahman that is anticipated, the mystic is "drawn *experientially nearer* to the center of that unity than he is now" (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{254} But this implies ontological change, which monism denies.

Salvation is an area within pantheistic monism where contradiction flourishes. The admonition to attain enlightenment, and the fact that an enlightenment process is possible

\textsuperscript{252}Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, 25.
\textsuperscript{253}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{254}Ibid., 24.
means that one must go from this to that. Implied is that one may proceed from a spiritually undesirable condition, to a different yet preferable state. Pantheistic soteriology requires change, an operation incompatible with their other views of God or the nature of reality. The change of enlightenment occurs within an individual, yet each person's essence is said to be that of the changeless Brahman; a logical impasse is reached.

The pantheist cannot claim that alleged change is simply at the level of maya, and therefore unreal. Enlightenment is said to be one's only experience of the real. Radhakrishnan writes,

Moksa (enlightenment), Nirvana, the Kingdom of God are not to be pictured as subsequent to or far off from our present existence. It is an inner development, a radical transformation. Here and now we can attain life eternal (emphasis added).255

The action and change that characterizes enlightenment takes place in this realm of existence.

"He who knows that Supreme Brahman becomes that Brahman itself."256 And Brahman is the "absolute reality."257 Yet "The world of manifestation has no claim to reality," Radhakrishnan asserts.258 The conflicting details set forth about the enlightenment process appear irreconcilable.

Criticisms are seen as proof only that there exists blindness or ignorance within the one who is the source of the criticisms. But the undeniable fact is that the concept of "salvation through knowledge" is internally inconsistent. The alleged aim is to "transcend viewpoints and experience God." The goal is enlightenment, and "The true seer has shaken

---

255Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 106.
256Radhakrishnan, An Idealist View of Life, 128.
257Ibid.
258Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 86.
off all views."²⁵⁹ This, however, is a viewpoint. As such, holders of this view are obliged to face its considerable and inherent logical problems.

The pantheistic, monistic views on reality, language, and epistemology result in the word "God" being divorced of all meaning. Pantheistic views on God, maya, ineffability, and satori (the experience of enlightenment), cannot be assimilated into a meaningful whole. Knowledge of the Absolute is "without content." The conflicting assertions result in a state where:

The word "God" becomes entirely vacuous; it becomes a word without any conceptual meaning . . . . Without a definition, we do not have a word that captures infinity, but one that captures nothing.²⁶⁰

As a possible solution to this dilemma, Radhakrishnan insists on the plurality of religious beliefs, allowing that contradictory concepts all be recognized as true. Pluralism appears noble and congenial, but is actually a stratagem that will hopefully free one from logical entanglements and unsavory conclusions.

An epistemology that shuns logic and places a premium on the conclusions of subjectivism and intuition, faces inevitable internal conflict. Objective truth may not be claimed of this view, so the view itself is suspect. Hans Kung writes:

Hindus must face the following question: For all their multi-leveled thinking, their ethical relativism, and their anti-dogmatic, mystical world-view, are there no criteria for distinguishing true from false elements in a religion, for distinguishing religion from pseudo-religion? What is there to guard us against projecting whatever needs we wish?²⁶¹

²⁵⁹Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 191.
²⁶⁰Clark and Geisler, Apologetics in the New Age, 142.
PAN THEISTIC MONISM AND AXIOLOGY

This critique will develop further the theme raised by Kung's quotation: How does a view which makes no distinction between truth or falsity translate into "real life?" What are the existential implications of such a view? An adherent of pantheistic monism might counter by stating his belief that categories of "trueness" or "falseness" are simply constructs of the human mind. But he comes back to the inevitable reality that must be faced: his rejoinder is a view that is either true or false, and is self-defeating. If true, the content of his utterance is false.

The previous chapters of critique dealt with the internal logic of the pantheistic worldview. This critique asks, "To what extent is the view actually livable?" Do the assertions of pantheistic monism coincide with what we experience and know about life?

There are several indicators that point to the discrepancies between what pantheistic monism says, and what we actually experience in day-to-day life. Radhakrishnan accepts science and certain conclusions yielded by empirical evidence, saying that such things "dispel the darkness that oppresses the mind."262 Yet the oneness and changelessness of pantheistic monism is undermined by all that our senses tell us. We are cognizant that the world around us is anything but static. We are aware of change in ourselves and others.

