

THE LAW  
OF KARMA

1970

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The Law of Karma & the Theology of History  
or Karma & Historicity

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I

The Law of Karma and the Historical Dimension of Man

R. Panikkar

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The Law of Karma and the Historical Dimension of Man

R. Panikkar

I- The Problem

Western man tends to consider this as an almost peculiar characteristic of the renaissance-christian culture and is somehow proud of their monopoly (2).

Contemporary man reflects critically on his historical situation and asks himself whether historicity is not a dimension of his own ~~human~~ personal being. Starting with the assumption that today any problem which is not universal-ly put ~~is~~ has already a methodological flaw at the very outset, the aim of this study is to offer some considerations on the historical nature of man taking into account the concept of karma of the asian traditions (1).

from 15 →

The very history of human civilisation shows us that we can reduce to four types the cases of cultural encounters.

a) Isolation

For a long time cultures have lived in mutual ignorance and cultural isolation. <sup>This is the case of</sup> ~~When~~ western man, for instance, <sup>who</sup> (having reflected on his historical character and ignoring of any similar reflection in other cultures tends to consider this as an exclusive prerogative of his culture, or it is equally ~~the case~~ and I should hasten to add that the same is the case <sup>of</sup> with the brahmin saying today that the West has no philosophy of language <sup>because he does not know it.</sup> or the like. Obviously that in such cases when, ~~the~~ <sup>for example,</sup> ~~idea of historicity,~~ <sup>explained</sup> ~~has to be introduced~~ <sup>import</sup> it has to build up all the necessary categories to make itself understood.

or no mystical philosophy

(1) → 20, 1

A striking and global example could be said tagalo, the philippinan language whose theological vocabulary is made ~~on its~~ <sup>by</sup> 90% of spanish words.

But this only complicates the problem, because those auxiliary terms require new ones and so on.

~~b) Syncretism~~

The opposite

one wants to explain one particular concept proper to one culture, one has to import a set of auxiliary categories in order to make that concept intelligible. <sup>To a man of another culture</sup>







Again the issue at stake is more complicated as it may appear at the beginning. One cannot say, for instance, following the given example, that the translation God with brahman or even with deva is totally wrong, nor can one be satisfied with either of them. —→ 3, 1

*for 2,1* → c) Syncretism

A third procedure has proved, all too often, to provide a way out, until the moment in which one discovers that it does ~~ne~~ neither justice to the original nor to the translated concept. Taking only in consideration the common traits of a concept the syncretistic approach ignores all the rest and sets out to work as if there were equivalence between those two concepts or systems. It is

*obvious that such a procedure is also unsatisfactory. To be daltonic to differences is equally dangerous as to be unable of grasping common traits.*

And yet history proves that very often it was the only a certain syncretism way to proceed along for a while and not fall into total uncommunication. Did the hellenization of christianity, to put a global example, not begin with a certain syncretistic adaptation of greek elements until they were transformed by the very fact of being adopted (but not before)?

d) Fertilisation and Growth

The rules of the game for a meeting of cultures is one of the most ~~urgent~~ needs of our times. No part (has the right to set the pattern and no pattern can be set ~~before~~ without a certain pre-understanding of the other. It can only be done if some individuals succeed in making the internal and genuine experience of the two cultures under study. Extrapolation here will not do. Only living "rosettas" will help the mutual deciphering.

The ideal consists in discovering the growing points in one particular culture sensitive to the problematic opened by

(from 3)

Examples are not lacking in our times also. Not only certain missionary conceptions, not exclusive to one particular religion, but also certain technical and scientific mentalities<sup>ies</sup> are advocates of this type of encounter. All is judged according to the measure in which the 'other' culture helps, serves or is able to be utilised for the introduction of those saving values which religion, technique, or whatever science may be importing.

-----  
(from 5)

(to 3)

I could have equally chosen the buddhist line of ~~equally~~ <sup>also</sup> indian origin, and, in point of fact, the acme and most penetrating analysis of the karma theory is to be found there. Buddhism is pure karman as there is no âtman offering any resistance to it or condensing or conditioning karman. There is nothing else than the acts themselves (karma) and ~~its~~ <sup>their</sup> fruits (which again produce new acts) without any actor or agent (kar-tar). As a matter of fact the buddhist intuition may be nearer to the ideas developed here, but it is more challenging to take up the âtmavâdic line of indian thought so as to make this interpretation more convincing (2). → 5

-----  
(from 13, 5)

(1) Cf. R. PANIKKAR, Kultmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum, B. Freiburg i. Br. (K. Alber), 1964, pp. 56-61; 70-72; etc.

-----  
(2) As for buddhism cf. the fundamental passages in R. PANIKKAR, El silencio del Dios, Madrid (Guadiana) 1970 passim.

Thus making possible a natural <sup>means of</sup> <sup>4</sup>  
the <sup>an</sup> other and ~~contributing to their~~ growth by (a cultural me-  
tabolism, which, like all metabolisms, combines in assimilable  
portions, endogenous with exogenous elements. The problem is  
not ~~easy~~ in any way easy and requires to pass the ~~first~~ <sup>test</sup> ~~proof~~  
of being recognised as a possible interpretation ~~or~~ ~~continua-~~  
~~tion~~ within the two different traditions in internal dialogue  
in the mind and heart of those who have taken the burden of  
such an enterprise.

~~More than elaborate further theoretical ideas on the~~ <sup>2</sup>  
subject, I would like to submit some initial considerations  
regarding one of the most relevant problems for our times:  
~~the notion of historicity.~~

I may be allowed to stress that the relevance concerns  
not only the theoretical level, but also the most practical  
and concrete political realm. <sup>The world is</sup> ~~India and Asia, in general~~  
<sup>a common</sup> ~~are~~ entering (History, marxist ideologies of many a type are  
swelling in the asian fields. ~~The endogenous historical Social~~  
<sup>or rather socialistic</sup> ~~consciousness~~ <sup>this</sup> is emerging with violence in ~~that~~ part of the  
world. Allergies, schizophrenias, repressions and obsessions  
are not only maladies of the individuals. <sup>but of societies also</sup> I would consider  
the topic of this study of the most vital importance and  
would plea for insight and collaboration: Repentance and  
Revolution go together.

Some Indological Notes

II- The Data

→ 6

from 6 → The concept and the word of ~~karma~~ or more properly karman (neutral form) is an almost all-pervading factor in practically all asian religions from ancient brahmanism to modern japanese religions. It has a long history in time and space, from ~~roughly one~~ <sup>circa 3 three</sup> millenium <sup>a</sup> BC until ~~our days~~ and from the limits of Iran until the <sup>a</sup> coasts of Japan, from the heights of Mongolia until the <sup>e</sup> isles of Borneo. There is hardly a concept more widespread <sup>among</sup> in (the

could roughly say that the common trait of all asian religions is the acceptance of the law of karman.  
 No wonder that the meaning of karman goes from one

extreme to the other in the scale of possible interpretations. And yet it seems that an underlying fundamental intuition is undergirding all those meanings. It is this basic concept that I would like to ~~examine~~ <sup>un</sup> discover and examine in relation only to one of its aspects, namely its ~~anthropological~~ character of what in modern western languages could be rendered by ~~the word of~~ historicity as an anthropo-<sup>cosmo</sup> logical dimension.

