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GOD AND OTHER AGENTS IN HINDU MONOTHEISM

Keith Yandell

Having shown that Ramanuja and Madhva are indeed monotheists, I argue that (i) they differ concerning the relationship between God, the original Agent, and human agents created by God; (ii) that this difference involves in Madhva's case there being only one agent and in Ramanuja's case both God and created persons being agents, and (iii) since both positions require that created persons be agents, Madhva's perspective is inconsistent and Ramanuja's is not.

Preface

My topic here, in a nutshell, is agent individuation in Indian monotheism. There are two sorts of individuation, epistemological and metaphysical. Suppose there are two expressions, X and Y, each of which refers to something. The epistemological individuation question in this circumstance will be: to what can I appeal in order to tell whether X and Y refer to the same thing? The metaphysical individuation question in this circumstance will be: if X and Y refer to different things, what is it in what X refers to and in what Y refers to that makes them distinct, and what makes something to be of the kind or kinds that X and Y are? The epistemological question seeks marks or signs of non-identity that are accessible to us. The metaphysical question seeks conditions in the relevant items that make them distinct, whether these conditions are accessible to us or not. My concern is with metaphysical individuation, not with epistemological individuation.

Section One: Some Monotheism-relevant Quotations

I take it that there is such a thing as Hindu monotheism — that for example there is sufficient similarity in the concept of *saguna Brahman* as it appears in Visistadvaita and Dvaita Vedanta to justify one in talking about the concept of God as it appears in Vedantic monotheism. To make this clear, consider the descriptions of, and claims about, Brahman-with-qualities that follow.

The great figures of Hindu Vedantic monotheism are Ramanuja and Madhva. Ramanuja refers to "all the perfect attributes" that belong to Brahman—"those myriads of immeasurable, glorious, and innumerable

perfections like omniscience, omnipotence, universal sovereignty, his being unequalled and unsurpassed."¹ He holds that Brahman is the "sole cause of creation" and "is opposed to all evil and is of wholly infinite perfection."² Brahman possesses "knowledge, strength, sovereignty, heroism, creative power, and splendour; qualities which are essential to him and of incomparable excellence."³ Being unconditioned, Brahman is to be distinguished "from non-intelligent matter, which is subject to change, and from intelligent beings, which are linked with such matter in the created world...."³ So God is conceived by Ramanuja as omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect. He takes Brahman or God to be related to the rest of what exists in such a way that it depends on God and not God on it. So Ramanuja takes God to be an omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, independently existing being on whom the rest of what exists depends. Similarly, Madhva asserts that God is "the Independent Being possessed of all adequate and unrestricted powers in regard to the Cit (sentient beings) and the Acit (insentient beings) and who is all-knowing. He is the One who controls the Cit (sentient beings) and Acit (insentient beings) which are of a different nature from Him."⁴ He adds that "The Independent Being must, necessarily, be infinite in its attributes. For an Independent Being cannot possibly wish to be finite and limited in any sense."⁵ Madhva states a position concerning finite persons on which he and Ramanuja are in agreement when he writes that "...there is no birth of the Jiva as spirit. Passing from one state of dependence to another is itself a new birth [i.e., a new reincarnation] (in respect of eternal entities like the Jivas)."⁶

Vedantic monotheism, then, in the figures of Ramanuja and Madhva, holds that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect, and that God sustains in existence everything distinct from Himself without Himself being dependent on those things. Further, in creating, Brahman acts freely. Ramanuja writes that:

The purpose of the One, all whose desires are attained and who is [already] perfect, in creating the universe ... is nothing other than mere sport ... Brahman's purpose in causing the origination, existence, and destruction of the universe, which he does by a tiny act of His will, is only sport.⁷

and

His sport is to evolve, sustain, and dissolve all the worlds.⁸

The idea is not that God does not care about God's creation or love any of the created beings who can return that love. The idea is rather to deny that God creates from need or compulsion.

Madhva too holds that Brahman "is the supreme Lord by whose grace exist matter, action (karma), time, nature, and souls."⁹

I take these views to express monotheism — to be, for example, claims of a sort that Jewish, Christian, and Islamic monotheists themselves firmly embrace. An exception, of course, is the view that created persons exist beginninglessly, a view not characteristic of Semitic monotheism. Further,

the views of Ramanuja and Mahdva seem plainly to include the view that God might not have created — that *Necessarily, if God exists, then God creates* is false. God is free in creating in the sense that God's existence and nature are not such as to render it inevitable that God create. This is, of course, also typical of Semitic monotheism.

