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The Asymmetry of ‘Creation’ and ‘Origination’: Contrasts within Comparative Theology

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I. Semantic Specificity and Theological Confusion

THE following essay is a contribution to comparative theology, particularly in its contrastive dimension. For a successful comparative theology, the two theologies or religious perspectives being compared and contrasted must be described accurately and equally in depth. Where Christian theology in its Catholic dimension is one pole of the comparison, it is important to make a distinction between doctrine and theology which I will do below. Issues of translation also immediately arise.

Recently I re-read two articles I wrote in 1994 and in 1997 for the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*, “Śrīdhara and His Commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*” and “Madhva, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and His Commentary on Its First Chapter.”¹ In them, I translated the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*’s opening line according to each

commentator. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*’s first line has a clear reference to the second sutra of Bādarāyana’s *Brahma Sūtras*, i.e. *janmādyasya yatah*.

Śrīdhara: “‘Him from whom is the creation, etc. of this [universe],’ inferred by positive and negative concomitance in things; all-knower, self-luminous; who revealed the *Vedas* through the heart to the first sage; about whom the gods are confused; in whom the threefold evolution is real as is the transformation of fire, water, earth; by his own strength, always free from deception; the True, the Supreme, [on him] we meditate.”²

Madhva: “‘Him from whom is the creation, etc. of this [universe],’ on account of harmonization and the other [logical reasoning about the senses of scripture],

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all-knower, self-ruling; who revealed the *Vedas* through the heart to the first sage; about whom the sages are confused; in whom the threefold evolution is [apparently] false as is the transformation of fire, water, earth; by his own strength always free from deception; the True, the Supreme, [on him] we meditate.”³

The Sanskrit word I translated here as “creation” is *janma*. Francis Clooney had translated *janma* differently in a related passage from the much earlier *Brahma Sūtras* of Bādarāyana [fifth century BCE ?] which the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* [eighth century CE ?] was citing:

Next, therefore, the desire to know Brahman.

‘Brahman’ indicates that whence derive the origination, etc. of this world.

Brahman is knowable because it is the source of the teachings.

It is known from the Upanishads because it is their consistent object.

A quick survey of different translators at hand revealed the following: *janma* as “creation” (Sheridan; Pereira; Raghunathan; Sanyal, Sharma); *janma* as “origination” or “origin” (Dasgpta; Clooney [1993], Vireswarananda; Panikkar; Apte; Thibaut); *janma* as “source” (Radhakrishnan); *janma* as “birth” (Gambirananda; Clooney [2001]). Thus this somewhat random selection shows a general divide between those preferring a translation of *janma* as “creation” with a significant, almost unavoidable, theological/Christian denotation and connotation and those who translate it with a

significantly less theological term. In view of the ongoing work of comparative theology in which translation is always a major issue, is “creation” an appropriate translation of *janma* in connection with Bādarāyana and citations of this verse in later works like the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*? And what considerations are involved in answering this question of translation?

I am exploring a very difficult area of comparative theology, that is, the area of how, and how well, we form categories and concepts suitable for inter-religious subjects that we study and about which we reason. This may be based on how we translate specific words from one religious tradition to another. Dilemmas of category formation and conceptual taxonomy arise when concepts that have specific theological definitions in one religious tradition, while also accompanied by a broad semantic range within that religious tradition, are used to translate concepts in another religious tradition, which may have a different semantic range.⁴

For example, in the interaction between the Christian religious traditions and Hindu religious traditions over the past five centuries, we can discern several different types of uses of theological terms taken from Christian faith (in English) and then used within the religious traditions of Hinduism (in English). In the case of the theological concept of God, (1) “God,” in its Christian theological usage as “supreme being,” is used in a homologous function within some of the traditions of Hinduism; thus the conceptualization of God is thought to be close to the conceptualization of Brahman. Witness Clooney’s book *Hindu God, Christian God*.⁵ (2) “God” can be used to translate a term in Sanskrit with a specific definition within Hinduism, “Brahman,” even though “Brahman”

has its own broad and very different semantic range among the religious traditions of Hinduism. (3) “God” and/or “Brahman” can become inter-religious, or comparative theological, categories that postulate a putative identical reality that is called “God” in Christian theology and “Brahman” in Hindu theology. In Clooney’s perspective, this last sets up not a mistake in judgment but a dual process of reading and reasoning through the claims of the two religious traditions. In my judgment, however, we must be clear that the existence of an equivalent reality across the two traditions should be a conclusion, not a premise, in either theology.