Among the many threads of the asian traditions, for reasons of expediency, I chose the indian one and in it the sanskritic one. Similar studies <sup>on other sources</sup> (may qualify some of the statements of this paper, but I would dare say that they would on the whole substantiate from another angle what I am propounding here. ⑧

⑧ → 5, 2  
 for 3, 1 ←  
 ⑧ → 5, 1

justify my assertions by

~~And~~ In order to be as brief as possible I shall ~~be~~ confine to mere references <sup>substantiating</sup> (what otherwise would <sup>require more</sup> take time and space <sup>than are</sup> not available here and now. → 6

① → 9

(from 5)

~~(2) It must be said that the acme of the karma theory is to be found in buddhism. Buddhism is pure karma, as there is no âtman offering any resistance to karma, or somehow conditioning or conditioning karma. There is nothing else that the acts (karma) and its fruits ~~×karma×~~ (which again produce new acts) without any actor/ agent ~~×karma×~~ or (kartar). For many of the fundamental passages of R. PANIKKAR, El Silencio del Dios, Madrid (Guadiana) 1970.~~

(from 14)

4) E.W. HOPKINS, "Modifications of the Karma Doctrine" in Journal Royal Asiatic Society, (1906), 581-593; (1907), 665-672. [B: kannst Du vielleicht ein paar bibliographische Notizen hinzufügen?]

(from 13,1)

④ (4) It has been said that India stresses the threefold way of works (karma), knowledge (jñâna) and ~~faith~~ loving faith (bhakti) as the theologies of James, John and Paul emphasised ~~at~~ respectively these three kândas.

(from 13,1)

The Yogasûtras also offer some basic references to the understanding of karma. Îsvara, the Lord, is a special kind of Self precisely because he is untouched by karmas (1). Release amounts to the cessation of all karmas (3), obtained by elimination of all the latent-deposits of karma (5), <sup>a)</sup> process which entails advancing and not-advancing in the development of karma (6), which does not need to be a conscious

one (7). Only he who witnesses his own self' (ātmasākṣātkāra) over against the individualistic 'I-am-ness' (asmitā) reaches salvation (9).  
 ✕x (to 13,1)

(from 11)

Here karman appears no longer as the sacrificial act or as later in the Gītā as the truly moral and thus ontologically real action, but as that core ~~andxundexixingxink~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ which remains from the person and yet transcends all individuality.

(to 11)

⑥ ⑨ cf. ~~YS Bhāṣya I, 17 among many other places.~~  
 YS II, 6 for asmitā.

(from 5,1)

- ① (1) Cf. YS I, 24
- ② (3) Cf. YS IV, 30
- ③ (5) Cf. YS II, 12
- ④ (6) Cf. YS III, 22
- ⑤ (7) Cf. YS IV 7

(XV Century):

from 5 → ⑧ cf. one single and typical example of the Sikh scriptures  
 "Karma determines how you are born, but it is through grace (nadar) that the door of salvation is found" Japji, 4

from 5 →

The word karman is a <sup>(noun)</sup> ~~substantive~~ ~~prkx~~ meaning action, ~~and~~ <sup>coming</sup> proceeding from the root kr, with ~~the~~ meaning of doing, acting, performing, and the like. → 5

from 5 end →

a) The Vedas and Brāhmanas.

On the Rg Veda the word karman and its forms appears a series of times with the meaning of action, specially of a sacred action, i.e. the sacrifice (1). Scholars discuss whether the idea of re-birth is present or not in the Rg Veda (2). The texts are not clear and <sup>certaintly</sup> do not use the word karman, in order to express a ~~prkxkx~~ what could be interpreted as a reaping in another life the fruits of the previous one <sup>(3)</sup>. → 2

from 7 →

What is again and again stressed in the Rg Veda is the fact that human fulness and cosmic salvation is reached only through the sacred action, the sacrifice, which <sup>is</sup> ~~does~~, with the aid ~~and~~ of <sup>the</sup> God, the complementary act by which the world came into being (4).

→ 8

The Atharva Veda has some passages ~~in which it is stated~~

- ~~III~~ I, 61, 13; I, 112, 12; I, 22, 19; I, 55, 3; I, 101, 4; I, 102, 6; I, 121, 11; (1) Cf. RV (I, 31, 8; I, 62, 6; II, 22, 1; II, 24, 14; III, 33, 7; I, 37, 2; VIII, 21, 2; VIII, 36, 7; VIII, 37, 7; VIII, 38, 1; IX, 46, 3; IX, 88, 4; IX, 96, 11; X, 28, 7; X, 55, 8; etc. Σ, 66, 9;

some passages:

order!

(2) Cf. R.PANIKKAR, Algunos aspectos de la espiritualidad hindú in Historia de la Espiritualidad, Barcelona (Florn) 1968, p. 466-474 for a further development of the idea.

③ → 9

④ → 7

~~(3) Cf. RV X, 16, 3, which is the only passage given in support of it and which does not convey that meaning in the sense of later tradition.~~ <sup>any other</sup> → 7

~~xx~~

The only text traditionally given in support of the re-birth theory says textually:

"Your eye will have to go to the Sun;  
your spirit <sup>(6)</sup> will have to go to the Wind/.

Go to heaven or earth according to your merit(7),  
or go to the waters if this is your lot;

settle down among the plants with all your bones"(5).

This text could be read on the background of many other texts (8). The meaning it yields is <sup>that</sup> the ~~following~~ life of the individual <sup>has</sup> ~~is~~ neither an absolute beginning nor an absolute end and that many of its constituents continue their existence in other realms of ~~the~~ the world. Significantly enough, though, ~~the~~ the word karman or its derivatives does not appear and, instead, the word dharma is used. (to 6)

(from 6)

(4) Cf. R.PANIKKAR, Kultmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum, Freiburg i. Br. (K.Alber), 1964, p. 56 <sup>-61</sup> ~~sq.~~ and ~~etc.~~ etc. ~~passim~~

(6) The word is here âtmâ instead of prâna as one would expect having in mind, ~~RV ((Gayatri))~~ other parallel texts. and AV V, 9, 7; etc.

(7) The word is here dharmanâ (or dharmabhih in AV XVIII,



(from 7)

2,7) but not karman.

(5) RV X, 16, 3.

valid

(8) Cf. RV X, 90,13; AV V, 9, 7 (already quoted); ~~xxx~~ V, 10, 8;  
VIII, 2, 3; ~~xi~~ I, 5, 3, 4; VI, 2, 2, 27;  
XI, 8, 31; XXIV, 9; SB X, 3, 3, 7; XI, 8, 4, 6;  
TB III, 10, 8, 5; and the Upanisad that we are going to quote  
below, specially BU III, 2, 13

(from 6)

stressing the importance of karman and in one text (seems to correct or complement the rg-vedic vision of a famous hymn which says <sup>S</sup> that ardour or energy was the origin of the cosmic order and of truth (1) affirming that this energy or ardour (tapas) was born from karman (2). This universe is the fruit of a divine action and another set of Theandric actions is conserved and saved. This is the main idea which the Brâhmanas are going to develop, that the sacrifice, the sacred action is the ultimate cause and force of this world. <sup>6</sup> The Satapatha Brâhmana says

from 5, 1

(1) RV X, 190, 1

9 Cf. AV IV, 23, 3; VI, 23, 3

(2) AV XI, 8, 6.

6 Cf. SB X, 5, 3, 9-10

(check)

in one place that "a man is born into the world he has made" (3) and the idea of a judgement according to one's deeds is <sup>already</sup> (commonly) found (4).

(3) SB VI, 2, 2, 27.

(4) Cf. SB X, 6, 3, 1; XI, 2, 7, 33.