Section Two: Brahman or God and Created Agents

In conjunction with these views Ramanuja and Madhva deal with the status of created persons, and in particular with whatever degree of freedom such persons may have. Ramanuja holds that:

The Supreme Person ... enters ... souls as their inner self and abides within them, controlling them as the One who permits them to act ... When the finite selves ... have performed good or evil actions according to their respective wishes, the Lord recognizes the one who performs good actions as the one who obeys His commands, prospers him with the four goals of human attainment, righteousness, prosperity, fulfillment of physical desires, and salvation, while He causes the one who transgresses His commands to experience just the opposite of these blessings.¹⁰

The issue this raises is made explicit in this passage:

Here another objection may be raised. "You have stated that the Supreme Self is the Inner Controller of all creatures and that everything is controlled by Him. But if so, no one would be qualified to obey the injunctions and prohibitions . . . since one is only then qualified if he is capable of acting or abstaining on his own mental initiative. There can be no such person, since you say that the Supreme Self is the one who directs all activity and causes all action to be done, which means that He is controlling everything. . . . Causing both good and bad action to be done would mean that God is cruel." We reply to this as follows: The Supreme Self has endowed intelligent beings in general with the equipment needed either to perform or abstain from action. In order to enable these selves actually to carry out their actions, He who is their support enters into them, exercises control as the one who permits them to act, and abides in them as their owner and master.¹¹

In Mahdva's view, "the Lord is the real doer and the cause of the soul's activities."¹² He adds

"Just as a man ... makes a puppet dance, or even as he sets his own limbs in motion, so does the almighty Lord cause these creatures to act."¹³ But he also says "The guiding of the Lord is according to the soul's previous works and also efforts that result from its natural aptitude."¹⁴

Ramanuja's followers debated as to whether he held created persons

simply to be determined in all of what appeared to be their agency or to possess some degree of libertarian freedom. The cat carries its kitten by the scruff of the neck to where the cat wants it to be, while the monkey leads its young to the next destination; so determinists held to a cat theory of the relation between Creator and created and the non-determinists embraced a monkey theory. It is plainly appropriate to ask whether Ramanuja's or Madhva's worldviews allow there to be any agents besides God.

Section Three: Varieties of Dependence

Indian monotheism takes the relationship between God and what God creates to include this feature: the creature is existentially dependent on the existentially independent Creator. Our example of a creature will be the sort of thing that needs enlightenment, and among such the human person. So consider some human person Chandra who is a creature. For each moment at which Chandra exists, Chandra depends for existence on God. In that sense, whether Chandra ever began to exist or not, and whether Chandra ever ceases to exist or not, Chandra is created by God. Call this *total existential dependence*. Indian monotheism is hence committed to another sort of dependence of Chandra upon God. If Chandra is totally existentially dependent on God, it follows that whatever properties Chandra must have in order to exist are supplied to Chandra by God. This will include Chandra's essential qualities. If Chandra, as a person, is inherently capable of self-consciousness, then at every moment Chandra is sustained in existence by God he is sustained as a being capable of self-consciousness. If Chandra is essentially immaterial, then at every moment Chandra is sustained in existence by God he is sustained as an immaterial being. The same holds for any other essential property of a created being. Call this *total essence dependence*. A creature depends on God for the sustaining of each of its essential properties at every moment at which it exists.

Indian monotheism is also committed to a further sort of dependence of creatures on God. It is not part of Indian monotheism that human persons are necessarily embodied; their not being embodied does not entail their non-existence. While the fact, and the modality, of their being embodied expresses their karma, they do not themselves create their embodiment; it is given to them in the manner that fits their deeds. If grace loosens their karmic bonds, it is God whose action on their behalf does the loosening. There will be, then, a good many non-essential or accidental properties that any human person has that she depends on God for her having — her natural eye and hair color, her date of birth and her age, her gender and caste origins, her family relations, whether she is naturally short or tall, and a host of other properties. Call this *accident dependence*. The sum of total existential dependence, total essence dependence, and accident dependence is considerable. Anyone related to God by these sorts of dependence who, insofar as relevantly informed and rational, would be grateful for her existence will have a great deal for which to be grateful to God. Note that existence and essence dependence, and the sorts of examples of accident-dependence that we have listed, concern what might be called *fiat* properties. God can simply fiat that someone have such properties, and someone will have them.

Suppose something A is totally existentially dependent, and totally essence dependent, on God. Then if A is also totally accident dependent on God — if every property that A has that A could have existed without having is a property that God fiated onto A — then let us say that A is *exhaustively dependent* upon God.

Section Four: Fiatable Properties

It is controversial whether all properties are fiatable properties. I will discuss this matter only insofar as it relates to Indian monotheism. One issue relevant to this matter concerns libertarian freedom. Making the issue reasonably clear involves remembering some standard definitions.

Let a tensed universal description [TUD] be an accurate statement of everything that is true in the world at a given time. Each such description should be viewed as tensed to some specific time that is specified in the description. Let LN be a correct account of all of the laws of nature, and LL a correct account of all of the laws of logic. Then *determinism* holds: *For any TUD tensed earlier than time t, that TUD plus LN plus LL, entails and explains any TUD tensed to time t or later.* Thus, if determinism is true, the past determines a unique future. There are logical possibilities alternative to what happens at any given time; it is simply not compatible with the laws of logic, the laws of nature, and what has happened in the past that they be realized. So they will not happen, and there is no more that we can do about that than there is that we can do about the truth of the laws of logic, the laws of nature, or what happened in the past.

Compatibilism holds that it is logically possible that determinism be true and that persons have the sort of freedom that is required for them to be morally responsible for their choices and actions. The opposite position to compatibilism is *incompatibilism*, which holds that it is not logically possible (non-contradictory) that determinism be true and that persons have the sort of freedom that is required for them to be morally responsible for their choices and actions.