At an early age we became aware of ourselves as conscious individuals. The pantheistic worldview, with its beliefs about avidya and maya, contradicts this awareness. Further, pantheistic monism contradicts our experience of other persons as conscious individuals. We


---

262 Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 550.
interact with other persons as distinct, legitimate centers of consciousness. Pantheism teaches that man's essence is Brahman, obscured by a degree of maya (which is also Brahman at its essence). This "oneness" does not at all correspond to what we experience in the real world.

A further criticism related to personality and consciousness is worthy of note. The concept of monism is contrary to our experience of the reality of interpersonal relationships. If a relationship does not involve two distinct "selves," then love or companionship is illusory. If, underneath it all, we all comprise one person, then friendship or love are just delusions. There are not other individuals with which to make acquaintance or fall in love. Yet our experience emphatically tells us this cannot be true; interpersonal relationships must be real.

In discussing the ethical demands of pantheistic monism, Radhakrishnan emphasizes the duty to live according to "dharma," or "right action." It is the contention of Hinduism that duty will never demand of us an action that is "against our nature." In a similar vein, P.T. Raju wrote that actions of the individual person are in some way a "micro-version" of the one Cosmic Person, whose movements, "constitute the currents of the cosmos." Since our action has bearing in some way on the Cosmic Person, how may we be sure that we act rightly? Raju asks:

Do we know the nature of the Cosmic Person? The reference then, must not be to the cosmic person but to the human person. Our question can then be: Do the duties accord with human nature? If they do, then our faith is that they must also accord with the nature of the Cosmic Person.

Given their other beliefs, this position is contradictory for the pantheistic monist to hold. Contrary to their position on logic, Raju has used the law of excluded middle to show that duties can conform to the nature of either the individual or the Cosmic Person. If excluded

---

263 Radhakrishnan and Raju, editors, *The Concept of Man*, 363.
264 Ibid., 364.
middle is an applicable axiom, then so is non-contradiction, which precedes it. The devastating effect that non-contradiction has when applied to pantheistic monism has been alluded to throughout this thesis.

But in addition to these points, Raju's position curiously involves itself in the pronouncement of moral judgments. Brahman, the Cosmic Person, is the one in whom neither good nor evil exist. Radhakrishnan and other writers may extol the virtues of pursuing dharma, but given the fact that notions of objective goodness or evil are illusory, there remains no basis and little incentive for morally good deeds. In fact, it would be a misnomer to label an action "good," because goodness (or evil) is only a notion that we superimpose over an otherwise neutral act, due to our own ignorance.

The impersonal Brahman is morally neutral. The Upanishads declare:

The immortal (enlightened) man overcomes both thoughts of "I did evil" and "I did good." Good and evil, done or not done, cause him no pain. Give up good and evil, truth as well as untruth. The liberated individual is lifted beyond the ethical distinctions of good and evil.\textsuperscript{265}

Radhakrishnan comments that when one is lifted out of the mire of maya into the mystical world of the \textit{real}, "he transcends the distinctions of good and evil."\textsuperscript{266} As one with Brahman it would be erroneous to say that a person was capable of what others in their ignorance label "good" or "evil."

The knower of Brahman is fully absolved and removed from ethical categories. The full impact of this is appreciated only if one remembers that when union with Brahman is attained, \textit{personal self is negated}; one is "dissolved into the Supreme."\textsuperscript{267} Pantheistic monism

\textsuperscript{265}Radhakrishnan, \textit{East and West in Religion}, 102.
\textsuperscript{266}Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{267}Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Principal Upanishads}, 889.
can make no ethical claims, because "good and evil presuppose the basis of egoism." To have good or bad deeds, there must be individual selves to perpetrate such deeds. Pantheistic monism denies that such individual selves really exist.

For these reasons, *it is fallacious that Radhakrishnan and others who share this view make moral judgments.* And yet they are unable to refrain from doing so. Radhakrishnan spoke out against the materialism and lack of spirituality that characterized this century. He spoke out against self-indulgence and the love of wealth.269 Radhakrishnan expressed indignation over the "universal greed (that is) the cause of much of the meanness and cruelty which we find in the world."270 To judge desire for wealth as "greed" is to make a *moral* judgment. To decry actions as mean or cruel is meaningless, if there is no actual difference between good or evil. It is equally contradictory when Radhakrishnan asserts that rather than by greed, "Wealth and happiness should be gained in ways of righteousness (dharma)."271 There can be no ethical "shoulds" or "oughts" in the relativistic world of maya.