(from 8)

Now, if the sacred action has such a power, the human being is responsible for using it properly. Moreover, the world largely depends on the performing of such acts. And here we have as in a nut-shell all the future motifs of the idea of karman.

(to 8)

~~(from 24)~~

(1) Cf. for a single reference L. SILBURN, Instant et Cause/. Le discontinu dans la pensée philosophique de l'Inde, Paris ((Vrin) 1955.

(from 5)

(1) I shall refer to some of my studies where I have tried to underpin the statements ~~made~~ made/ here regarding the interpretation of karman.

b) The Upaniṣads

The possibly earliest text of the so-called transmigration is one of the Brhadâraṇyaka Upaniṣad, summing up a long process of thought of the same Upaniṣad,<sup>(4)</sup> and which says:

" Now this Self (âtman) is brahman indeed. It consists of understanding (viñhâna), mind (manas), life-breath (prâna), sight and hearing, of earth (prthivî), water (âpâh), wind (vâyu), and space ( ether, âkâśa), light ~~and~~ (tejas) and darkness (atejas) (2), loving desire (kâma) and indifference (akâma), anger and non-anger, righteousness (dharma) and absence of it (adharma); it consists of all things. This is the meaning of the saying: it consists of this, it consists of that.

(from 6) (3) Cf. RV IX, 59, 2, where the word dhisanâ is used to denote the priestly work, the sacred work, the action of the gods.

From the root dhâ, to put. Cf. parallel references like

RV III, 2, 1; I, 102, 1; I, 22, 10; I, 96, 1;

X, 30, 6; IV, 34, 1; I, 109, 4; X, 17, 12; etc

(2) Tejas-atejas, could be also translated as heat and cold, energy and inertia.

all typed annotations

(4) cf. BU III, 2, 12-13

order

As one acts (karma), as one behaves, so does one become. Acting well it becomes good, acting ~~xxx~~ ill it becomes evil. By meritorious acts ~~xxx~~ one becomes meritorious (punya punya karmanâ bhavati), by sinful acts, sinful (pâpa).

Some have said: This person (purusa) consists of ~~the~~ loving desire (kâma) alone. As his loving desire, so his will (kratu), as his will, so will he act (karma); as he acts so will he attain" (1).

The operative ideas are clearly visible. Man is an aggregate or a principle of activities which have a wider repercussion as he imagines, ~~the~~ man's actions as well as man's constitutive elements are not his private monopoly, they belong to the wide world and to the wide world do they return; man has an ontological and not only an ethical stewardship.

Man's actions have not only reward and punishment, they carry with them also an ontological ~~weight~~ weight, which does not depend only on the private propriety of his actual bearer.

The previously mentioned passage, <sup>to which the given one is the answer,</sup> is worth while summing up. Jâratkârava Ârthabhâga is questioning the great Yâjñavalkya regarding several problems until they come to the meaning of life and its connection with death. What happens at death?

(1) BU IV, 4, 5.

Quotation  
margin

"When a person dies, what is it that does not leave him?" (1).

After having answered that it is the name that is infinite and immortal, Yâjñavalkya goes on to disclose the cosmic law of the conservation of all the elements in the universe:

"...the voice enters into the fire, the breath into the air (or, ~~the wind~~ goes with the wind), the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon, the ~~xxx~~ hearing into the regions, the body into the earth, the self into the space, ...

What then becomes of this person?

Ârthabhâga, my friend, said he, take my hand. We two alone shall know about this. It is not for us to unfold this in public. Away they went together and together they spoke with one another. What they were discussing ~~was~~ was karman and what they were praising was karman. Indeed one becomes meritorious by meritorious action and sinful by sinful action.

Jâratkârava  
Then Ârthabhâga kept (silence in) <sup>his</sup> peace." (2). → 5, 2

There are many other places in the Upaniṣads stressing the peculiar nature of karman (3), the cosmic destiny of man's actions (4), the importance of the last acts of a man (5), the continuation of man's attributes (6) and the inherent

-----  
(1) BU III, 2, 12

① (2) BU III, 2, 13

Greater  
margin

See 5, 2

justice of this procedure (7), ~~etc. (8)~~ <sup>5</sup> the details of the transmission (9)

✗ the end of the deeds retaining one on earth (10), <sup>2</sup>

the nature of release (11), <sup>3</sup>

its relation to the sacrifice (12), <sup>4</sup> etc. (8) <sup>5</sup>

I may sum it all up with a short sentence of a ~~rather~~ relatively late Upanisad: "The doer of the acts --- he is the enjoyer" (13) <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> (13) - SU V, 7

<sup>A</sup> (12) Cf. KausU II, 6

<sup>B</sup> (11) Cf. MundU III, 2, 7

<sup>D</sup> (3) Cf. MaitU III, 2, 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> (4) Cf. CU V, 10, 7;

<sup>V</sup> (5) Cf. ~~SU V, 7~~ MaitU VI, 34, 2-4

<sup>S</sup> (6) Cf. KauU I, 2; SU VI, 7 & 11

<sup>b</sup> (7) Cf. BU IV, 4, 23; IV, 3, <sup>8</sup>/9; KathU V, 7; MundU I, 2, 7

<sup>S</sup> (8) Cf. besides MaitU II, 6/7; ~~MaitU II, 6/7~~ CU V, 3; BU I, 3, 10; ~~etc.~~ KathU I, 1, 5-6; etc.

<sup>1</sup> Cf.  
(9) KausU II, 15

<sup>V</sup> (10) Cf. MundU II, 2, 9; IsU 2

Tradition  
c) Sūtra

It may suffice to adduce some recognised texts.  
of the Bhagavadgītā ~~which~~ could be said to be the consecra-  
tion of the way of karman up to the point that for the Gītā  
karman is the constitutive element of our creatureliness (1).

↳ 13,1

-----

7 Cf.  
(1) BG VIII, 3

for 13,1 →

(2) Cf. some fundamental references: BG,  
(put them in order)

II, 42-43; <sup>II</sup> 47-~~48~~ 51;

III, ~~4-9~~ 4-9; <sup>III</sup> 14-15; <sup>III</sup> 19-20; <sup>III</sup> 22-25;

IV, ~~14-24~~ 14-24; <sup>IV</sup> 32-33

V, ~~1-14~~ 1-14

XVIII, ~~2-25~~ 2-25

-----

~~The discussion between the way followers of the path of  
works and the path of knowledge is one of the pivots of the  
whole indian philosophical speculation. The Brahmanūtra may  
offer a key following the traditional commentaries (3)~~

for 13,1 →

(3) Cf. BS III, 1, 17; IV, 1, 15 and the bhāṣyas thereupon.

from 13)

A substantial part of the Gîtâ is dedicated to this problem and the books II and III deal thematically with this question of action and inaction, works and not works (2).<sup>8</sup> The law of karma is there fully recognised.

*From 5,2 →*

The discussion between the theology of works and that of knowledge, or in the way of action, be it the sacred or the secular actions and the way of knowledge, be it the traditional knowledge or the modern scientific knowledge could ~~be~~ be said to be one of the pivots of the whole Indian culture from its beginning until our days. (4)<sup>7</sup> There is a striking continuity which only a sociologist's eye may detect today because ~~there~~ indeed the temples of today are new constructions but the rites are the same old ones (1). → 13,2

→ The Brahma<sup>s</sup>ûtra offers two important passages to our subject, which offer also a leading thread to the development of the idea, through the traditional commentaries along the centuries (3). → 5,1

(2) ((p. 13))

(4) → 5,1

(1) Cf. as an example the passionate plea for modernity by A.D. MODDIE, The Brahmanical Culture and Modernity, Bombay (Asian Publishing House), 1968.