Libertarianism holds that incompatibilism is true and determinism is false; in order for persons to have the sort of freedom that is required for them to be morally responsible for their choices and actions they must have genuine freedom, not compatibilist so-called freedom, regarding those choices and actions. Libertarians hold that persons do have this sort of freedom. Compatibilists are dubious that there is even possibly any sort of freedom beyond that which they affirm. The notion of libertarian freedom, often called categorical freedom, runs as follows.

(CF) *Jane is categorically (or libertarianly) free with respect to lying at T entails Jane's lying is within her power at T and Jane's refraining from lying is within her power at T.*

In turn:

(CFa) *Jane's lying is within her power at T entails Jane's lying at T does not require that Jane falsify some total universal description (TUD) tensed to*

a time earlier than T, make some law of nature false, or make some law of logic false.

and

(CFb) Jane's refraining from lying is within her power at T entails Jane's refraining from lying at T does not require that Jane falsify some TUD tensed to a time earlier than T, make some law of nature false, or make some law of logic false.

(CF) is to be understood as containing the definitions provided by (CFa) and (CFb). An important consequence of these definitions is that it is logically impossible that a categorically or libertarianly free action be fiated. Thus if Chandra exercises libertarian freedom in making some choice C, Chandra's so making C is not a fiatable property of Chandra. Further, for any property Q such that Chandra's coming to have Q is in any way dependent on Chandra's making C, Q is not a property whose possession by Chandra is simply a matter of Chandra being fiated to have Q. Agents being actors who are morally responsible for their actions, a libertarian will hold that anyone who is morally responsible for what she has done possesses some non-fiatable properties.

A monotheist can hold that the notion of libertarian freedom is unintelligible. A monotheist can claim that the notion of libertarian freedom is logically inconsistent. A monotheist can claim that the notion of libertarian freedom is a perfectly intelligible notion but that Chandra's ever exercising libertarian freedom would be incompatible with the sovereignty of God. But a monotheist can also hold that God grants libertarian freedom — *possessing libertarian freedom* is a fiatable property, though its exercise is not — and allows Chandra to exercise such freedom. My question here concerns whether a monotheism that denies libertarian freedom to persons can provide an account of the metaphysical identity conditions of persons on which persons are distinct from God in the ways that monotheism holds them to be. If God grants libertarian freedom to Chandra, and Chandra is in circumstances in which this freedom is exercised, then Chandra will have some non-fiatable properties, namely his exercises of libertarian freedom, and some properties at least not in fact fiated, namely those he comes to have in whole or part due to those exercises of freedom. This will be so even if some or all of those latter properties could have been fiated. In particular, on a libertarian view of moral agency and moral character, the sort of moral character that one has is not a fiatable property, nor hence are the properties by virtue of which one has the particular sort of character that one has.¹⁵

The non-fiatable properties, if any, that Chandra has will not be random properties. They will be properties Chandra has by virtue of his libertarianly free choices. If there can be libertarianly free choices there can be non-fiatable properties. I see no contradiction in the notion of libertarian freedom and take there being non-fiatable properties to be a live option for monotheism.

Another issue regarding whether there can be non-fiatable properties concerns whether it is logically possible that there be a world not created

by God. If it is logically possible that there be a world not created by God then that world, should it exist, would have a non-fiatable property, namely *not having been created by God*. What might a monotheist say about this?

Section Five: Some Varieties of Monotheism

Relative to logical necessity, monotheism has two varieties. A monotheist can hold that it is a logically necessary truth that God exists or that it is a logically contingent truth that God exists. These are exclusive and exhaustive alternatives.

A monotheist can hold that it is logically impossible that there be a world of non-divine things that might not have existed that is not created by God; she may accept *Necessarily, if something non-divine exists that might not have existed, then God created that something*. In this case, she will be holding that there is no possible world in which things exist that might not have existed but God does not create them. She will think that the notion of an uncreated world of things that do exist but might not have existed is logically inconsistent. But a monotheist can also hold that it is logically possible that there be an uncreated world of things that do exist but might not have existed, holding only that in fact there is a world of things that do exist but might not have existed, and that in fact this world was created by God. It is dubious that a monotheist can hold that God exists, that there is a world of things that do exist but might not have, and that God did not create this world. At any rate, I shall assume that monotheism embraces the claim that *Necessarily, if God exists, and there is a world of things that might not have existed, then God created that world*. This leaves us with the following alternative versions of monotheism.

Twice Necessary Monotheism:

1. *Necessarily, God exists.*
2. *Necessarily, if a world of things exists that might not have existed, God created that world.*

Once Necessary Monotheism

2. *Necessarily, if a world of things exists that might not have existed, God created that world.*
3. *It is true, but logically contingent, that God exists.*

No Necessity Monotheism

3. *It is true, but logically contingent, that God exists.*
4. *It is logically possible that there be a world of things that might not have existed and that God did not create.*

For No Necessity Monotheism, it is logically possible that Chandra be distinct from God, since for this sort of monotheism, it is logically possible that Chandra exist and God not exist. For Once and Twice Necessary Monotheism, it is not logically possible that Chandra exist and God not exist. For Twice Necessary Monotheism, it is logically impossible that God not exist, and logically impossible that there be a Chandra that God did not

create, and for Once Necessary Monotheism, it is logically impossible that there be a Chandra that God did not create.