My concern about translating *janma* as “creation” also raises the questions whether these three types of uses are legitimate, and then whether they are theologically useful for either Christian theology or Hindu theology. I think that the term “theology” can itself be used in these three ways. However, to judge the legitimacy of these uses we must, following Clooney, read the texts from the two traditions and then reason across the two traditions. Of course, this is very much the work of a comparative theology that relies on appropriate and accurate translations. A penultimate investigation is appropriate about the use, misuse, and abuse of Christian theological terms like “God” and “creation” when translating Sanskrit terms.

For historical, cultural, and theological reasons, contemporary studies of the intellectual traditions of Hinduism are often published in English. Thus terms and categories borrowed from Christian theology, sometimes from Protestant contexts, are often used in their English forms. In the words of Parimal G. Patil,

There are significant asymmetries in the project of ‘comparative theology’ that reflect and reveal the complex historical, intellectual, and political realities of Christianity’s encounter with ‘others’ . . . It is not possible, in my opinion, to accurately describe Hindu arguments and theories in English without a deep familiarity with philosophical and Christian writing in English. Thus, any discussion of Hindu material that is authentic to the tradition and intelligible to contemporary theologians will already have to be comparative and dialogically responsible to Christian traditions of theology . . . As theologians from other traditions are allowed to contribute to the conceptual resources of the discipline, the vocabulary and style of English language theology should . . . become properly interreligious.⁶

Patel may be too sanguine about the coherence of our English theological vocabulary, not yet “properly interreligious.”

For forty-three years I have been translating Sanskrit texts. I often found myself flipping through Sanskrit-English dictionaries looking for English words that might match Sanskrit words. It took me a while to realize that the dictionaries depended on Oxbridge study of Latin and Greek, the Authorized Version, the Book of Common Prayer, Shakespeare, etc. The dictionaries were unfamiliar with philosophical and theological vocabularies from the Latin Christian tradition, and were certainly unfamiliar with the Greek and Oriental Christian traditions. To know something definite in comparative theology, we need a “properly interreligious” English

theological vocabulary that is appropriate both to the Christian traditions and to the Hindu traditions. This is precisely the challenge of an optimal comparative theology: how to be dialogically responsible. This responsibility certainly presumes something that is still rather rare, that is, an informed, professional, and competent understanding of, and across, two differing religious traditions.

II. Reasoning about 'Creation Out of Nothing'

Only, perhaps at the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE in regard to definitive Christian doctrine, and then in the subsequent theological writings of figures like Saint Athanasius [c.296-373 CE], Saint Augustine [354-439 CE], and later Saint Thomas Aquinas [c.1225-1274 CE], did the defining contours of Christian monotheism become clear in the formulated doctrine.⁷ As a premise for the Trinitarian affirmation of the salvific role of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Christian monotheism presented God the Father as eternal begetter of the Son, and as *totaliter aliter* [totally other] creator of the world. From the human point of view, the doctrine of creation out of nothing allows God apophatically to be mysterious in God's own Triune being, and kataphatically to be revealed in God's created world. The doctrine of creation was based on four judgments of reasoned faith, confirmed by reading the scriptures. The first is that God the Father is the cause of all reality, both the eternally begotten and eternally proceeding realities of the second and third divine persons and the reality of all that is not God. The second is that God as source, that is, as Father, eternally "begets" the Son from God's own being, and in turn the Spirit "proceeds" from the same source; thus God is triune. A crucial