(3) ((p. 13))



h-13,1 → As an example of the traditional indian way of thinking and because of its representative character I may be allowed to quote ~~in EXTENSE~~ one passage ~~which-may-help-to-understand also-the-third-part-of-this-study~~ from the Prince of the Advaitins:

"But, ~~But~~ to raise a new objection, there exists no transmigrating soul different from the Lord and obstructed by impediments of knowledge; for Śruti expressly declares that 'there is no other seer but he; there is no other knower but he' (1). How then can it be said that the origination of knowledge in the transmigrating soul<sup>s</sup> depends on a body, while it does not so in the case of the Lord? - True, we reply. There is in reality no transmigrating soul different from the Lord~~(1)~~ (2).

Still the connexion<sup>ct</sup> (of the Lord) with limiting adjuncts, consisting of bodies and so on, is assumed, just as we assume the ether to enter into connexion<sup>ct</sup> with divers limiting adjuncts such as jars, pots, caves, and the like. And ~~is~~ just as in consequence of connexion<sup>ct</sup> of the latter kind such conceptions and terms as 'the hollow (space)

(1) BU III, 7, 23

(2) Italics mine. The text says literally: satyaṁ neśvarâd anyah saṁsârî, "In truth no other than the Lord, transmigrates

of a jar', etc. are generally current, although the space inside <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ jar is not really different from universal space, and just as in consequence thereof there generally prevails the false notion that there are different spaces such as the space of a jar and so on; so there prevails likewise the false notion that the Lord and the transmigrating soul are different; a notion due to the non-discrimination of the ~~the~~ (unreal) <sup>of</sup> connection of the soul with the limiting ~~the~~ conditions, consisting of the body and so on. That the Self, although in reality the only existence, imparts the quality of Selfhood to bodies and the like / which are Not-Self is a matter of observation, and is due to mere wrong conception, which depends in its turn on antecedent wrong conception. And the consequence of the soul thus involving itself in the transmigratory state is that its thought depends on a body and the like." (1).

Without need to make an appropriate commentary, <sup>the</sup> ~~it~~ <sup>texts shows</sup> ~~sawns immediately~~ that the locus of the karma theory is not the mere ethical realm but that it is in-built in a whole conception of reality.

~~As for the rest of indian tradition we may now assume that it is sufficiently known as well as the western counterpart~~(2). → B, 5

(1) ((p.13,4))

(2) ((p. 14))

(from 13,2)

wanders through". Saṁsāra as noun means going or wandering through. A compound of saṁ and the root sr̥ which like the root sru means to flow. Saṁ-sr̥ being thus the verbal form for to flow together with, to go about, wander or walk or roam through. Cf. its usages in the MONIER-WILLIAMS Dictionary. One could ~~have~~ equally have translated: "In truth no other (or no different) than the Lord transmigrates".

-----  
(from 13,3)

(1) Śankara Bhāṣya (on the BS I, 1, 5) according to the english translation of G. THIBAUT, The Vedānta-Sūtras with the Commentary by ŚĀṆKARĀCĀRYA, in MAX MÜLLER's The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, p. 51/52 in the reprint of Delhi,... (M. Banarsidas), 1962.

d) Summary

13,3  
(from ~~12x2x~~)

Making an attempt at bringing together the many threads of the indian tradition regarding the conception of karman from a general philosophical point of view ~~xxxxxx~~ one could detect ~~the~~ three operative ideas ~~Q.~~

1. Karman as the saving sacrificial action; sacrifice understood as the truly theandric action by which the human and the divine collaborate in order to maintain the universe and let it reach its goal. *(This aspect which is the original idea, is expressed in the Vedas and Brāhmanas, are the unsurpassable specimens.)*

2. Karman as karmamārga, i.e. the path of action, of good works as the way to human salvation and fulfilment. Action is inevitable and as such not entangling if <sup>it</sup> is performed in the right way and with the right spirit. Not detachment from action but detachment in action, *(from its expected fruits.)* The Bhagavadgītā remains still the highest example of this attitude.

3. Karman as that which remains as the subtle structure of the temporal reality once the prima-facie ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ elements have faded away or have been transformed, as that which all existing beings have in common and in which they share. *(in the individual and cosmic sense.)* It is here that the concept of historicity is at its place. The lasting message of the Upanisads lies the accent on this aspect, *which is underlying all the philosophical schools. Yoga has developed all the psychological and spiritual implications of this experience.* (to 15)

*①*

~~All the rest will have to be now taken for known (1).~~

for 13,3 →

(2) The following literature may be useful, besides the ~~general~~

((alphabetical order)) general works on indian philosophy: -slip. (2)

- 6) → C.G. JUNG, "Die verschiedenen Aspekte der Wiedergeburt!"  
Eranos Jahrbuch, Zürich (Rhein), ~~1940~~ 1939, 399- 447
- 5) → C. HUMPHREYS, Karma and Rebirth, London, 1943

7- slip-

↪ 5,1

III- The Karmic Conception of the World → 19

to 13,5 →

from 1

It should be said  
~~at this point~~  
from the very beginning that the purpose of this paper is not  
 to compare the indian concept of karma with the western  
 concept of historicity, first of all because there <sup>is</sup> no such  
 a thing in either camp. ~~Secondly~~ What there <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ is a multitude  
 of opinions on the matter in both parts of the world. <sup>as</sup> Philosophy  
 This <sup>paper does</sup> ~~is also~~ <sup>want to compare,</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>though it may be classified as</sup> Comparative  
~~the case~~ (because what I would defend as the  
 genuine and positive function of Comparative Philosophy (and  
 Religion, for the matter) is not to compare philosophies (or  
religions) but to  
 deepen and try to understand a philosophical <sup>(or religious)</sup> problem  
 with the aid of more than one philosophical (or religious) tra-  
 dition. Moreover, I am not ~~intending~~ here to express the  
 western problematic around history with borrowed categories  
 from another culture, nor expounding the asian concept of  
karman with images and concepts from the western world. What  
 I would like to ~~try~~ <sup>attempt</sup> ~~is a simple and genuine philosophical~~  
 problem, ~~expressing it with~~ <sup>all</sup> (the tools at my disposal) ~~from~~ <sup>i.e. with the</sup>  
 both the traditions. ~~It must be add immediately, however,~~ <sup>insights</sup>  
~~that the~~ <sup>do</sup> tools here ~~are~~ <sup>mean</sup> not only the external instruments to  
 express an idea, but the internal means of grasping the very  
 problem also. A <sup>real</sup> culture does not provide only tools; it offers the  
 very field in which those tools are effective.

→ 1

for 19 →

a) The Mythical and the Mythological

It is usually held

by a popular conception, east and west, that the theory of kaman means simply what goes under the name of transmigration and rebirth. According to this belief, you individual ~~★~~ <sup>EF</sup> are

going to be born in an individual ~~★~~ <sup>EF</sup> according to your karma, i.e. according to your deeds, good or bad so that as reward

or punishment you are reborn in a ~~lower~~ higher or lower being. When ~~you were~~ born ~~you were~~ already inheriting the

past karma <sup>D</sup> of another individual ~~★~~ and so the karmatic line has neither beginning nor end, except for the case of the

released person, i.e. for that saintly person, who having burnt all his <sup>(1)</sup> (or her) karmas no remnant remains to be born

again. This would in this way, first of all, give a chance to every individual to get eternal life, if not at one

stroke, yet ~~it~~ <sup>after</sup> (a number of possible births; secondly it would <sup>account</sup> explain for two revolting and scandalising human facts:

The inequalities of nature <sup>and</sup> or society <sup>on the one hand,</sup> and the problem of evil and suffering, <sup>on the other.</sup> ~~(The past karmas being the explanation of them.~~ <sup>for</sup>

~~to~~ <sup>which solve a great part of these problems,</sup> As how those past karmas came into existence, different

schools may propound different theories, not excluding human free will, but this does not longer belong to the mythological.