C.S. Lewis observed that the God of pantheistic monism "does nothing, (and) demands nothing."272 The impersonal Absolute, in whom good and evil merge, provides no basis for right or wrong. It is therefore inconsistent to single out a particular circumstance as "evil." Yet Radhakrishnan often made moral judgments about society: "This indifference, this callous disrespect of the stuff of life, shows the decadence of the moral sense of mankind, the attrition of ethical values."273

---

269 Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, 78.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid., 57.
273 Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 113.
Radhakrishnan commented on promiscuity and the divorce rate, each of which was increasing even in his lifetime:

Modern conditions are responsible for the large numbers of divorces and separations. It is not very modern for a man or woman who is sick of his or her partner to take another, but what is really modern is the new philosophy in justification of it.274

Here is Radhakrishnan's solution to the problems: "In an ideal marriage the genuine interests of the two members are perfectly reconciled. The perfectly ethical marriage is the monogamous one."275 This writer agrees with the previous assessment, but Radhakrishnan has left himself no logical ground for making such an assessment. This is the man who wrote, "In its inmost being reality is neither good nor evil, neither moral nor immoral, just as it is neither high nor low, colored nor colorless."276 It is interesting to note that in making his point, Radhakrishnan employs the logical rules whose authority he elsewhere denies, in this case excluded middle. But in addition to this, Radhakrishnan's ethical valuations become meaningless given the assertions about reality that he sets forth as part the basic premises of his world-view. "Ideal" and "perfectly ethical" can simply no longer apply.

Radhakrishnan goes on to comment against Jewish/Arab "machine gun massacres," and "merchants who make millions through the sale of vile drugs that destroy the body."277 Most people would share the grief that he felt over such societal problems, but if other of Radhakrishnan's teachings are true, one need not preoccupy himself with distress over world conditions. It is not "ultimately real," karma is gradually purging away such manifestations.

274Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, 63.
275Ibid., 61.
276Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 104.
277Ibid., 364.
of avidya. The world is not an enclave of injustices. It is, as Buddhist D.T. Suzuki said, the Absolute, "serenely going its own way."

If right and wrong are notions of the mind and not applicable to reality, then it is fallacious to praise or condemn a given action. Likewise, it would be fallacious to advance one system of actions as "better" than another. Radhakrishnan condemned the societal ills imposed by "religion" (namely Christianity), and touted the benefits engendered by the spread of Hinduism. Looking forward, he speculated that the eventual solution of the world's religious and social tensions would be found in the widespread adoption of Hinduism. Commenting on the past, Radhakrishnan asserted that "Hinduism civilized a backward people."278 This assertion is loaded with implications, all of which contradict other closely-held tenets of pantheistic monism. Implied is the actuality of good and evil. "Civilized" and "backward" imply that one state of affairs is better than another. Also, the process of getting there is an example of change.

A further axiological consideration which has been alluded to throughout the paper relates to monism and change. Pantheistic monism errs in denying the actuality of change in the world. Within reality there is "no possibility of change or becoming. He (Brahman) cannot be found in finite things or transitory happenings."279 If all change is unreal, and if finite, limited, changing beings do not really exist, then whatever it is that we are must be "God." Radhakrishnan lived far enough into the twentieth century to notice that this was a turbulent era. He said that we perceive change in the world, but that it is at a level of reality such that it is rightly viewed as unreal.

278Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 476. 279Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 146.
The pantheistic monism of Radhakrishnan exhibits what has been called an "appearance/reality distinction" (abbreviated as "A/R"). Michael Levine wrote, "One must accept A/R to claim that the things we ordinarily regard as distinct substances, or kinds of substance, are not distinct after all."\(^{280}\) To say that "all is one" and change is unreal, pantheists are resorting to something of a "deus ex machina" (meaning, as *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines the term, "a thing artificially introduced to solve a difficulty"). We see around us what amounts to change, but pantheists remind us that *what is seen* is distinct from reality.