distinction was made that "begetting" is not "creating" and "creating" is not begetting". The third is that for everything else, the heavens and the earth, all things visible and invisible, the universe, God is not the source in the senses of Neoplatonist emanationism, but uniquely the creator. The world was not "begotten" by God, but "created" by God out of nothing, that is, not from God's own being nor from anything preexisting. The fourth is that creation took place at the "beginning." Comparatively, it is my judgment that the Christian doctrine of God's creation of the world out of nothing and with a beginning may find homologues in Hinduism, but that the Christian doctrine of God's creation of the world out of nothing *with a beginning* is singularly distinctive of Christian faith in its creedal form. It is not found elsewhere. This is an *a posteriori* judgment that may be disproved by a single instance.

The judgment of creation out of nothing requires what has been called the "metaphysics of creation." Robert Sokolowski describes the doctrine of creation out of nothing as the basis for the "Christian distinction."

The Christian distinction between God and the world is therefore a distinction that is, in principle, both most primary and yet capable of being obliterated, because one of the terms of the distinction, the world, does not have to be. To be God, God does not need to be distinguished from the world, because there does not need to be anything other than God alone . . . And the world is not diminished in its own excellence, it is not somehow slighted because God is not related by a real relation to it; rather the world is now understood as not having had

to be. It did not have to be, it is there out of choice. And if the choice was not motivated by any need of completion in the one who let it be, and not even motivated by the need for 'there' to be more perfection and greatness, then the world is there through an incomparable generosity. The world exists simply for the glory of God. The glory of God is seen not only in particularly splendid parts of the world but in the very existence of the world and everything in it.⁸

This Christian foundational and definitive doctrine, that God created the universe out of nothing with a beginning, that is, not out of God's own being nor from anything preexisting, has remote homologues, but not analogues, within the religious traditions of Hinduism. I distinguish here "analogy," as used theologically, from "homology," as used comparatively.⁹ In a coherent Christian/Catholic theology, the "analogy of being" is used to justify speech about God with language that is neither univocal nor equivocal. God has being; created beings have being. The word "being" in both cases does not assert the same judgment. God and the created being are infinitely different. "Being" is therefore predicated neither univocally nor equivocally. Created beings are not similar to God, nor do they add anything to God. Human concepts derived from created being can be used of God, but only "analogously."¹⁰

In contrast, homology when used in comparative contexts seeks to avoid equivocation by describing a similar function in a dissimilar system, an asymmetrical resemblance of realities otherwise unlike. For example, Yahweh and Tao may be judged

homologous because they are both at the center of their different religious traditions. They are the central terms of reference, yet in other very important respects dissimilar, more unlike than like. Perhaps they can in a limping way be compared to the wings of a bird and the wings of an insect. Both wings enable flight, but biologically, structurally, physiologically, and chemically, they are very dissimilar. According to the judgments of their different religious traditions, Yahweh and Tao do not refer to the same reality at all once Yahweh is related to the judgment that Yahweh is that which created the universe out of nothing, not out of God's own being nor out of anything preexisting. The Tao is not that.

The Christian doctrine of creation is not easily understood in ordinary language. A special theological language emerged in the patristic period of the first six Christian centuries. It is possible to conceive of God without a created world. It is possible to conceive of a world without God. The world might not have been. If the world does exist by creation, if it is "gifted" by God, then the response should include gratitude for the world's existence, and wonder at the way it is. Theological reasoning about gratitude to the Triune God and wonder at the universe leads to a theology of human freedom and love for God.¹¹

However, one thing that creation is not is that it is not a change. The created universe has no material cause. Nothing changes. Thomas Aquinas theologically states this emphatically.

Creation is not change, except merely according to a mode of understanding. For change means that the same something should be different now from what it was

previously. . . . But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and before only according to our way of understanding, so that a thing is understood first as not existing at all, and afterwards as existing. . . . Creation places something in the thing created according to relation only; because what is created is not made by movement or change. . . . Hence creation in the creature is only a certain relation to the Creator as to the principle of its being.¹²

Aquinas also argued that “in the beginning” could not be reasoned to. It requires revelation.