① Though some systems will say that no woman as such can reach total salvation, i.e. release from karma. (Dipambara - only)

I submit that this picture is a simple caricature of something which when passing from the mythical to the mythological gets fundamentally distorted. <sup>A parallel</sup> ~~The~~ simile would be that of considering the christian idea of heaven as an air-conditioned big hall where the christian God amuses and entertains his worshippers who <sup>did</sup> ~~have~~ behave bravely on earth for a whole eternity, or where all the repressed desires of earthly existence find their fulfilment <sup>as a place</sup> in a heavenly paradise.

I am not at all suggesting that the popular beliefs are wrong. I am only ~~xx~~ emphatically saying that the passage from the mythical to the mythological ~~xx~~ represents a 'metabasis eis allo genos' which defigures the original image. Those who live in a particular myth express their beliefs in terms and images which lose their message and truth in the moment in which they are uprooted from their original soil. The words may be the same but their meaning has completely shifted. ~~The~~ <sup>particular</sup> Our problem is the more aggravated as <sup>it</sup> carries with it not only the passage from one <sup>peculiar</sup> particular form of understanding to another one, but from one particular culture and world-view to a completely foreign one. To begin with, even the terms by which one says: "metempsychosis", "transmigration", "rebirth", <sup>and the like</sup> are either misnomers, wrong translations or totally different words.



The word mythical here stands for all those symbols and contents which we take for granted and ~~which <sup>offer</sup> serve for us~~ <sup>are based</sup> on the ~~very~~ basis on which the rest of our conceptions rest. The word ~~mythic~~ <sup>conscious</sup> mythological would like to express that <sup>which is the</sup> fruit of the entrance of the logos into the myth and ~~thus~~ which expresses <sup>es</sup> the partial transposition of the mythical contents into a ~~mythological one~~ <sup>Context - The mythological reduction</sup>, i.e. into a more or less conservation

~~of~~ the letter or the formal aspects of the myths without the belief in them, <sup>concerning</sup> ~~which makes of them~~ an altogether different thing <sup>than</sup> its mythical contents. The God of my belief, ~~is~~ be it ~~Indra~~ Siva, Zeus, Yahweh or any other ~~name~~, is my myth, the concept of God which you may make of it without believing in him is the mythology you draw from my myth. Or, Democracy, Justice, Nationalism or whatever ideal I may believe in, and which is operative for my further actions, is my myth, whereas your concepts of my values, when you yourself do not believe in them is the mythology you discover in my beliefs. We all live in myths and we all discover the mythological contents of <sup>some of</sup> them and discard and replace them by means of the logos as the selfaware and critical faculty of human knowledge.

changing by  
This very fact  
the object of  
mythical  
consciousness.  
I.e. the mythical  
intentionality  
points to

without believing  
that I  
believe in  
it,

without yet  
reaching 'heaven'  
as at Babel.

magma of new  
emerging myths  
is what  
accounts for  
the inexhaustible  
human  
progress -

at certain times

The passage from myth to logos makes for human culture and civilization, but the receding from forgotten logoi into the

I should not elaborate now further on this point. My task is <sup>here</sup> rather that of showing whether it is possible to explain the mythical without the mythological distortion. The key to the procedure is the belief in truth which has

to accompany all along our enquiry. <sup>us</sup> → 19,1

from 19,1 15  
 In order to explain the karmic conception of the world  
 I will have to break this unitarian vision into a few  
<sup>up</sup>  
 particular rays each of which may give us like in a prismatic  
 refraction one of the colours of the total spectrum. → 16

from 19,1 →  
 b) Karma and Kosmos

The first global idea of the concept  
 of karma is that it expresses cosmic solidarity and ontolo-  
 gical relationship.

It has been said time and again that the idea of karma  
 denotes the universal causality, i.e. the causal link in the  
 universe. Everything is causally connected, has a cause and  
 produces effects, because the universe is a kosmos, i.e. an  
 order(1) and not a chaos. The idea of karma gives expression,  
 first of all, to this inter-relatedness between everything in  
 the world: nothing gets lost, nothing is isolated and discon-  
 nected, any action has repercussions until the very confines  
 of the universe; there are no hidden and secret actions on the  
 karmatic level. → 20

-----  
 (1) The greek word kosmos means originally order and good order  
 both in the material and moral sense. From here it meant orna-  
 ment, organisation, constitution, glory, etc. before coming  
 to mean the world, the habitated world, etc. Its etymology is → 20

(from 19)

life itself  
as a  
possible redeeming  
sacrifice.

19,1

Our case

~~This fact~~ is here all the more important because the historical origin<sup>s</sup> of the theory of karma ~~may well have~~ <sup>has probably</sup> been the result of a process of secularisation from the vedic and brahmanic conception of the sacrifice <sup>(into the general conception of</sup>. The kernel idea could be perhaps <sup>med</sup> sum up in this way: The sacrifice is the sacred action par excellence, which bring<sup>s</sup> salvation and also all kinds of well-being (according to the types of sacrific<sup>e</sup>s). It is not difficult to see that the danger of magic and exploitation by priestcraft is all too near. Somehow salvation and well-being needed to be made independent of the <sup>danger of depending on the</sup> whim of the priestly class or <sup>of external</sup> the ritual observances. The karma idea offers the wanted solution. The whole life is the rite conducting to salvation and happiness; the sacred actions are not a couple of acts only performable by experts or through them, but the whole bulk of the human activities. The sacred is shifted from the ~~xxxxxx~~ sphere of the altar to that of life. In this way the karma theory was experienced as a liberating process from a certain conception of the sacred. But to understand it we should not ~~now~~ transplant it to a foreign body of ideas where the karma-myth would not be able to ~~xxxxx~~ manifest itself as it really is.

As a man sows so will he reap, could be the simple formulation of it. ~~the~~ acts so the fruits results.

(to 19)

(mechanical  
Sachverhalt)

the ontological constitution of  
 Whatever karma may be, the law of karma is a universal  
 law, it pervades the whole universe and is co-extensive with  
 it, almost by definition, so that if something would escape  
 the law of karma <sup>it</sup> would also escape the realm of ~~the world's~~  
 realities. Not only all the transformations are somehow  
 fruit of karma, but the underlying structure which makes the  
 transformations possible and intelligible is also related to  
karma. → 20,1

From here one could imagine that the two main problems  
 ██████████  
 in order to situate the nature of karma <sup>is</sup> on the one hand its  
 relation with the absolute and on the other with the individual.

### c) Karma and the Absolute

Karma is the cosmos. It  
 is the peculiar causal and phenomenically related  
 structure of this universe. In other words,

→ 21

(from 19) uncertain. It is probably connected with the latin censeo  
 and the sanskrit samsati. Cf. the root sās (śis), order.  
 Cf. P. Chantraine, Dictionnaire étymologique de la Langue  
Grecque, Paris (Klincksieck), 1970 i.h.l., though he does not  
 give the sanskrit root.