How are we to fully understand what is *seen*, this temporal world? We cannot: "How the finite rises from out of the bosom of infinite is an incomprehensible mystery."\(^{281}\) Once one has given up viewing the world and moral absolutes as real, the Upanishads further urge the person to "give up the consciousness that you have given them up."\(^{282}\) Levine explained the reason for such exercise: "The point of invoking A/R is to show how *appearance notwithstanding*, reality is something other than what it appears to be" (emphasis added).\(^{283}\)

Everyday reality does strike harsh blows against the basic premise of pantheistic monism. To counter this, writers such as Radhakrishnan reiterate what Levine calls an "A/R." The solution to this problem in their world-view always takes a basic form: "The physical world is seen not exactly as illusion, but certainly appearance having an inferior degree of reality."\(^{284}\) The pantheistic answer, "We can't say just what it is, but it is not real," is unsatisfactory.

\(^{282}\)Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 102.
\(^{283}\)Levine, "Pantheism, Substance, and Unity," 8.
Pantheistic monism has a need to deny the actuality of change. If there are any beings that really undergo change, then there must be beings other than God (for God is a necessary, unchanging Being). This undercuts the monistic notion that all of reality is one. A previously quoted writer asserted that if Brahman were to change, he would cease to be Brahman.\(^{285}\) But it is obvious that change is real; man and his environment change constantly. C.S. Lewis wrote the following: "One of the moderns has said that reality is "incorrigibly plural." I think he is right. All things come from One. But all things are not One."\(^{286}\)

Radhakrishnan denies that there is either change or plurality of beings. "Discord, cleavage, and division," are once again said to be traceable "to the limitations of the human intelligence."\(^{287}\) Over and over, maya and various terms aimed at describing "ignorance" are employed in attempts to explain away what is revealed to us by our senses. Radhakrishnan spoke correctly when he said that the concept of maya "is necessary to account for life."\(^{288}\) Yet the concept of change is used when needed: "The knowers of Brahman remake the world."\(^{289}\) Radhakrishnan said that as more and more humans are liberated and enlightened, the world will emerge progressively more like the ideal set forth by the Upanishads. This implies both change and degrees of moral goodness.

Pantheists shun the label "illusionism," which may be used pejoratively in describing their view about the world's convincingly real appearance. However, their answer consists only of some nebulous assertions that prove to be baseless. Pantheistic monism says that what

\(^{285}\)Chennakesavan, *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*, 123.
\(^{286}\)Lewis, *Miracles*, 165.
\(^{287}\)Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 110.
\(^{288}\)Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 571.
\(^{289}\)Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 101.
we see and experience is not just illusion, but neither is it real. Radhakrishnan writes that the existence and nature of this world can only be understood as "the mystery of the freedom of the Supreme."²⁹⁰ "We can only say that it is a mystery. If we still raise the question, our answers are bound to be riddled with difficulties."²⁹¹ Pantheistic monism states that we cannot know what the world really is, or how this state of affairs came to be. But in the interest of monism, the "unreality" of the world must be retained. Stuart Hackett writes on the implausibility of this position:

The world appears to have a separate existence from my consciousness: and there is no way of accounting for this illusion if the world is actually a projection of my consciousness. For such an illusion would have to reduce ultimately to an act of will— in which case it would not be illusion; or it would spring from an extraneous cause, in which case the self is not the only reality.²⁹²

One might say that it is "existentially undeniable" that we experience finite existence. Pantheistic monism breaks down in light of the fact that we experience real change in a real world.

The dangers and duties of this world prompt pantheistic monists to behave as if the world were real. Pantheists are "practical realists." The pantheistic monist lives as if there are real personal risks, pleasures, and moral duties. They protect their children from the existential change that would occur if the child wandered into a busy highway. This is good, but inconsistent if reality is as they say.

Illustrating the pragmatic and practical side of pantheistic monism is the following quotation from the Upanishads. If one desires to become a Brahmana (a mystic or "ascetic"), he may do so and experience union with Brahman. "When one is about to die, he may renounce by mind or speech." One may hasten the process of satori, if this is his condition:

²⁹¹Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 90.
He may choose a hero's death on the battlefield, throw himself into water or fire, or walk unto death. The wandering ascetic who has non-possession, purity, non-enmity lives on alms, obtains the state of Brahman.²⁹³

These life-threatening measures would plunge one directly into Brahmanic bliss, but consider the concluding admonition: "This is not to be done by one who is healthy."²⁹⁴ If reality is as they say, why hesitate? The fact that such drastic actions are to be undertaken only by one who is about to die anyway is proof that at least subconsciously, pantheists recognize: (a) the world is real, and (b) actions have tangible ramifications. Despite what the Vedas and Upanishads teach, and despite what practitioners believe, pantheistic monists behave as if the world is real.

