

Beyond the Looking Glass

(The following is from an online discussion between Joe M and Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja.)

Joe: ". . . you still insist that the source created the energy, and that the energy did not create the source. I think you have it backwards. I don't see how you can have a source, without the energy to create it. The difference here between us is critical."

BMP: Because you are conceiving the relation between source and energy as being relatively on the same existential level, like self and other, you are missing the third element, i.e. the transcendental absolute nature of the Source. When the Source is conceived on the absolute platform it can no longer be the result of anything but itself. It is important to understand the difference between the Absolute and relative platforms, and I think Spinoza has made a clear attempt at explaining this difference by his concept of *causa sui* [cause of itself]. I explained this in my first message to you, but either you seem to have a terrible memory or were not able to understand this the first time. I agree this is an extremely critical point to understand and it will change your whole perspective when you do.

When we understand the Source [I write it with a capital letter to indicate it is an Absolute and not a relative idea] it means the nothing within the relative world-frame can influence it or exert any cause on it at all. Thus the absolute world is called pure, unconditioned, eternal, self-luminous, or as the *Bhagavad-gita* mentions the transcendental eternal soul cannot be wet by water, burned by fire, killed by a sword, and so on.

While the Absolute cannot be influenced by the relative world, the relative world can be influenced [or more properly, created/manifested] by the Absolute or Transcendental world. We can understand this idea through the example of reflection [this is only an example]. When an object is reflected in a lake, in a mirror, or cast as a shadow, the reflection imitates the original and is caused by the original, but the reflection does not cause the original to act. On the other hand, the activity of the reflection is entirely dependent upon the activity of the original [source of the reflection].

If someone is absorbed in the reflected objects or shadows on the wall and thinks them to be the actual or original world, then this is called *Maya*. Such a person thinks the reflected objects or shadows have their own spontaneous free will to move as they like, but this is all an illusion. The images in the mirror don't move, nor are those images formed by the glass and silver of the mirror if they were to be analyzed.

When the reflective material is called matter, then we can understand how the material conception of life is simply an illusion or reflection of the original world of spirit. We will get to further details of that idea in a separate post. For now, I hope this helps to give a clearer understanding of what is involved.

Joe: "What is missing in this claim is the granting of complete freedom of will to man. Man is endowed with the "Lords" abilities. Man is now the creator. That is Who You Are. Hence, man, as is well shown on this forum, creates his own knowledge. The knowledge of how to create is the knowledge that is acquired form the "Lord", as I see it."

BMP: Free will is always a difficult concept to grasp and its proper understanding may come only after we have matured in our spiritual understanding. In Sanskrit will or will power is called *iccha shakti*. In other words, free will is also an energy. As such it has a Source which is not us. As you write "Man is endowed," or given the gift of free will, creativity, consciousness, and so on. These are all energies and therefore dependent upon the Source from which they come. Thus *Bhagavan* Krishna, or Lord Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita*, *aham sarvasya prabhavo* - "I am the Source of everything." In the *Isopanisad* it is written *isavasya idam sarvam* - "I am the owner an controller of everything."

What this means is that we have free will, but it does not come from us, it comes from and belongs to the Source. We are just the energy of the Lord called *jiva shakti*. Because energy is dependent upon its Source, and we are energy and thus dependent upon our Source, our free will and creativity are just the reflection of the Absolute, not that they originate in us.

If this can be understood, the whole conclusion of Vedic knowledge can be realized. The goal is not *moksha* or liberation into the Void or the abstract monism of impersonal Brahman, but liberation from the the world of the looking glass, and realization of the original life of spirit that has been neglected and forgotten in the perverted reflection of that original spiritual world. In the original world we understand our complete dependence and act as our proper selves as energy of the Lord in complete personal forms in the performance of His blissful *lila* or pastimes, while in the material world which is the perverted reflection of that world we think we are God and can act without proper understanding of our true spiritual nature.

Joe: [Given the relation of Source and energy] ". . . how can there be independence and Wholeness?"

BMP: Absolute independence exists only for the Source as self-caused. Everything else is caused by something other than itself and is therefore dependent. Even our free will is dependent upon the Source of that freedom. That means that what is freely given to us can also be freely taken from us. Complete wholeness can only exist in the Absolute whole from which all wholes come - *om purnam adah purnam idam*. The wholes that come from the Complete Whole, are not really whole in themselves because they depend for their existence on that which is beyond themselves. Thus, for example, a single prokaryotic cell is a whole as an organism, but it depends on its environment to maintain its existence. In this way every individual living entity may be considered a whole, but they are never completely independent. Thus the nature of an individual is

very hard to pin down since its true nature cannot be isolated from its Species, Genus, environment, society, history, and ultimately its Source.