(capital  
 letter)

(from 20)

I would venture to ~~say~~ say that the greek intuition 'the world is ~~an~~ ~~the~~ kosmos and not chaos' finds its counterpart <sup>through pointing to a different direction,</sup> in the asian insight: 'the world is karman' and not brahman'. The meaning being: this world, or as many a text of Scripture will say: 'all this' (idam sarvam), i.e. all that falls <sup>S</sup> or is capable to fall under the range of <sup>anybody's</sup> ~~my~~ experience (of any kind) is karma<sup>n</sup> that is to ~~say~~ say, it all is ordered and causally connected, it all builds a net of relationships of actions and reactions in which some points of condensation have the power of directing those lines in one or another direction, thus <sup>building</sup> ~~building~~ up or <sup>reducing</sup> ~~down~~ the karmic <sup>dem. by</sup> ~~structure~~ of the universe.

(to 20)

-----  
(from 1)

(1) The proper name in its neuter and noun form is karman and this is also the stem-form. English literature uses ~~the~~ often the masculine term of karma, which has become almost a normal term. Except for the compounds and for the plural we shall retain here throughout the stem-form in order to be consistent with ~~the~~ more scientific outlook on the language. But we use the adjectival forms karmic and karmatic as acceptable neologisms, almost unavoidable when dealing with such topics.

→ Karman is not the Absolute. It is precisely the very symbol of the non-absolute. It stands for that factor, that aspect (real or unreal, according to different schools) which distinguishes the earthly existence from an absolute being. ~~forms of existence~~. The same as it is a redundancy to speak of an ordered cosmos, it is also a redundancy to speak of a karmatic cosmos. The whole universe is karma, is nothing but a concentration of karma, a condensed form of karmatic lines crossing one another so as to give the impression (again true or wrong according to schools) of this earthly reality.

The law of karma is what governs the whole 'contingent' world, the whole 'created' universe, the whole 'non-real' Being, the whole 'provisional' existence, the whole of the 'temporal' reality, could we add drawing the expressions from different philosophical and religious world-views. Whatever karman may be, all agree that it is not brahman, not nirvâna, not moksa, not sat (when considered as the absolute being) and the like. Karman has, on the contrary to do with samsâra, the world, kâla, time, (duh.kha, suffering,) and the whole human and cosmic pilgrimage towards realisation. Karman is the very symbol of the relative, of the changing, of the provisional, of the temporal. The locus of karma is the temporal existence of reality, the temporal existence of this world and of man

specially.

Karma means the non-absolute in <sup>an</sup> ontological, ~~and~~ epistemological ~~sense~~ and logical sense.

From the logic view point karma is essentially relationship, mutual relatadness and thus also dependance. It is thus the relative par excellence and not the ab-solute, the unrelated.

From an epistemological angle the karmic knowledge is the knowledge about the 'working' of the universe, about the 'know-how', the mutual relationship among the things, it is phenomenical knowledge or <sup>ien</sup> ~~scientific~~ knowledge we could also add. ~~Karma is not~~ The knowledge of karma will not tell us what things are, but how they 'work', behave, act and react. It will not tell us anything about the ultimate nature of things but only about their pragmatival inter-actions.

From the point of view of ontology karma is that which claims to be passing, provisional, not ultimate and definitive, non-absolute. Practically all ontologies <sup>That</sup> ~~have~~ to do with the notion of karma will distinguish a double level: the real, absolute, metaphysical and <sup>eternal</sup> ~~one~~ one (called by very different names: paramārthika, nitya, sat, etc.)

((~~Bettina~~→))

and the unreal, relative, phenomenical and temporal one

(called also differently: vyavahārika, anitya, asat or anātman, etc.)

How to relate these two levels will be one of the most thorny problems of indian philosophies.

Karma is thus the earthly realm of the intra-worldly causality, it represents the mutual causal-effect relation between all ~~the~~ beings of the universes and its mutual repercussions. Karma is this <sup>the</sup> (non-metaphysical structure of reality. To know what is beyond karma or how to transcend it will contribute the goal of most of the indian philosophical systems.

d) Karma and the Individual

The karmatic world-view is a phenomenical and non-absolute world-view. It is further a non-individualistic and non-individualisable conception of the factual structure of the ~~world~~ universe. <sup>Seeing</sup> ~~Being~~ all ~~seen~~ as a net of causal gross and subtle relationships there is no possible criterium for the dividing line between one individual and the other. The individual can here be only a pragmatical device for the sake of naming things or manipulating phenomena. The net of relationships constituting the karmic structure of reality (real or unreal according to the systems) have <sup>s</sup> no stops, no limits, no privileged points so as to put limits to the karmic mutual influence and allow us to say that here begins an individual and here ends another one. ~~It~~ (Step B)

we are lacking  
But ~~there is~~ not only that we have no possibility of having a criterion for individualisation. ~~It is also that~~ If such <sup>(pure)</sup> an individual would exist, it would fall by this very



fact outside the karmatic realm: it would not be karmatically

detectable, it would ~~fall~~ <sup>exist</sup> outside the realm of the mutual

causality. ~~It~~ <sup>It would be the unconditioned, which</sup> can only be God, the absolute, <sup>the purusa of Sankhya</sup> an avatâra,

a descension of the Divine, a mutation or rather a point of

discontinuity in the karmatic structure of the world. <sup>It can only be nirvâna in Buddhism.</sup> If

there is something outside time and causality, outside the

reach of ~~the~~ mutual relations and influences it can only be

by definition the realm of the absolute, ~~i.e. of the divine.~~

From here many a system of indian philosophy will be understand-

able. If at all it has to postulate existence of <sup>a</sup> jîvas, purusa,

âtman <sup>a</sup> <sup>above</sup> ~~soul~~ <sup>m</sup> ~~outside~~ the karmatic realm, they can only be uncreated and thus divine, <sup>belonging to another world.</sup>

We could put the same idea just the other way round.

There are no privileged individuals because everything is unique and ~~an~~ individual. Each point, each karmatic crossing, as it were, is unique and can be considered as an individual.

Each This is the so well-known theory of momentariness, so consequently developed in buddhistic philosophy. <sup>1</sup> All is nothing else but a succession of moments of existence (or of consciousness, according to schools underscoring the relation between existence and consciousness).

<sup>has to</sup> <sup>said, further,</sup> It ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> (be ~~also understandable~~ that this conception

makes only sense if accompanied by a spiritual quest for

perfection, i.e. salvation, <sup>The fact that you discover the karmic</sup> ~~which only may make meaningful~~

① → 8,1

accurate  
usage for  
'salvation.'

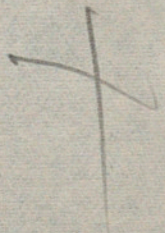
nature of the universe, indicates that there is 'something' which belongs  
~~the overcoming of the ego~~ to another realm; or, with a more  
formulation, that there is 'nothing' that can appease the existential

A fundamental distinction seems to be relevant here in  
order to understand the deep intuition underlying the con-  
ception of karma: the distinction between individual and  
person.

particular philosophical considerations  
Brushing aside attempts at ~~giving new definitions~~ (we  
may fairly agree that the notion of individuality is based on  
numerical distinction and thus it needs a somehow material  
basis for its expression. An individual is a being somehow  
complete in itself and separable from others, it is an indi-  
visible ontological unit (in its field) different from others  
precisely in its individuality. The traditional conception of  
the atoms being perhaps the best model. A person, on the  
contrary, is a center of relationships and is based on the  
qualitative distinction of uniqueness. And because unique,  
uncomparable and, thus, somehow ~~the bearer of~~ a mystery, ~~for it-  
self~~. Uniqueness being the phenomenological expression of any ontological  
mystery.