The concept of soul transmigration (reincarnation) essentially eliminates the need to do acts of beneficence for others. Such acts would really be interference since a person whom we thought we were helping is actually at work attempting to eliminate karmic debt. R.C. Zehner followed Radhakrishnan in the Spalding Chair of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University, and he quotes Shankara on the matter: "By ceasing to do good to one's friends or evil to one's enemies, one attains to the eternal Brahman by the yoga of meditation."²⁹⁵ There is no ethical "rightness" or "wrongness" in the Hindu view. There is only the personal imperative to gain the state of moksa (enlightenment, union with Brahman). Recognizing this, Zehner wrote of Hinduism and Buddhism: "In practice it means that neither religion in its classical formulation pays the slightest attention to what goes on in

²⁹³Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 898-899.
²⁹⁴Ibid.
the world today."²⁹⁶

It has been asserted that not only is the pantheistic ethic relativistic, it is ultimately antihumanitarian. The suffering people of India, whose condition comprises the "norm" are products of a world-view that acknowledges not an objective moral law, but relativism and the principle of karma. Radhakrishnan writes, "The knowledge of Brahman cannot be contingent on what a person does or does not. Contemplation is the way to cleanse one's mind and heart."²⁹⁷

The two areas of belief that contribute to the Hindu view of ethics, are: (a) the belief, borne out of monism, that good and evil are illusory, and ultimately nothing is right or wrong. (b) the belief that karma (whose inconsistencies have been partially covered) is the principle at work purging each person of unenlightenment. When combined, these beliefs create a society whose individuals have an attitude of resignation and pessimism. The quest for union with Brahman leads to introversion and detachment. Spiritual progress is not to be found in the goings-on of the external world. Man is left to face the metaphysical dilemma and its solution, both found within himself.

There are inconsistencies that multiply as one examines the pantheistic ethical system. Radhakrishnan explored the ancient texts and added insights of his own, but the basic conclusion is that absolute moral standards do not exist. He wrote, "If one's mind is good, one's acts will be good."²⁹⁸ That is, enlightenment justifies action, regardless of the action's apparent outward significance. One may ignore the sufferings of another human with

²⁹⁷Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, 107.
²⁹⁸Ibid., 107.
impunity, because the enlightened one sees the larger picture that takes into consideration the law of karma. Enlightenment of mind, not purity of deed, is what matters for pantheistic monism.

During Radhakrishnan's life he initiated social reform movements, and inspired others to do likewise. Radhakrishnan was burdened by what he perceived to be societal problems, and he finally began to speak out. Radhakrishnan "pointed out the abnormal developments of recent times, the utter disregard and neglect of children by parents who are negligent of their duties." He preached against secularism, "Dr. Radhakrishnan characterizes the contemporary technological civilization as a social disease." Using examples from history to support his points, he argued for the need of political reforms in India, and emphasized the need for education of the masses. He said education would improve society and be a means of "emancipation."

Radhakrishnan was involved with UNESCO from its inception, and was head of the Indian UNESCO delegation from 1946-1952. The stated aims of the organization involved scientific and educational pursuits for the betterment of impoverished nations, and this was what Radhakrishnan sought for his native India. Radhakrishnan's deepened concern over social problems, his proposed solutions and the zeal with which he desired to implement them, were inconsistent with his original premises about reality. Radhakrishnan's public service continued over the years, culminating in his presidency of India from 1962-1967. Under his influence, many young people began for the first time to cry against the injustices of the caste system. He argued that since "all are of the same divine essence, and therefore of equal worth

---

300 Ibid., 259.
301 Ibid., 261.
and entitled to the same fundamental rights." Radhakrishnan was troubled by social problems such as masses of Indians living in poverty and hunger. He wrote, "In the present conditions, in the interests of social economy, facilities for birth control must be available, especially to the poorer classes."

Some of the resulting effects have been laudable, but the rationale for his efforts is somewhat lacking. Radhakrishnan stated his case, and reasoned in support of his conclusions, citing data from temporal history that is supposed to be nothing more than maya. He proposed tangible solutions that were to be implemented in the real world, involving distinct individuals. His moral indignation and altruism are basically commendable, but logically inconsistent, given the rest of the Hindu doctrine which he so passionately delineated.