I answer that, by faith alone do we hold, and by no demonstration can it be proved, that the world did not always exist.¹³

Thus the great Hindu dialecticians had no reason to reason to “beginning.” The conjoined creation of the universe by God out of nothing and of one that begins may be a “haplax legoumena” [one-time teaching] with no corresponding Hindu homologue. This judgment is tentative.¹⁴

III. Additional Complexity

Contemporary Western philosophical tradition was influenced by the Christian doctrine and theologies of creation out of nothing. Even as it may no longer accept it,¹⁵ philosophy is haunted by the question of why there is something rather than nothing. This question is not synonymous with the judgment of creation out of nothing. As Martin Heidegger states, even as he rejects the judgment of creation out of nothing:

Why are there ‘existents’ [things that are] rather than nothing? That is the question. Clearly it is no ordinary question . . . And yet each of us is grazed at least once, perhaps more than once, by the hidden power of this question, even if he is not aware of what is happening to him.¹⁶

The question remains open, and peculiar, whatever way an attempt at an answer it made, because it cannot be answered on its own terms. For this question there is no Archimedean point from which to answer. Heidegger’s question works both ways. As Hans Urs von Balthasar states:

Why in fact is there something rather than nothing? The question remains open regardless of whether one affirms or denies the existence of an absolute being. If there is no absolute being, whatever reason could there be that these finite, ephemeral things exist in the midst of nothing, things that could never add up to the absolute as a whole or evolve into it? But, on the other hand, if there is an absolute being, and if this being is sufficient unto itself, it is almost more mysterious why there should exist something else.¹⁷

A theology comparative of the judgments of Christian faith and of judgments of the religious traditions of Hinduism must attend both to the doctrine of creation out of nothing and to the reasoning behind it. Both Christian and Hindu theology as they develop will also come to be haunted by the question why there is anything at all. The last question adds to the asymmetries that Patil describes above.

A theology that is comparative must also take account of the rejection of the creedal doctrines and theologies of Christian faith by much of the Western philosophical tradition since Descartes, a rejection which would logically extend to the religious traditions of Hinduism as well. For example, John R. Searle says:

Given what we know about the details of the world---about such things as the position of the elements in the periodic table, the number of chromosomes in the cells of different species, and the nature of the chemical bond---this world view is not an option. It is not simply up for grabs along with a lot of competing world views. Our problem is not that somehow we have failed to come up with a convincing proof of the existence of God or that the hypothesis of an afterlife remains in serious doubt, it is rather that in our deepest reflections we cannot take such opinions seriously.¹⁸

We will not discuss further the need for comparative theology to consider this dismissal of Christian and Hindu worldviews, but it should be kept in mind.

IV. Reasoning with Śaṅkara about “Whence the *Janma*, Etc. of This”

Bādarāyana’s *Brahma Sūtras* is the key text for the Hindu traditions known as Vedānta. There is a divergence between the monistic and theistic traditions of Vedānta ranging through ontology, epistemology, and soteriology. However, Advaita Vedānta emphatically affirmed the perfect being of Brahman, the Supreme. Brahman is the ultimate goal of the

human quest. Brahman is so transcendent that it includes all that is finite. This transcendence is thus immanent in all that is finite. How this could be explained is the cause for the divergences among the Vedāntic traditions. Selfhood is the primary analogue for understanding Brahman. It is the basis for whatever relationship there is between Brahman and finite selves. The monistic or Advaitin tradition of Śaṅkara [first half of the eight century CE] asserts that the Supreme Self or Brahman is the only ultimate reality, and finite empirical existence is unreal from the perspective of Brahman. At first, Śaṅkara seems to accept Bādarāyana’s assertion that Brahman is “that from which the *janma*, etc. of this universe.” However, he goes on to assert that judging “one thing to be another” is always an error. After the removal of such a superimposition, he can deny that there is a material cause [*pradhānā*] of the universe. He cites Bādarāyana to show that there is not an independent cause of the universe.