Joe: "I claim that energy of action, is the source of identity, not the source of action."

BMP: Yes, one's true identity is manifest to a certain extent in what one does and v.v. But when that extent is broadened to the absolute degree then the identity in question is not merely about a particular individual anymore.

The remaining arguments in your message concern your ideas vs my ideas, and your ideas of my ideas, or causality and acausality (non causality), linear or circular causality, and so on. These all refer to ideas within the looking glass, in the Vedic literature called the causal ocean (*karana dakshyee*). But we must try to understand there is an original reality beyond the looking glass, beyond what you or I or anyone else thinks or doesn't think or cause or doesn't cause in any way within the reflected world. In the Absolute world of spirit, freedom reigns in the form of spontaneity, spontaneous love and bliss. All self centered-ness is forgotten and self giving to the real center is supreme joy. In the *Bhagavad-gita* Krishna explains the method of *bhakti-yoga* for getting there, through the path of *sharanagati* (surrender) *mam ekam saranam vraja* - "Only (*ekam*) by complete surrender to Me."

As long as we retain any sense of 'I and mine' entanglement in the reflected world will continue without relief. Only a change of heart can make one qualified to receive grace and mercy from above the plane of relativity if the transcendental Lord wills. But those who remain passively or actively hostile to the Lord condemn themselves to an illusory existence in which true light/knowledge is reflected/apparent only.

Joe: "In order for the Whole to be, there needed to be something other than the Whole, so the Whole simply divided itself, becoming, in one glorious moment, that which is this, and that which is that. For the first time, this and that existed, quite apart from each other. And still, both existed simultaneously. As did all that was neither. Thus, three elements suddenly existed, simultaneously: that which is here. That which is there. And that which is neither here nor there—but which must exist for here and there to exist. The Whole is the nothing which holds the everything. It is the non-space which holds the space. It is the all which holds the parts. Do you understand?"

BMP: The Whole does not divide itself. When a mother (a whole) gives birth to a child (another whole) she doesn't divide herself. When the flame of a candle is used to light another candle, it does not divide itself. When a cell gives rise to another cell by what is called mitosis, it does not divide itself. A whole is actually produced from another whole, and this is only improperly called division. Rather than a division it is actually a multiplication. I'm sure you understand the difference between division and multiplication.

I understand you are sincerely trying to make sense of all this in your own way, and by grace you may be very close to understanding transcendence and the absolute platform.

Joe: "The part is not independent of the Whole. But the Whole is also not independent of the part. I am a part of God and I am God, experiencing. I am One and Many, like you. I am created in God's image, as a creator. I am God. Who Are You? "

BMP: Hopefully after reading this far you will now recognize the difference between the relative and the absolute platform of understanding, and that your statements here are on the relative platform only. Whole and part are relative terms, but when the Whole is the Absolute then the relative whole and part fall within the mirror world while the Absolute Whole retains its independence of that. Your role as a creator is only apparent, not real. You are a shadow reflection of the actual creator, not a another creator beside the original. I am a servant of God, *jivera swarupa haya krishnera nitya dasa*, [this is Bengali language] as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Lord Himself taught. We are all the energy of God (*jivashakti*) and therefore never independent of the Lord who is called *Visnu-tattva* (*tattva* means truth). To think otherwise is *Maya*, the illusion of taking our reflected existence in the material world to be our real nature.

These ideas are very hard to understand, as Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *mama maya duratyaya*. In fact it is not possible to understand them merely by the process of knowledge (*jnana*). In the *Bhagavad-gita* Krishna explains the correct process *bhaktya mam abhijanati*, -"I can be known only by devotion."

At least if we try to become a humble friend of Krishna we may be granted a peep into that world which lies beyond the reflected relative domain of *Maya*.

I will stop here because it is already a lot to remember and understand. You are actually doing a great service by providing an opportunity for this knowledge to be presented in this forum. Actually we are all serving Krishna already, only some may know it and others may not. You have my heart-felt appreciation for that.

Sincerely,
B Madhava Puri, Ph.D.
Princeton Bhakti Vedanta Institute
<http://bviscs.org>