Hans Kung examined the actions undertaken for social betterment on behalf of Radhakrishnan and some of his followers. Kung arrived at some interesting observations and conclusions. Of the social reformers, he noted: "They were quick to point out specific religious and social abuses and outrages." Again, it may be said that the pantheistic monists are practical realists. It is important to note that rigid adherence to Hindu doctrine would not initiate such altruistic endeavors. Radhakrishnan received his earliest education at a Lutheran school in India, and later attended Madras Christian College. Other Hindu reformers also had exposure to Christian influences, and it has been observed that concern for others and desire for reform was begun "largely under Christian influence."

---

303 Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, editors, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 477.
304 Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, 191.
305 Kung, Christianity and World Religions, 267.
306 Mahadevan and Saroja, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 245.
307 Kung, Christianity and World Religions, 267.
The ethical problems related to pantheistic monism are an outgrowth of the logical and
metaphysical problems created by their views about the nature of reality. People are trapped in
a world of unreality, and the means of exit (karmic action) is logically problematic. Trans-
migration of the soul (reincarnation) is a concept that does not inspire hope for spiritual
progress. There is no guarantee that one will fully eradicate his karmic debt and reach unity
with Brahman. Nothing is certain except uncertainty. The only appropriate outlook is fatalistic,
the appropriate action is passivity.

Even in their denial of good and evil, pantheists recognize man's bent toward "what
is less than expedient." The pantheist would err in speaking of man's proclivity to evil or sin,
but the evidence is strong that man does possess a fallen nature. It is not a nature impaired
by simple ignorance, but a sin nature. Radhakrishnan uses the word "sin," but always speaks
of it as meaning ignorance in some form. This ignorance prevents us from realizing Brahman,
but it is not "moral guilt" against the person of God in the theistic sense. However sin is
defined, the pantheistic view is deficient in its failure to account for man's sin nature. Man is
said to be at his essence Brahman. Yet man is impaired from knowing this, due to maya.
Monism demands that a dualistic solution be rejected. Brahman is said to be the "All," but
maya appears to be a formidable and unrelenting opponent of this "seamless unity."

Pantheistic monism denies that man's sin nature is the result of a separate entity or
force, but this raises the aforementioned undesirable conclusion that sin and evil is somehow
a part of God. We humans (said to be God) are not ultimately evil. Thus, evil is not a part of
God. But here monism fails. So no final solution is given to explain sin or man's sin nature.
As with several other areas of difficulty, pantheistic monism opts to leave the question
unanswered.
Indignation over social ills or guilt feelings about personal sin are misguided reactions, due to the inaccuracy of the data provided us by our senses (according to pantheistic monism). The Hindu view of ethics is logically inconsistent, but the specific views rest on the prior premise that our senses deceive us. This existential conclusion is self-defeating. Radhakrishnan wrote that the senses were incapable of giving us trustworthy knowledge about life. According to Radhakrishnan, trusting the senses, including reliance on logical principles, is the error of "trying to understand the phenomenon of existence through intellect."\textsuperscript{308} Trust of sensory data leads to unwarranted interaction with the world around us, and to unwarranted views about the nature of that world. Man's values, ethics, and other existential considerations must not be based on what our senses tell us: pantheistic monism teaches that the soul must "free itself from the snare of false identification."\textsuperscript{309}

But a wholesale rejection of the validity of sensory data is self-defeating. If our senses can be known to be deceitful and untrustworthy, the pantheistic basis for truth (subjectivity, intuition) fails. If the senses lie, how do we know that we were not "fooled" into accepting that conclusion? If the pantheist's assertion about the senses is true, he himself would have no means of knowledge about reality. In such a state, any actions based upon assumptions or any conclusions reached about anything would be meaningless.

This third and final area of critique has examined pantheistic monism as it related to values and ethics. The view may be said to fail existentially. The doctrines and beliefs of pantheistic monism are not livable. The teachings of this view do not correspond to what we know about reality. Life must be lived in ways that contradict what Hinduism does teach

\textsuperscript{308}Radhakrishnan, \textit{Indian Philosophy}, 555.
\textsuperscript{309}Ibid.
about reality.