[The *pradhānā* of the Sāṅkhyas is] not the cause of the universe, because it is not mentioned in the Upaniṣads, [which fact is clear] from the fact of seeing [thinking].¹⁹

This assertion of Bādarāyana as understood by Śaṅkara is based on *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI.ii.1-2:

In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being [*sat*], one only, without a second. To be sure, some people say: ‘In the beginning this world was just Non-being [*asat*], one only, without a second; from that Non-being Being was produced.’ But verily, my dear, whence could this be?’ said

he. 'How from Non-being could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just Being, one only, without a second.'²⁰

This concurs with the Christian teaching that God did not create the world out of anything other than God. This is not, however, creation out of nothing because there is no difference between cause and effect [*satkāryavāda*]. For Śāṅkara the concepts of cause and effect serve a propaedeutic purpose, but, as in the end they are considered errors, they are eventually superseded by knowledge of the real. There really is no "created" or "originated" universe, since the universe is not metaphysically different from Brahman.

This lack of difference is not reciprocal. Brahman as cause is identical with its effect in the universe, but the effects of the universe are not identical with the cause. Thus all effects, whatever one makes of their relative reality, are ultimately unreal in the face of the transcendence of a Brahman understood as non-dual. There cannot be a second except as a mistake. Brahman so conceived cannot engage in creative activity or be creative in act of a "created" or an "originated" world. Activity involves a change and a lack of permanence that are incompatible with Brahman's transcendence. The apparent effects in a separate "originated" world are some kind of mistake. Brahman is indeed *totaliter aliter*, totally other, from the originated world, but the originated world is *totaliter non aliter* [totally not other] to Brahman. For Śāṅkara causality, except perhaps as a pure potentiality which cannot be actualized, cannot be reconciled with the transcendence of Brahman. A pure

potentiality which cannot be actualized is not a potentiality. Thus it is not two, *advaita*.

Two additional points can be made here. The first is essential to the Hindu religious traditions of Vedānta. *Janma* is always associated with, and never separated from, the "etc." These are "sustenance" and "dissolution" of the universe. The second point is essential to Śāṅkara. These three provide only an indicative definition for Brahman, not an essential one. They point to the existence of Brahman. If one says, "see that man in the yellow robe," the man is known through the attribute of the yellow robe. The man is not the yellow robe, but the yellow robe follows him around. If one says, "bring the man who saw the sea," the man can be brought, but not the sea. Thus the "*janma*, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe" are like the yellow robed man whom we see because we see the yellow robe. At the same time, they are also like the man who saw the sea, because when he is brought here he does not bring the sea. Neither are the yellow robe or the sea essential indicators, but they are indicators. This is the case with the "*janma*, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe." When we see them, we know Brahman. But when we know Brahman, we know that Brahman is not the "*janma*, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe." Certainly, in the tradition of Śāṅkara, Brahman does not cause the "*janma*, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe." This means that the reality of processes of the universe can be reduced to Brahman, but more deeply that the reality of the universe cannot be reduced to, or deduced from, the existence of Brahman. This has been called a "non-reciprocal relation of dependence."²¹ The universe is only real in its cause and is unreal as

an effect. In effect, since it is unreal as an effect, it really is not caused either. Brahman is not two.

IV. Does Madhva Make a Difference?

Madhva [1238-1317 CE] was the founder of the school of Dvaita Vedānta, also known as Tattvavāda [lit. teaching of reality].²² His teaching is a major point of departure in the long-running Vedāntic debate between theism and non-dualism. Madhva protests against the non-dualism of Śaṅkara. Madhva is sometimes mentioned as the Hindu thinker closest to the Western monotheistic religions. However, Madhva does not teach *creation ex nihilo*, the Christian teaching that God created the world out of nothing with a beginning.