No Necessity Monotheism has various interesting consequences. Let a brute existential fact be a fact to the effect that something exists where the existence of that thing might have had an explanation but in fact has none. According to No Necessity Monotheism, Chandra's existence might have been a brute fact — this is a logical possibility — but in fact it is not. The property *being a brute fact* can be a logically contingent property of something that has it. So can *having been created by God* be a logically contingent property of anything that has it, not merely in the sense that anything that God creates God might not have created, but in the much stronger sense that anything God creates might have existed even if God had not created, for it might have existed even if God did not exist. Similarly, having the property *existing dependently on something else* is a property that something can have contingently; something can in fact exist in such a manner as to depend on something else even though it is logically possible that it have existed without depending on anything at all. Obviously, on this view, a thing's having the causal origins it did have is not part of its conditions of self-identity. For No Necessity Monotheism, then, there are possible worlds in which Chandra enjoys the advantage over God that Chandra exists and God does not exist. Even when one notes that what this amounts to is that it is logically possible that Chandra exist and God not exist, it seems a somewhat unmonotheistic thing to hold.

If something is *possibly non-existent* then it is *necessarily possibly non-existent*. Under no circumstances could it be other than *possibly non-existent*. What No Necessity Monotheism denies is not this, but that *being possibly dependent* entails *being dependent if existent*.

Section Six: Identity and Difference

The range of identity and difference that is relevant to the concerns of this essay does not include pairs of items both of which are logically necessarily existing things. Each relevant pair will contain at least one thing that exists logically contingently. If Spinoza is correctly interpreted as a logical fatalist, holding that every truth is a necessary truth and every falsehood a contradiction, then one cannot distinguish between Spinoza's *God or Nature* and one of its modes by virtue of its being logically possible that *God or Nature* exist and the mode not exist, for if logical fatalism is true this is not a possibility. But for any pair of items, at least one of which exists logically contingently, here is a proper statement of metaphysical identity conditions:

C1. A is distinct from B if it is logically possible that A exist and B not exist or it is logically possible that B exist and A not exist.

Obviously, as we noted, this would not do as a statement of identity conditions for items that exist logically necessarily.

Here is another statement of metaphysical identity conditions:

C2. A is distinct from B if there is some property Q such that A has Q

and B lacks Q or such that B has Q and A lacks Q.

Yet another such statement goes like this:

C3. A is distinct from B if it is logically possible that there is some property Q such that A has Q and B lacks Q or such that B has Q and A lacks Q.

It is clear, I take it, that for Visistadvaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta, God and some human being — say, Chandra — are metaphysically distinct beings by virtue of satisfying each of C1, C2, and C3. It is logically possible that God exist and Chandra not exist. This is so even though Chandra has always existed. Our Hindu monotheists cannot consistently accept the view that if something always exists then it exists necessarily, or that if an existential proposition is true when it is tensed to all times that it is therefore a necessarily true existential statement. Since these views are false, this is not a problem for Hindu monotheism.

Whether one reads Hindu monotheism as a version of Twice Necessary Monotheism, Once Necessary Monotheism, or No Necessity Monotheism, it will still be able to distinguish between God and Chandra. For Twice Necessary Monotheism, we can add a fourth claim to the effect that:

Criterion 4: if being A has logically necessary existence and being B has logically contingent existence, then being A is distinct from being B.

and then note that God has logically necessary existence and Chandra has logically contingent existence, and hence are distinct beings. For Twice Necessary Monotheism, it is logically possible that God exist and Chandra not exist, and both logically possible and true that God and Chandra have different properties. So for these reasons too God and Chandra are distinct beings.

For Once Necessary Monotheism, it is also logically possible that God exist and Chandra not exist, and the case that it is both possible and true that God and Chandra have different properties. So for these reasons God and Chandra are distinct beings. Even though, for Once Necessary Monotheism, it is logically possible that God not exist, it is not logically possible that Chandra exist but God not exist, since for Once Necessary Monotheism it is necessarily true that any non-divine thing that exists contingently depends for its existence on God.

For No Necessity Monotheism, it is logically possible that God exist and Chandra not exist, that Chandra exist and God not exist, and that God and Chandra have different properties, and true that God and Chandra have different properties. So on this account there are all of these reasons for thinking God and Chandra to be distinct beings.

If we look at things from a different angle, we get similar results. Even if Chandra is totally existence, essence, and accident or non-essential property dependent on God, appeal to Criteria 1-3 will make it possible for us to state conditions that monotheism entails obtain which are such that God and Chandra are distinct beings. The same is the case if we think of

Chandra as totally existence and essence dependent on God but only partially accident or non-essential property dependent on God — i.e. as having some non-fiatable properties. However we read Hindu Monotheism, then, regarding these varieties of monotheism, God is one thing and Chandra another thing, just as one should expect. Thus the question arises as to why one should think that any problem arises for any of these varieties of Vedanta when one considers God and Chandra. Are they not plainly distinct for either Ramanuja's or Madhva's Vedantic view? It is indeed clear that God and Chandra are distinct. The question remains: distinct *what*? Are they distinct *persons*, distinct *minds*, and distinct *agents*? This is, at least, less than clear for reasons to be noted.