Concerning the axiological and existential failures of pantheistic monism, Os Guinness wrote:

It should be evident that it is not only deficient but dangerous—Can we afford a view which rejects the reality of the physical universe? . . . a view which contains so radical a negation of individual personality? . . . a view of morality that is relative at its best and at its worst produces resignation and withdrawal? A sign should be blazoned across the pathway of our times—The East, No Exit!310

---

CONCLUSION

It was an unfortunate compromise, when events at the 1893 World Congress of Religions prompted Western religious leaders to view Hinduism as essentially congruent with their own beliefs. Vivekananda succeeded in bringing the teachings of Shankara to the attention of the modern world. At the Congress, "Vivekananda's address captured the hearts of the people assembled."\(^{311}\) The shift in view toward pantheistic monism resulted in a more tolerant attitude and reduced missionary efforts toward Hindus on the part of some organizations. Some abandoned the view that Hinduism was a primitive religion in need of Christian evangelization.\(^{312}\)

Three years later in 1896, Vivekananda established the Vedanta Society of New York, presenting pantheistic monism and the teachings of Shankara to "American disciples."\(^{313}\) Along with others such as Swami Nikhilananda and Mahatma Ghandi, much has been done to portray pantheistic monism as the religious solution to which the world should look in the years ahead.

Convinced listeners at the Congress of Religions rushed to a conclusion, and in the years that followed many have joined in their error. In a sense, Vivekananda laid groundwork upon which Radhakrishnan's efforts in the West were based. The twentieth century has seen an unprecedented spread of Hinduism and derivatives in the West. Yet back of all the cries for tolerance and acceptance of religious pluralism is the unavoidable fact that "the theistic

\(^{311}\) Mahadevan and Saroja, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, 106.
\(^{313}\) Mahadevan and Saroja, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, 106.
God and the pantheistic God . . . cannot be metaphysically equivalent.\textsuperscript{314}

One of the sources employed in the production of this thesis chronicled the spiritual searches engaged in by persons of the "baby boom generation." More than any previous generation, these seekers have been open to investigate and embrace what to the West are new and alternative religions. Perhaps the growth of pantheistic monism is due in part to the fact that it offers to man in generous portions everything that naturalism denies. Naturalism offers a world without God. Pantheistic monism is ultimately "God without a world" (given that the temporal sphere of existence is viewed as unreal). Naturalism deprives man of transcendence; pantheistic monism seems to offer the ultimate in transcendence, to the point of union with the Absolute. With little understanding of the implications, many spiritually-starved persons eagerly embrace what pantheistic monism seems to offer. "Modern man could not tolerate being shut up finally into the stuff of machinery, and so modern man has become a mystic.\textsuperscript{315}

Possibly unaware that he is doing so, modern man shops for a world-view that will satisfy his desire for transcendence. What are the criteria by which a world-view is judged? Do persons who have adopted pantheistic monism espouse a view that "measures up?"

Radhakrishnan laid out some general guidelines that, in his estimation, a satisfactory world-view should fulfill. He argued that while some value may be derived from any of the religions, dogmatic, rationalistic, allegedly fragmented theologies are inadequate and dated. Radhakrishnan felt that the passage of time would show man finding it increasingly difficult to

\textsuperscript{314} Levine, "Monism and Pantheism," 102.
\textsuperscript{315} Francis A. Schaeffer, \textit{The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century} (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1970), 17.
accept traditional Christian beliefs. He said that attempts to convert modern man to such an “outmoded” belief system “are not quite successful in their aim.”

This thesis has been an examination of the truth claims of pantheistic monism. A careful analysis has been attempted, but how does pantheistic monism fare under the scrutiny of Radhakrishnan’s own self-imposed guidelines? The correct view should have: “... a sense of the whole, an integrity of life, a stable anchorage which helps us to face the gravest crises.” With its denial of reality, ethical relativism, and fatalistic outlook, it would appear that pantheistic monism is the candidate least likely to fulfill his lofty criteria. Consider more of what Radhakrishnan expects of a belief system: “We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will reconstruct the bases of conviction and devise a scheme of life which men can follow with self-respect and creative joy.”