In the karmatic view of reality the human being can in  
no way be considered as an individual, for there is nothing  
in him which ~~can~~ <sup>could</sup> be isolated and considered separable from the  
rest. All the elements, of which the human being can be said  
to consist of, are related to others and depend on such rela-  
tions: physical elements, body, mind, will, ~~xxxx~~ the very  
psychic reality of ego-consciousness, etc., all is nothing but

de...  
m...



Can in such a view the human being be considered as a person? In other words, is there any place for an ontical uniqueness of the human being as a person?

The answer depends, of course, on the meaning we give to the word person. If we ~~utter this name~~ <sup>say person</sup> but we still mean ~~the~~ individual, then there is definitely no place for it. If the ego means the individualistic consciousness and the conviction that <sup>I, I</sup> my-self, am a kind of monad or spiritual atom, i.e. something with ontological reality in this world in a unique ~~and~~ way, then we shall have to say that there is no place for the ego in a karmatic conception of the world; or rather, more accurately we shall have to say that the whole karmic dynamism <sup>tries</sup> to eliminate this illusion of ego-ness, as <sup>being</sup> the main evil, both ontological and moral.

If by person we understand an incidence from a non-karmic <sup>being</sup> ~~being~~ upon the karmatic structure of reality so as to make ~~in~~ a particular <sup>e</sup> crossing of karmas a center of freedom and decision than we can say that there is place for the person as an incidence of a superior order, which in no way can be mixed with the karmatic one. The only condition that a karmic vision of reality would put is that the person should respect, so to say, the rules of the karmic game, which are the rules of the whole cosmic order. Moreover, precisely because this incidence is from an altogether supra-karmic level it has in itself no possibility of ~~multiplication~~

② of the behaviour of a jivanmukta a realised soul who has transcended time and space and yet still lives among 'mortals'.

Out of the ~~structure~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~universe~~ ~~is~~ ~~born~~ ~~the~~ ~~person~~ ~~who~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~center~~ ~~of~~ ~~freedom~~ ~~and~~ ~~decision~~

② of the ~~rules~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~game~~ ~~is~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~person~~ ~~should~~ ~~respect~~ ~~the~~ ~~rules~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~whole~~ ~~cosmic~~ ~~order~~

asmita - individuality (the I-ness)

itself no possibility of multiplicity and distinction, i.e. the persons are many only in so far as they appear <sup>as such</sup> ~~so~~ ~~in~~ on the karmic level, as active centers of action and reaction, but in reality they are not multiplicable. And precisely the privilege of the "person" is that it knows that it is only a mask and thus does not cling to ~~keep~~ it for more time as it is needed for the running of the play.

(persona)

→ 27, 1

for 29. 33 →

e) Karma and Historicity Time

In order to be loyal to the ~~xxx~~

term of karma, used by so many different philosophical and religious schools, we have to abstain ~~from~~ from propounding particular philosophical theories and reduce our research to formulate the functioning of the law of karma and the historical dimension of man, which we may call historicity, at least for brevity sake.

→ ~~27~~ ~~28~~ ~~29~~ 34

~~time~~ { linear  
cycle  
spiral in 3 dimensions

~~History~~ { Degradation process (Vorfalleschritte)  
Redemption process (Aufgangsprozesse)

~~Historical human dimension~~ { man not { definitive  
finished

~~1) - time  
2) - History  
3) - man~~

(from 27)

From this perspective I would submit the following  
 definition of the person: Person is that <sup>(point of convergence of karmas)</sup> ~~power~~ which has  
<sup>at the same time (Purusakara)</sup> the power to burn karmas. Person is the only one reality  
 which has power over the whole karmic structure of the universe,  
 being capable to ~~Person is that which can direct the karmic lines or the~~  
~~karmic lines~~ in one or another direction; ~~or, utilising a~~  
 In more congenial metaphor, person is that power which has the  
 capacity of destroying karman, or of engrossing it; person  
 is ~~is that which can make disappear or the contrary.~~ The person  
 is the great mâyin capable of creating or ~~annix~~ annihilating  
karman. In one word, person is the center of freedom.

Anybody versed in indian philosophy will discover the  
 echoes and the quintessence of one of the underlying motives  
 of most of the indian systems: the play between prakṛti and  
purusa, the intercourse between brahman and Īśvara in and  
 through mâyâ.

(to 28)

(from 27)

How to reach it?

From this point of view an ego-less conception of the karmatic human existence would stress, among others, the following points:

"My" ego is not the owner of a 'my' life. This life does not begin with me, but was given to 'me'. I found it, I met it at a certain point endowed with positive and negative values. It is up to me to pass it on increased and embellished, or to diminish and damage it.

A series of elements, of karmatic lines have crossed and are constantly crossing <sup>within</sup> ~~in~~ me, and I have to manage this truly human condition for the best of my abilities for my personal enjoyment <sup>my</sup> and that of the whole world, without a sense of tragedy though, <sup>for</sup> ~~as~~ nothing <sup>on this level</sup> is ultimate and absolute. This <sup>allows</sup> ~~permits~~ detachment and perspective, love and play, gives a sense of relativity to all joys and <sup>softens</sup> ~~tingers~~ the cruel face of all sorrows. <sup>my ego</sup> ~~I~~ does not take <sup>him</sup> ~~myself~~ too tragically serious as <sup>if he were</sup> the center of the universe <sup>or</sup> ~~and as an~~ absolute <sup>value.</sup> ~~nor the others.~~

At the same time, I feel the cosmic responsibility, for the whole universe depends on my positive handling the karma at my disposal. I am that connecting link between past and future, between myself and the others and this on a cosmic universal level in which no single spark of being is excluded. Obviously that the motivation for action, for work and for good actions will have to be more than any crude or reformed and refined

eudemonism: for the enjoyment of myself on any level. I shall act ethically well <sup>only</sup> when the motives of my actions will have reached an ego-less motivation which has in mind the whole maintenance of the universe: lokasaṁgraha ①

As for 'me' I shall find my enjoyment in having been called to the play of this cosmos and allowed to play my role there. As for 'me' I shall be given the opportunity of discovering the vertical meaning of existence and ~~the~~ transcending the spatio-temporal structure of reality and overcome karma altogether. No frustration for the realised person, for his or her success is not measured by objective sticks regarding objective achievements, but by living in such a way that while giving life away and <sup>living it</sup> ~~forth~~ <sup>one</sup> reaches also the other shore, where there is nothing.

(from 27)

(to 30)

① cf. BG.

~~xxxxxxxxxx~~

It <sup>now the right</sup>  
~~This~~ is perhaps ~~the~~ <sup>moment</sup> to <sup>s</sup>disipate a wide and harmful misunderstanding, explaining at the same time ~~the~~ ~~reasons~~ why it became so popular. I am refering to the wrong ~~identification~~ <sup>identification</sup> ~~interpretation~~ of the karma theory with the so-called re-incarnation.

If there ~~is~~ something which the law of karman does not say and which contradicts all what it stands for, <sup>(it)</sup> ~~is that this~~ popular interpretation. The law of karman is saying that all ~~which~~ that a man is: his energies, thoughts, merits, vices, his corporal elements and all what he had, all that he was able to handle ~~x~~ during his mortal life, that all the karmas, in one word, do not get lost, <sup>that they</sup> ~~(enter into the cosmic~~ net of causality and of cosmic solidarity, <sup>o</sup> except precisely one thing: the psychological ego, which is either an illusion with no consistency whatsoever or a mere pragmatival label ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ or a totally mortal thing, for it was only the conglomerate of those qualities, which fall asunder at the death of the particular human being. What transmigrates is all but the individual. — if this word has to have any meaning at all.