A person, let us say, is a self-conscious agent — a mind capable of acting, of so behaving as to try to gain some goal, bring about some end, achieve some purpose. It is, I take it, logically possible to be a mind without being an agent; it is logically possible that there be something that is conscious of itself — that recognizes that it is a conscious thing that is distinct from other things — but cannot act. By *cannot act* I mean cannot act covertly or overtly, not being able to perform such mental actions as forming an image of the sun, trying to see if a certain argument is valid, or endeavoring to remember whether one has ever before thought about whether it is possible that compatibilist freedom is enough for moral responsibility, as well as not being able to walk around the block or make a fist. A self-conscious being whose thought content was never the result of her own efforts seems perfectly logically possible. If so, being a mind is not sufficient for being an agent. But I will suppose that being both a mind and an agent is sufficient for being a person, leaving aside whether being a mind but not an agent is also sufficient for being a person.

Section Seven: Rod and Chandra

Consider two created persons, Rod and Chandra. Rod, a precocious child, learns at age seven that his parents want him to have a little brother or sister. Rod decides he wants a special sort of little brother and disappears into his basement biology lab. He soon returns with a purple powder that he surreptitiously introduces into his mother's plum wine. She drinks the wine, thereby imbibing the powder, and never learns that by so doing she gives to Rod the power to determine the gender of his brother and much else besides. The "much else besides" is this: his brother (whom they name Chandra) is very much dependent on Rod. Chandra's mind, let us suppose, is related to Rod's mind in the following manner: while Chandra intrinsically has the capacity to have thoughts, feelings, images, to make choices, and the like, nonetheless (due to Rod's powder) it is up to Rod whether this capacity is ever actualized. Chandra shall have or be in cognitive states of any sort only if Rod causes Chandra to have them, and he will have or be in exactly those cognitive states that Rod causes him to have or be in. Chandra will see an image of a pick dragon, think that two and five are seven, hope for a chocolate bar, or decide to try to raise his arm only if Rod causes the image, thought, hope, or choice. Rod causes cognitive states in Chandra's mind that he knows he does not have, just to be sure that there are differ-

ences in content between his own mind and Chandra's. Rod's intentions are good — he does not cause Chandra to do things that harm Chandra, or to have nightmares or a low self-image or desires to harm others.

If we ask whether, under these circumstances, Chandra has a mind of his own, and mean by this whether Chandra's mind is ontologically distinct from Rod's, the answer is affirmative by both the existential criterion and the qualitative criteria — by each of C1 through C3 above. Since these criteria seem correct, presumably the affirmative answer is correct. Rod's mind and Chandra's mind are distinct items. They are distinct centers of consciousness.

It seems clear that if Rod never causes Chandra to have or be in any cognitive states, the fact that Chandra could be in cognitive states is not sufficient for Chandra's being or having a mind. I have the capacity to eat grasshoppers with salt and mustard. Happily, this fact alone does not make me a grasshopper-with-salt-and-mustard eater. I see no reason to think things are different in the case of the capacity to have cognitive states but never ever having any and actually being a mind. If this is right, Chandra is mindless unless Rod causes Chandra to have conscious states. Given our story, Chandra is or has a mind only if Rod causes him to have or be in cognitive states. Since being an agent presupposes having a mind, Chandra is an agent only if Rod causes Chandra to have a mind — Chandra's agency, if he has any, is dependent on Rod because his having a mind is dependent on Rod. But of course there is further dependence of Chandra on Rod.

I note briefly that were someone to show that under these circumstances, Chandra would not have a mind, this would not refute anything I am concerned to defend here. One might argue that, under the circumstances imagined, Rod has a mind that occupies two centers of consciousness or has two realizations (or some such). Or one might deny that what Chandra has is a mind, claiming that it is only a sort of sham mind, related to a real mind as fake chocolate is to the real thing. This view is even friendlier to the position I wish to critique than is its also friendly denial, and I can accept it and still make my case.

Section Eight: Chandra and Agency

Suppose *being an agent* is an essential property of a person. The question as to whether, on this assumption, Chandra is a person depends on whether it is *being the sort of thing that is possibly an agent* or *being someone who has actually exercised agency* that is essential. Is potential agency sufficient, or is actual agency — exercise of potential agency — required? If we follow the course of our earlier answer concerning *being a mind* then we shall answer that actual exercise of agency is required to make one an agent. But in fact it will not matter for our argument how we answer this question, since the religious traditions under discussion claim that Chandra and his fellow created persons are not only minds but exercisers of actual agency. Whether this is offered as an essential feature of being a person, or as something that must characterize persons if they are to be subject to sacred injunctions, or both, does not matter for my overall argument.

Chandra, we are supposing, is in cognitive state A if and only if Rod causes Chandra to be in A. The bite in this is not in the "if" — not in the fact that Rod can, if he chooses, make Chandra hop on one foot and sing the national anthem backwards. The bite is in that "only if" — Chandra can do nothing unless Rod causes him to do it. *Rod can make Chandra do anything within Chandra's powers* in no way threatens Chandra's agency insofar as Rod does not make Chandra do things. *Chandra can do nothing unless Rod causes him to do it* renders Chandra agencyless.

We can put the relevant point a bit differently. If mind B is so related to mind A that A can cause B to be in whatever cognitive states A chooses that B shall be in, let us say that B is in *volitional servitude* to A. A can make B do whatever A wants B to do, subject only to the limits of A's imagination and B's powers. But this does not entail that B cannot have cognitive states or initiate actions on her own. Her servitude at A's will need not prevent her from having some life of her own. She can still be an agent when A is letting her alone.