For Madhva, Brahman is God, understood and identified by name as Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is the primary, personal and divine reality who is metaphysically different from the individual self and from the plurality of the other beings of the universe. Brahman/Viṣṇu is the sole self-dependent reality. Brahman is not the material cause of the universe. The universe is not a modification of Brahman. This is the overall import of the authoritative Hindu scriptures:

Therefore, as non-difference is contradicted by all the sources of knowledge, it is not the purport of the scriptures. On the contrary, the highest meaning of all the scriptures is the preeminence of Viṣṇu over every other entity.²³

The correct import of the scriptural texts was a unique form Hindu monotheism that proposed the eternal metaphysical difference between

God as independent and everything else as eternally dependent on God.

The universe has five differences: there is the difference between the individual self and the Lord. There is the difference between the Lord and on-sentient material realities. There is the difference between the individual selves. There is the difference between individual selves and non-sentient material realities. There is the difference between one non-sentient material reality and another. The difference between these five is real.²⁴

In the words of Ignatius Puthiadam:

The Supreme Being's transcendence is not expressed by means of the analogy of being, but by making Viṣṇu a '*tattva sui generis*,' with certain specific attributes. . . . Transcendence, in the final analysis is not the total otherness in being, the otherness in existence itself, but the fact of being the greatest in a hierarchy of existents.²⁵

Thus Madhva's teaching about Brahman/Viṣṇu is only a remote homologue to the Christian doctrine God's creation of the world out of nothing. Madhva does not make a difference here.

V. Conclusion: A Class of Homologous Doctrines: "Creation out of Nothing" and "Whence the Origination, Etc. of This"

If we accept the Christian understanding of the terms "creation out of nothing," then Bādarāyana, understood according to Śaṅkara, is not speaking about creation at all nor is Madhva. The same is true for the *Bhāgavata*

Purāṇa. I mistranslated the opening line from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* both according to Śrīdhara and according to Madhva. In these contexts *janma* is mistranslated as “creation.” It should be “origination, etc.” However, thinkers from within the Hindu traditions if they engage in comparative theology should be intrigued about the Christian doctrine “creation out of nothing.” The Christian faith’s judgment of “out of nothing’ is tantalizingly close to Śaṅkara’s denial that Brahman is a metaphysically material cause, but it is quite far from Śaṅkara’s denial that the effect ultimately exists. His “non-reciprocal relation of dependence” of the universe on Brahman can be tantalizingly close to the doctrine of God’s creation out of nothing, but theologically it lacks the giftedness of a real gift of reality to the universe. Origination is not creation.

In the Christian reasoning about creation, there is a further element that is added to “out of nothing,” and that is “with a beginning.” The Christian doctrine is incomplete without “with a beginning.” Therefore, I conclude, although tentatively, that the Christian doctrine of the creation of the universe by God out of nothing, but with a beginning, is close to being a “haplax legoumena” [one-time teaching] with no corresponding, or even near, homologue within Hinduism.²⁶ Nonetheless, like its Advaita and Dvaita Vedānta relatives of several removes, the Christian teaching on God’s creation of the world out of nothing with a beginning is dependent on revelation from God, not on reasoning alone. So too are the conclusions of Advaita about the non-duality of Brahman and all that appears to exist; and also the conclusions of Dvaita that Brahman is different from everything else and that everything else is real and not just appearance.

At this point in the ever deeper probing of an asymmetrical comparative theology, it is no longer correct to translate *janma* in the context of Advaita or Dvaita Vedānta as “creation.” “Origination, etc.” is to be preferred. “Creation” is a category mistake since “creation out of nothing” and “whence the origination, etc. of this [universe]” represent two contrasting instances of a loosely gathered comparative class of homologous doctrines. They are a class of remotely homologous doctrines about the relation of the transcendent and the finite, which again are differently defined by each religious tradition. It may be the case, pace Clooney, that close reading and reasoning is building up, rather breaking down, a boundary between Christianity and Hinduism, albeit asymmetrically. We are still early in the development of comparative theology whether in its generic, or Christian, or Hindu forms. In its Christian development, it is even more premature to presume that appropriate categories have yet been found that can do justice to the differences among the religious traditions. In the case investigated here, the comparison of “creation out of nothing” and “whence, the origination, etc. of this universe” requires more work. In the words of Francis Clooney:

