

Malkani on Reason's Relation to Reality
by Student
Paper V09P

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SUBJECT: G.R. Malkani

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Cannot refer to anything outside of experience
Rationality covers the whole of reality
Reason extends experience beyond the experienced
Reason analyzes problems into self-evident elements of experience
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The Self is the only self-evident principle in experience
Limitations of reason known by reason itself
Formal side of reason can always raise doubts; intelligent side of reason rooted in personal certitude, cannot be doubted
Comparison with Greek philosophy/Plato

BOOKS QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

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

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NOTES:

- **RETYPE STUDENT PAPER presented in class (V09P).**

- During this time period, Anthony assigned people to write summaries or papers on philosophical articles. This is apparently what this is.
- See also WG Papers 1982 0407a and 1982 0414a.

MALKANI ON REASON'S RELATION TO REALITY

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April 22, 1982 - Malkani: "Reason and Its Limitations"

Further clarification of Malkani's use of the terms "experience" and "self-evidence" seemed necessary to understand just how he defines reason's relation to reality.

To begin with experience--what does Malkani mean when he asserts that we cannot refer to anything outside of experience? What is the scope of experience, and does the very reference to something outside of experience constitute a certain awareness of it? Psychological theories of the unconscious certainly aim at demonstrating that the field of awareness includes experience of what is unknown to ego consciousness, and the Greek notion of soul maintains that a part of the being is always in contact with reality. Malkani asserts that rationality covers the whole of reality and determines it as that which is experienced. Even though reasoning takes place in reflective consciousness, reason knows its own limitations and experiences what is not a part or content of experience by knowing it as other than that which is experienced. To say that personal experience is that of spiritual exile is to know at the same time what is missing in experience. Reason exceeds the scope of reflective consciousness and could be said to extend experience beyond the experienced.

Malkani's use of the term "self-evident" is evidently, if not self-evidently, still a source of confusion. He declares that reason operates by analyzing a problem into self-evident elements of experience. The statement suggests the conventional meaning of reason as a generic term for the mental powers concerned with forming judgments, conclusions, or inferences, which are then taken as facts independent of reason. Ordinarily we would say, then, that objective truths become self-evident to reason. Reason must also admit, however, that errors and mistakes in judgment are also undeniable facts of experience. If the possibility of error exists, then all evident facts must be questioned because at some time they could be sublated. To fulfill its function, then, reason must maintain a critical stance as doubter. Because the rational processes must be referred to an ego or self, this reasoning self *is* the doubter, and a reasoning self is obliged to doubt evident facts if it has had even one experience of error. Faced with the ever-present possibility of unlimited sublation of its world of experience, the reasoning self searches for a principle that cannot be doubted. Since the doubter cannot be doubted, the Malkani/Vedantic position is that the self is the only self-evident principle in experience.

Malkani briefly summarizes the points made in the preceding discussion in his "Summing Up" paragraph. He says, "(1) We know the limitations of reason. And yet when we know them, we know them *by* reason. (2) Reason on its purely formal side can never be satisfied; it can always raise doubts. On its intelligent side, it is rooted in personal certitude, and this can never be doubted."

To thinking nourished on Greek philosophy, Malkani's presentation seems in the end to undervalue reason and oversimplify reality. He does not elaborate what he means by the self, and it is possible that emphasis on the importance of personal certitude is another way of saying that our knowledge is rooted in soul's vision of the Nous. But despite surface similarities, Malkani's assessment of the function and value of reason seems very different from the Greek view.

Malkani might not quarrel with the statement that reason unfolds the intelligibles in the imagination, but the Platonic view emphasizes that true reasoning is non-arbitrary because the Ideas as essences are themselves specified and ordered. The articulation of the Ideas is not something that *we* do.

Reason operating in conformity with real being involves nonsensuous intuition of essences as specified and arranged by Divine Reason.

Malkani's final statements on reason contrast sharply with the Platonic view, for he defines it in a negative sense as that which dissolves limitations that it has itself imposed. He says, "Reason has value only in curing its own diseases--in resolving its own misconceptions." Perhaps Malkani would not disagree with the Platonic view of reason, but his presentation here is quite different.

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