If mind B is so related to mind A that B will be in any cognitive state whatever only if A causes B to be in that state, and all the qualities of B's cognitive states are determined by what A decides they shall be, then let us say that mind B is *totally in A's control*. This will prevent B from having some life of her own. She is at best a zombie when A is leaving her alone. Since Chandra is not merely in servitude to Rod, but is totally in Rod's control, Chandra is not an agent. No one totally in another's control is an agent.

Between God — on whom Chandra depends for existing as a being capable of cognitive states, and Rod — on whom Chandra depends for his actually having any cognitive states and for every particular cognitive (and affective and volitional) state he has — in the sense that, between them, God's and Rod's actions are necessary and sufficient for Chandra's existence, essence, and states — Chandra exists in total existence, essence, and accidental property dependence. This, we have been arguing, precludes his being an agent.

When we ask whether, under these circumstances, Chandra is an agent, then, — whether Chandra ever does anything at all on his own — the answer is negative. It is negative on libertarian, but also on typical compatibilist, terms. It is worth noting this carefully. Typical compatibilists are no more anxious to hold that persons who act under compulsion, coercion, or are totally under another's control act freely than are libertarians. Thus typical compatibilists should agree that Chandra is not an agent. No one totally in another's control is herself an agent.

I have not raised the question as to whether, if Rod causes Chandra to perform some action A, Chandra would be responsible for doing A. I confess to thinking that the answer is plainly negative. But this is strictly irrelevant. My claim is that there is no such thing as Rod causing Chandra to perform an action under the circumstances we have laid out. There is only Rod acting through Chandra — only Rod using Chandra's mind and body to bring something about that Rod intends to bring about. Whether Rod brings it about that Chandra is in a mental state of intending to bring it about makes no difference to the fact that it is Rod who is doing the acting — Rod who is the agent and Chandra who is simply a channel for Rodian

activity. All of the activity in which Chandra engages, if he engages in any, is activity Rod causes Chandra to engage in. In Madhva's metaphor, Chandra is Rod's puppet. As a man makes a puppet dance, or move his own arms, so Rod makes Chandra have or be in cognitive states which in turn have whatever effects such states have in the environment in which they occur.

Chandra is not an agent. No one related to Rod as Chandra is related to Rod is an agent. Nor, of course, is Rod special in this regard. No one related to any person as Chandra is to Rod is an agent. Thus no one related to God as Chandra is related to Rod is an agent. Hence if all persons are related to God as Chandra is related to Rod, no persons are agents.

There are, of course, differences between Rod and God. If monotheism is true, all persons are in total existential and essence dependence on God, and all persons are in at least partial accidental or non-essential property dependence on God. If all created persons are related to God by total existence and essence dependence, and total accident-dependence on God, none are agents. Chandra is not an agent if Chandra's entire mental life is caused by God. Total existence and essence dependence, and total accident-dependence, includes total mental life dependence,¹⁶ and total mental life dependence precludes agency.¹⁷

One might here appeal to a Spinozian, or to one sort of compatibilist, idea of agency as follows:

Def. 1: Mind M is an agent if and only if M causes effects that M intended and M's causing effects that M intended is caused by M's nature and mental states, not by the nature and mental states of some other person.

On this account, God will be an agent, but Chandra will not. There is no other being whose nature and mental states cause God to act as God does. There is, in our story, a being whose nature and mental states cause Chandra to act as Chandra does.¹⁸ If every created person is related to God as Chandra is to Rod, then no created person is an agent. It will not do to appeal to some such definition as:

Def. 2: Mind M is an agent if and only if M causes effects that M intended.

Rod can guarantee that Chandra satisfies this weak definition, but his so doing will not change the fact that Chandra is not an agent. I do not think that Def. 1 is sufficient for agency. But my argument needs only the claim that Def. 2 is not sufficient for agency.¹⁹ If God is an agent on Def. 1, this is no objection to my argument, since created persons are not agents on Def. 1.

Section Nine: Madhva and Libertarian Freedom

It is not obvious what either Madhva or Ramanuja holds regarding libertarian freedom. Thus the interpretations that follow are offered tentatively. We begin with Madhva. He, like Ramanuja, holds that non-divine per-

sons are not created if one requires either that there is a time when God exists but no non-divine persons exist or that there is a first time that is created in the act of creating such persons. There is an asymmetrical dependence relation between God and created persons such that the existence of the latter is entirely due to the creative activity of the former, and this dependence relation holds beginninglessly and will hold endlessly, not by logical necessity but by divine choice.

All such persons at each moment of their existence, unless they become enlightened, have (so to speak) some sort of karmic account — they are owed some karmic consequences. The consequences can be good, they can be bad, and they can be some of each, but to be due karmic consequences is to be locked into the cycle of birth and rebirth. For any lifetime *L* of a created person *S*, *S* receives the karmic consequences still due *S* from her lifetimes prior to *L*. Such consequences are always paid out, and in this way justice is perfectly preserved. Further, Madhva holds to what one acquainted with Medieval European philosophy would call an *haecceity*, an individual nature, such that a particular individual's karmic history is an essential (highly complex) property of that individual. Thus were God, in an apparent exercise of grace, to favorably alter Chandra's karmic history, this would be tantamount to God's abolishing Chandra. For God to have created a being whose karmic history differed at all from Chandra's would be for God not to have created Chandra at all.