Again, the individual points within the previous quote connot everything that pantheistic monism is not. How can one’s beliefs be vital and living, when the same intellect in which they reside is said to be a vessel of delusions and misconceptions? Could not the belief system itself be one of those delusions? It seems hard to imagine how the Hindu creeds could be “bases of conviction.” There is said to be no objective truth or objective moral law. Good and evil merge into a state of synonymy (sameness). Karma imposes no specific ethical demands, and offers no spiritual guarantees. The view that Radhakrishnan delineated over the course of many years and many pages seems to fall short of its own expectations.

All belief systems, including pantheistic monism, involve themselves in making propositional assertions. Even a system whose claims are internally inconsistent may possess

---

316 Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 82.
317 Ibid., 83.
318 Ibid.
a degree of truth. Certain propositions, taken individually, may reflect an actual state of affairs and convey truth about reality. It would be odd if this were not the case. Groups of propositions from within a belief system will likely posses varying degrees of truth. Leveling the charge of "internal inconsistency" against pantheistic monism or any other world-view is not an insinuation that everything asserted by the view is patently false.

The problem with Radhakrishnan's view and the pluralism he argues for relates to the relationship between the individual or collective truth claims. When the relationship is one of contradiction, the "irreducible minimum" must be considered. The essential truth claims of the propositions are at issue; given two mutually exclusive propositions, one is true and the other is false (or they both may be false). Genuine pluralism means "absolute pluralism," which is self-defeating. Pluralism is possible only if there is no substantive meaning in the group of conflicting religious perspectives.

In closely examining a world-view, one begins to see the ways that individual beliefs are related to one another. A certain tenet hinges on some other tenet. There emerges a certain inter-relatedness in the points of critique. As logical flaws within pantheistic monism accumulate, it becomes increasingly obvious that the entire system crumbles.

The position of this thesis is that pantheistic monism fails, but this conclusion is based upon grounds in addition to those laid out by Radhakrishnan. Consider the criteria suggested by one writer: "If a conceptual system contains an essential element a (one or more membered) set of propositions which is logically inconsistent, it is false."\textsuperscript{319} Philosopher Keith Yandell observes, "It seems clearly a defect in a view that, were it true one could not reasonably

believe it to be so.\textsuperscript{320}

Further criteria laid out by Yandell is helpful in appreciating the impossibility that the internally contradictory system of pantheistic monism could be true:

A contradiction is a \emph{necessary} falsehood, and its denial a \emph{necessary} truth. A system essentially containing a contradiction for that reason is false. If two propositions are such that neither alone is a contradiction but their conjunct is, it is a necessary truth that one or the other is false, even if neither of them is a \emph{necessary} falsehood. Thus if neither $P$ nor $Q$ is a contradiction, but $P$ \emph{and} $Q$ is a contradiction, a system of which $P$ and $Q$ is an essential part is false (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{321}

The premises of pantheistic monism, the "essential elements," include some logically self-defeating propositions. By virtue of their content these have no truth value. But there are also propositions as described above; perhaps not a \emph{necessary} falsehood, but when the elements \emph{combined} can only yield contradiction (as in the case of pantheistic monism), the system is false. L.M. Regis wrote that contradiction, "guarantees nothing, therefore is the foundation for no truth, however small."\textsuperscript{322} The propositions comprising the pantheistic view have been shown to be logically inconsistent. The view is false; pantheistic monism is an assimilation of contradictory premises.

This conclusion says nothing about the character or possible sincerity of those who believe that pantheistic monism is the correct view of reality. Resorting to petitifogging, religious pluralists would make only "sincerity" the focal point, but at issue is whether or not the view stands up to the tests of logical scrutiny.

\textsuperscript{320}Keith E. Yandell, \textit{Christianity and Philosophy}, 280.
\textsuperscript{321}Ibid., 275.
The overall logical inconsistency of pantheistic monism results in a thoroughly subjective, ultimately unbearable view. Adherents of pantheistic monism obviously carry on lives, but their actions belie the assertions of their world-view. In light of pantheism's actual views, the absolute statements and pragmatic actions of the believers are meaningless.

As stated, proof of theism was not the objective of this paper. Had it been, several avenues could have been taken in defense of theism over pantheistic monism. This examination of pantheistic monism has revealed that the Hindu scriptures, as well as the writings of Shankara and Radhakrishnan yields a logically inconsistent (i.e. false) world-view. This alone does not establish theism, but does eliminate one of theism's contenders as a viable option in the arena of thought.
WORKS CONSULTED


__________________ *Christianity and Philosophy.* Grand Rapids, Michigan:
