

**Malkani on the Role of Reason
by Student
Paper V09P**

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SUBJECT: G.R. Malkani

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CONTENTS:

Reason is a tool for philosophical investigation; the paradox of criticizing reason

The process of thinking

Self is the only truly self-evident reality and the ground of rational processes

Reality known in experience; critique of Kant's view

Reason's role is to expand our idea of what is experienced

Self-evidence of experience; "otherness" comprehended within experience; whole of reality is rational

Reason's capabilities; cannot grasp the real but can point to it

Ascertainment is common to all states of mind; the unity of experience

Equating ascertainment with Self-revelation and awareness

Summary of Malkani's main points

BOOKS QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- G.R. Malkani, *Reason and Its Limitations*

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NOTES:

- **RETYPE STUDENT PAPER presented in class or a summary of a class (V09P). THERE ARE NO AUDIO CASSETTE TAPES EXTANT.**

- This is **1982 04/14a, Malkani Paper, and the first entry associated with this date. 1982 04/14b = Seminar on the One, Intellectual-Principle, and Participation. 1982 04/14c = Seminar on the Intellectual-Principle and Number.** We do not have any audio files for either seminar, just JF notes.
- During this time period, Anthony assigned people to write summaries or papers on philosophical articles. It's not clear if this is a paper that was read in class or a summary of the class in the form of a paper.
- See also WG Papers 1982 0407a, 1982 0422.
- The class that took place on this date is referenced a few times in WG Class 1982 0417a (Alchemy). Something said there towards the end makes it sound like AD wasn't present for this class.

MALKANI ON THE ROLE OF REASON

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Reason and its Limitations by G.R. Malkani (4/14/82)

Reason is the tool of philosophical investigation. Even those who criticize reason, who would point out its limitations and stress the need to transcend it, must employ reason in their arguments. Reason, then, cannot be judged to be limited -- the very judging involves an appeal to reason, which must then be higher than any claimed limitation.

How does thinking proceed? Any rational process must always start by accepting some principles and positions as self-evident, then hopping, one by one, to further self-evident positions. We might think that a judgment or conclusion is reached only at the end of such a chain of reasoning. However, every step of the thought process involves a judgment, since each link in the chain must be accepted as self-evident. Reasoning can only work by analyzing a problem into such self-evident elements of experience, which are called facts.

But what can truly be said to be self-evident? What truth cannot be questioned? The only self-evident reality is the self (also called "the ego" in this article). Any rational process presupposes the self, has the self for its ground. In fact, if a critic demands a proof of the presence of the self -- or of the possibility of self-evidence -- Malkani answers: "The [very] tendency to prove is the evidence of what cannot be proved." Even to doubt the self is a way of affirming it. The self can never be circumscribed or determined, but in it and through it all determinations take place. Without it, no reasoning would be possible, no experience.

The relationship between reality and experience is crucial. Malkani says that in the attitude of reason toward reality, "reality is determined...as that which is experienced." Again, rationality covers the whole of reality, and...determines it as that which is experienced." There seem to be two main points here. First, reality is known in experience; this contradicts Kant's claim. (We can imagine an exchange like this:

Kant: "Reality cannot be experienced."

Malkani: "You assert that reality cannot be known. But to honestly make such an assertion, you must have experienced some knowledge of reality, else how could you compare it with the known or even refer to it? Thus, by your own admission, reality can be known in experience.")

The second point concerns the role of reason in bringing about experience. Malkani seems to say that it is the activity or stance of reason that is the ground of reality in experience. It is reason's determining of reality that makes experience possible. In any case, we can say that it is the task of reason to expand our idea of what is experienced, to get closer to the fullness of experience, reality. The word "experience" should be taken to as deep a meaning as possible; for example, it includes the waking, dream and sleep states.

The facts of experience as such are all self-evident. That is, the fact that an experience occurred cannot be questioned (although of course its content might be). You can doubt that you are seeing a snake, or doubt that you are seeing a rope, but you cannot doubt that an experience is taking place. What about the fact that within some experiences are references to an independent reality outside experience? Are such references valid? Malkani: "The appearance of "otherness" which characterizes every object is completely comprehended within experience, and is ultimate and incapable of further explication." So

even the so-called independent reality is within experience. We cannot experience or reason about anything outside of experience. But there is no need to! As we employ speech and reason, we actually reveal reality as the facts of experience. "The whole of reality is rational. We can then ascertain the real as it is; and there is no legitimate question regarding it which cannot be solved by us."

Objection: "My experience is merely of the snake or the rope, not of reality."

Reply: "You confuse the content of experience (i.e. appearance) with the experience itself, which has a basis in self-evidence, i.e. the self, or intelligence."

Reason can discriminate between truth and error. In fact, reason discriminates between what it can do and what it can't do: it cannot grasp the real, but its recognition of this failure is a way of pointing to the real. This means that, in knowing its own limitations, reason transcends those limitations.

A final point concerns the importance of ascertainment. Any rational operation -- judgment, thinking, etc. -- involves ascertaining. The fact of being ascertained characterizes all of presented and presentable reality. Reason can challenge appearances, it can reject the content of what may seem to be revelations, but it can never challenge the fact of ascertainment. Any experience presupposes an ascertaining. Even a revelation is granted its certainty by an act of ascertainment. Ascertainment is common to all states of mind. It may be called the unity of experience.

We can equate the ascertainment with the self as revealing itself in activity, self-evidencing. Perhaps we could use the word awareness. In any sort of knowing, even fantasy, there is an awareness to which there is a presentation. This awareness contains its own self-knowledge, which may perhaps be called its ascertainment.

To sum up, Malkani's main points are:

- 1) The only self-evident reality is the self.
- 2) Reality is known in experience as the irreducible elements of experience, facts. We cannot refer to a reality outside of experience. The appearance of otherness is within experience.
- 3) Reason plays a key role in constituting experience, and can be used to investigate the reality of experience. By pointing out its own limitations it transcends those limitations [~~crossed out: to reveal the real~~].

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