Some created persons pursue a karmic path that leads them to enlightenment; some pursue a karmic path that meanders through endless transmigratory travel; still others pursue a karmic path that ends in hell. For a person to complain that she was not created with an individual nature that, instead of ending her in heaven, leaves her forever doing transmigratory travel or finds her in hell, is for her to complain about the fact that she exists at all. If existence even in hell is better than not existing at all, her complaint will be irrational.

Two matters should be separated here. One concerns the goodness of God. The other concerns whether there are agents distinct from God. Relevant to the issue of divine goodness are such questions as: is it better to exist even in hell than not to exist at all? is a world containing only beings that achieve enlightenment better than one in which these same beings achieve enlightenment but other beings do not? is there a best possible world or is it the case that, for any world God created, it is logically possible that God create a better one? And so on. But our concern is whether, on Madhva's view, there are agents other than God.

The answer, I suggest, is negative. On this view, God is related to Chandra as Rod, in our own scenario, is related to Chandra. Chandra, so related to Rod, is not an agent. Hence Chandra, so related to God, is not an agent. Thus Professor Ignatius Pithiadum is justified in his comment that:

... in the last analysis Madhva is faced with an insoluble problem. His basic principles, viz., the absolute independence of Vishnu [Brahman], the essential nature of each being and especially of each soul, the beginningless and conditioning character of karma, and finally the agentship of the soul, cannot be brought together in a harmonious whole.²⁰

Section Ten: Ramanuja and Libertarian Freedom

Ramanuja, perhaps the most famous and influential Hindu monotheist, is plausibly read as holding that persons have libertarian freedom. He writes:

The question may be raised that, if the agency of the individual self is dependent on the Supreme Self, then the *sastras* relating to mandates and prohibitions become purposeless, as the individual self becomes incapable of being made subject to mandates in regard to any work. This question is satisfactorily answered by the author of the *Vedanta Sūtras* himself (in the aphorism) "But He [God] requires the efforts made (by the individual self) for the reason among others that the mandates and prohibitions (in the *sastras*) should not become purposeless."

What is said amounts to this. By means of the senses, the body, and such other things given by the Supreme Self, having Him for their support and deriving their power from Him, the individual self who finds his support in Him and derives his power from Him, undertakes of his own free will the effort which is of the form of directing the senses and other things for the purpose of performing work. The individual self himself of his own free will is indeed the cause of work, because the Supreme Self, remaining with him, causes him (who has made the effort) to act by granting His permission. As in the case of the activities which have for their object such things as the shifting of very heavy stones, trees, and similar things that can be brought about (only) by many persons, the condition of being the cause may belong to many, as also that of being subject to positive and negative commandments.²¹

The Supreme Person, who is the Lord ... gives finite selves, bodies, and sense organs and the power of controlling them and abides within them, controlling them as the one who permits them to act ... When the finite selves ... have performed good or evil actions according to their respective wishes, the Lord recognizes the one who performs good actions as the one who obeys His commands, prospers him with the four goals of human attainment, righteousness, prosperity, fulfillment of physical desires, and salvation, while He causes the one who transgresses His commands to experience just the opposite of these blessings.²²

The Supreme Self has endowed intelligent beings in general with the equipment needed either to perform or abstain from action. In order to enable these selves actually to carry out their actions, He who is their support enters into them, exercises control as the one who permits them to act, and abides in them as their owner and master.²³

Vedanta Desika was an influential follower and interpreter of Ramanuja. Consider this account of his reading of Ramanuja:

A distinction is drawn [by Ramanuja] between the initial action of the individual and the subsequent activity. In all human effort, the individual initially wills to do a thing. To this extent, he is free to do what he desires. Based on this initial action, the subsequent activity which follows is approved by *Isvara* [God]. By according such an approval, *Isvara* prompts the individual to proceed. If it were not so, the Vedic injunctions in this regard would become futile ... even though *Isvara* gives approval to the activity initiated by an individual, He does not become the *karta* — the doer. The real *karta* is the individual. It is in this sense that *Isvara* is considered to be the controller of human action and only to this extent the human freedom is not affected. Therefore the individual self is the *karta* [doer] in this restricted sense ... In all these cases the initial action is important and that alone determines the moral responsibility of the individual.²⁴

While he systematically favors Madhva's views over Ramanuja's, B. N. K. Sharma reports what he takes to be the standard reading of Ramanuja as follows:

Having bestowed on the Jiva [the finite person] the power of intelligence, the power to act, and the full complement of accessories in the form of body, sense organs, etc. the Lord remains neutral in respect of the Jiva's initial volitional effort in launching on a particular course of action, good or bad. Here, the Jiva himself takes the first plunge, as it were, without being prompted by the Lord.²⁵

Ramanuja's view, then, seems to be this: while each created person is related to God by existence dependence, essence dependence, and partial accident dependence, each created person also is related to God by partial accident independence. Created persons have non-essential properties such that everything that God ever does is not sufficient for their having those properties; they have properties that they perfectly well might not have had such that their doing something that they do with libertarian or categorical freedom is a necessary condition of their having those properties.