One also has to know what to do with these similarities and differences once they are identified, how to decide which ones matter more, and how to determine which are the significant questions raised by them. Making sense of similarities and differences is not a pretheological sorting of details but a theological enterprise that must be undertaken meticulously and with respect for the complexities of theological

judgments. What is most interesting and important eludes a reductive approach that

appreciates only one's theology and respects no other view as true theology.²⁷

Notes

¹Daniel P. Sheridan, "Śrīdhara and His Commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*," *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, 2, No. 3 (Summer 1994):pp. 45-66, and "Madhva, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and His Commentary on Its First Chapter," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*, 5, No. 3 (Summer 1997):125-141.

²Sheridan, "Śrīdhara," 51.

³Sheridan, "Madhva," 136.

⁴See Daniel P. Sheridan, "Discerning Difference: A Taxonomy of Culture, Spirituality, and Religion," *Journal of Religion* 66, No. 1 (January 1986):37-45.

⁵Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁶Parimal G. Patil, "A Hindu Theologian's Response: A Prolegomenon to 'Christian God, Hindu God'," in Clooney, 185; 192.

⁷See Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing in Early Christian Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy: 318-381* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); and Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith & Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington,

DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 31-32.

⁹See Daniel P. Sheridan, "Grounded in the Trinity: Suggestions for a Theology of Relationship to Other Religions," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 50, No. 2 (April 1986):260-278.

¹⁰See David B. Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).

¹¹See the rich theological reflection on these themes in Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si On Care for Our Home*, Chapter VI, Ecological Education and Spirituality, #7 The Trinity and the Relationships Between Creatures (May 24, 2015).

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

¹²Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 45, 2, ad 2 and I.45.3, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1946 [1920]), pp. 233-235. In classical Catholic theology, there are other approaches to the doctrine of creation. See Edward Buckner and Jack Zupko, trans., *Duns Scotus on Time & Existence: The Questions on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

¹³I.46.2, p. 243.

¹⁴For a different perspective, in dialogue with Paul Tillich, on this judgment, see John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

¹⁵Sometimes the doctrine is explicitly rejected because of putative side effects. See Whitney

Bauman, *Theology, Creation, and Environmental Ethics: From Creatio Ex Nihilo to Terra Nullius* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3: "If part of the problem is that *ex nihilo* provides support for colonization of human and earth others through the closing off of reality into an ultimate origin, then this revised understanding of creation must remain agnostic and begin with the *continuous* process of creation. In other words, if ultimate origins serve (as I argue) to reify life into narrative forms and thereby cut them off from the living, and open a continuous process of creation, then the only theology that will be viable is one that leaves both ultimate origin and ultimate end open: viz., a viable agnostic theology."

¹⁶Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961 [1953]), 1.

¹⁷Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004 [1963]), 143.

¹⁸John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 90-91.

¹⁹ Translation from Swami Gambhirananda, *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), 47.

²⁰ Translation from Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971 [1921]), 241.

²¹See Sara Grant, *Toward An Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); "The Contemporary Relevance of the Advaita of Sankaracarya" in Bradley J. Malkovsky ed., *New Perspectives on Advaita Vedanta: Essays in Commemoration of Professor Richard De Smet, S.J.* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 148-163; and David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An*

Interfaith Perspective (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

²²See Daniel P. Sheridan, "Madhva," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Volume IV (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²³ S. S. Raghavachar, trans. *Srimad- Viṣṇu-Tattva-Vinirṇaya of Sri Madhacarya* (Mangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1956) 1.98, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ The author's translation. VTN 1.340

²⁵ Ignatius Puthiadam, *Viṣṇu the Ever Free: A Study of the Mādḥva Concept of God* (Madurai: Dialogue Series, 1985), 321.

²⁶ In a personal communication, Clooney observed: "A severe claim of 'hapax' might be too severe. But since many seem oblivious to the finer distinction you are making, it is probably necessary to make it."

²⁷Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 167.