One need not, of course, spell out the details of libertarianly free action in exactly the way in which Ramanuja does. Perhaps Ramanuja spells out the minimalist conditions of libertarianly free action — the conditions such that, were they lessened, there would be no such freedom. What matters is that his conditions are sufficient for libertarian freedom. On his view, God is not the only agent. Each created person comes to have properties that are not *fiated*. Each created person who is an agent is partially, not totally, accidental or non-essential property dependent on God. Given that among these non-*fiated* properties are exercises of libertarian freedom, created persons are agents. Their being agents is not incompatible with their being totally existence and essence dependent on God.

Conclusion

Monotheists are committed to the view that created persons exist in

existential dependence on God. Since if a thing has an essence at all, it has it at every moment at which it exists, a created thing will have its essence at each moment at which it exists. So anything that has existential dependence on God also has essence dependence on God. This much, I take it, is simply entailed by monotheism. Monotheists also hold that God fiats lots of non-essential properties so to a considerable degree a person will have accident-dependence on God — eye-coloring, natural hair color, natural aptitudes, and the like.

Among other ways of categorizing monotheisms, one is this: some monotheisms are deterministic, and some are not. In other terms, some embrace the view that every created person, as well as being existence-dependent and essence-dependent on God, is totally accident-dependent on God. Some reject total accident-dependence. My argument has been that *being an agent distinct from God* is logically incompatible with *being existence, essence, and totally accident dependent on God* though not logically inconsistent with *being existence, essence, and partially-accident dependent on God*. Hence a monotheism that holds both that created persons are existence, essence, and totally accident dependent on God and that created persons are agents is a logically inconsistent account of things. There is some interpretive reason to think that Madhva's monotheism is inconsistent in this respect, and that Ramanuja's monotheism is not.²⁶

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NOTES

1. *Vedarthasamgraha*, para. 10.
2. *Sribhasya*, 2.1.14.
3. *Vedarthasamgraha*, para. 6.
- 3'. *Sribhasya*, 1.1.2.
4. B.N.K. Sharma, ed., *Madhva's Teaching in his own Words* (Bombay: Vidya Bhavan, 1961), page 96.
5. Sharma, page 96.
6. Sharma, page 111.
7. *SriBhaysa* 2.1.33.
8. *Vedarthasamgraha*, para. 34.
9. *Brahma Sutra Bhaysa*, 2.1.35.
10. *SriBhaysa*, 2.2.3.
11. *Vedarthasamgraha*, para 77.
12. *Brahma Sutra Bhaysa*, 2.1.26.
13. *Brahma Sutra Bhaysa*, 2.1.26.
14. *Brahma Sutra Bhaysa*, 2.3.41.
15. Strictly, if A's having set S of properties entails A's having a good or an evil or a mixed moral character, then if one has a moral character only if one is responsible for having that character, and one is responsible for having that character only if one has it as a result of multiple exercises of libertarian freedom, then the set S of properties cannot be fiated into A.
16. Mental properties of course being included among all properties.
17. *Dependence*, it should be remembered, is here to be understood as involving this: A's having property Q depends on God = God causes A to have Q, and A would neither exist nor have Q if God did not cause A to exist and

have Q. God's activity is necessary and sufficient.

18. If Rod's mental states cause all of Chandra's mental states, then trivially Rod's mental states and Rod's nature cause Chandra's mental states; if Rod's nature is causally efficacious in deciding what Rod's mental states are, then reference to Rod's nature is not trivial.

19. Suppose Rod causes Chandra to intend to cause the effect of Chandra's hand waving, and causes Chandra to be in set S of mental states such that Chandra's being in S causes Chandra's hand to wave. Suppose Rod also causes Chandra to intend not to wave his hand if Rod causes Chandra to intend to wave his hand, and Rod causes Chandra to know that Rod has caused Chandra to intend to wave his hand. Then Chandra intends not to intend what he does intend regarding his hand waving. But he still satisfies Def. 2. One could refine Def. 2 so as to rule out such second-order intendings, but Chandra will still be Rod's intellectual puppet, not an agent, even if he satisfies this revised definition.

20. I. Puthiadam, *Vishnu The Ever Free* (Madurai, Madras, Varanasi: Dialogue Series, Arul Anandar College, 1985), page 260. Puthiadam's concern, however, is with the problem of evil, mine with the problem of there being agents other than God. These matters are, of course, closely related: if God is the only agent, then God is one who does whatever evil is done.

21. Ramanuja, *The Gitabhāṣya of Ramanuja*, tr. M. R. Sampatkumaran (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1985), page 441.

22. Ramanuja, *Sribhāṣya* 2.2.3; Thibaut, 489..

23. Ramanuja, *Vedarthasamgraha*, paragraphs 89, 90; cited in John Carman, *The Theology of Ramanuja* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1974), page 139.

24. S. M. Srinivasa Chari, *Fundamentals of Vaisnavita Vedanta: A Study based on Vedanta Desika's Tattva-mukta-kalapa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), pages 201, 202.

25. B. N. K. Sharma, *The Brahmasutras and their Principle Commentaries: A Critical Exposition, Vol. II* (Bombay: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1974), page 262. Cf. also Eric Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1980), page 108.

26. Madhva's variety of monotheism, if it is as characterized, shares these features with various versions of Semitic monotheism.