This popular belief may be understood as the incapacity of getting rid of what precisely the whole karmic conception of the world intends: <sup>selfish ego-centeredness;</sup> ~~(it may be also said~~ to originate when individual consciousness emerges ~~and~~ without changing the



cosmological world-view: <sup>Then</sup> the mythical becomes mythological, at least in the view of those who try to interpret the belief of the others.

May I be allowed to be 'historical' for one paragraph?

I have witnessed more than one <sup>indian</sup> the simple peasant, believing in the law of karman, being forced to say what he does not believe because of the violence or duress of the dialogue and the lack of any other vocabulary at his disposal, than the 'enlightend' one of his ~~questioner~~ <sup>questioner</sup>. He feels, <sup>certainly,</sup> that he is the bearer of a treasure greater than he himself, he is convinced that what he has in his hands, his life is something about which he has not the right of property, he senses that his existence did not begin with him nor it will end with him. But he is not saying, and much less meaning, that it shall be he who survives, that it is his personality that comes from somewhere else and goes to another. He has not at all the impression that what a modern would call the individual is what goes on transmigrating. He is much closer to that saying we have already quoted of Sañkara that the Lord is the only transmigrator, that Life is what goes on and that all the qualities which he has cultivated will not get lost. It is only when confronted with the idea that it may be he himself who shall survive <sup>That</sup> (his eyes flash like in a temptation and may yield to it saying that it may be so.

I may still offer another hypothesis for what is worth. The Individual consciousness is so deeply ~~in~~radicated in western <sup>mental</sup> mentality since a few centuries, that western man can hardly imagine how another type of non-individualised thinking can take place in the human mind. Perhaps in the west we are witnessing now a sharp reaction against it. But whatever the present day trends may be, the fact is that the encounter between ~~the~~ west <sup>and</sup> and asian minds ~~these~~ last <sup>cent</sup>centuries were so enmeshed in the myth of the reality of the individual that no dialogue was possible without presupposing it and taking it for granted. <sup>In this way,</sup> ~~to~~ words like transmigration of souls, re-incarnation and the like came ~~to~~ into existence with the consequent deformation of the original meaning of the asian doctrines.

All this said, it must, of course, be added that this ~~phenomenon~~ <sup>event</sup> process is not only a western process (and that it seems to be an inherent ~~to~~ law of the development of human consciousness.

(to 27)

of individualisation'

We may divide this section into three headings:

1. Karman and Time Temporal World

The karmic conception of reality relativises time and makes of it the very ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ expression of the law of karma. This law is no other thing than the law of the flow of time. The degree of reality ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ of time is the same degree of reality that karman has. For those who consider karman real, time will be real and those for whom karman is unreal or in-between, time will fare the same destiny. In ~~fact~~, time is nothing but the very running of karman. ~~XXXXX~~ Karman is a kind of condensation of time. Past, i.e., time past means past karman and future, i.e., ~~time~~ future time means coming karman.

The so wide-spread and inaccurate conception, to say the least, of circular time is nothing but a translation of the <sup>beginninglessness</sup> ~~circularity~~ (of the karmatic world. Time is supposed to be circular simply <sup>because</sup> ~~when the~~ karman is considered to be unexhaustible. To transcend karman, to burn it, to extinguish all karmas and the like ~~XXXX~~ amounts to escape time, to go beyond it and to enter into the timeless. Time has been said to be circular in ~~in~~ the indian conception <sup>precisely</sup> because its identification with karman. <sup>Now the beginninglessness of</sup> Karman is not an end in itself and the law of karman ~~tends~~ to regulate the actions and interactions of all the existing, contiguous, beings. ~~If at all the succession~~

Now the beginninglessness of karman has also been quite often misunderstood and <sup>been</sup> made an ontological theory of it when it wanted to be precisely a phenomenology only. Karman has no beginning and no end because it <sup>is</sup> neither an entity in itself nor has an end in itself, i.e. it has neither ontological consistency (it is the law of contingent beings) nor ontological aim or goal in itself. The only beginning of karman is the beginning which is taking place every moment; the only <sup>(aim-goal)</sup> end of karman is the end (extinction) of it. But <sup>to affirm that</sup> ~~if~~ all karmas will one day disappear is a sentence which has no meaning ~~in~~ within the karmic context in which it can <sup>only</sup> be ~~said~~ formulated.

(from 27)

All what follows should be understood within this limits of a 'formal' philosophical investigation. I try to speak a language ~~with~~ making sense for the follower of more than one philosophical tradition: a risky task, but perhaps worth-while attempting.

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~~The law of karma is the law of time~~

## 2. Karman and History

The only difference which one could detect between time and karman is that the former allows for a <sup>certain more</sup> formal treatment, i.e. for a consideration of its nature independently of the temporal things, whereas the latter ~~is closer~~ <sup>linked</sup> is closer <sup>in the last analysis</sup> to the things themselves. Certainly, there cannot be time without things temporal as there can be no karman without the actions, and their results, of the different agents. But karman is, so to speak, unbreakably tied to the things themselves, <sup>(fact)</sup> what many a contemporary philosophical consideration on time would like to say also regarding time as the 'existential' of being as such. Much the better.

Whatever this may be, the law of karman expresses what probably western modern languages would like to call ~~the~~ the historical dynamism of beings. Obviously, that if the center of gravity and attention of history lies in the external and thus externally easily datable events, the law of karman does not pay much attention to them. What the law of karman describes and registers are the internal modifications, the inner happenings in the beings themselves. ~~and not~~ Not what they did, but what happened <sup>to</sup> to them doing what they did is the center of attention of the karmic law. ~~and not~~ slip. (3)

The concept of historicity as expressing the peculiarity of the human being, which can accumulate the past, as it were, not as simply past but as present, that quality of human existence by which the past emerges in the present and configures it, not by simple remembrance or by physical or spiritual remnants of the broken pieces of the past, but because they are integrated and operative present in the present in a special way, that peculiar character of the human being by which something similar happens with the future, active and present in hope and in reality in the present, so that one cannot define a man ~~can never be said what it is~~ without including all his past and ~~the~~ future; all those peculiarities of man which now may be summed up in the name of historicity are practically all present and effective in the conception of karman.

The karman of a human being, to begin with, is its most precious and intimate constitution and this karman is ~~nothing but~~ the crystallisation of actions past, of results of acts which are no longer in the past, but which emerge and are present in the contemporary situation of the bearer of that particular karman. In a way I 'am' more ~~than~~ <sup>I</sup> what 'was' and equally <sup>and both are</sup> what I 'shall be'; ~~is~~ (already present in my contemporary situation.

One could, further, use a known distinction between having and being. Properly speaking karman is not what I am, but what

I have. What I am, belongs to the mystery of the person and ultimately only one, can say 'I am' (aham asmi). What I have, is my karman and with that I have to deal in my earthly existence. But if we overlook that 'I' for which the 'am' is ultimately meaningful, ~~in~~ all the actions of the human being, including <sup>its</sup> ~~his or her~~ psychological consciousness <sup>'are'</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>its</sup> ~~his/her~~ karman: a condensation of <sup>acts</sup> ~~acts~~ past, a dynamism of tendencies to <sup>be</sup> ~~realise~~ <sup>themselves</sup> in the future and all in ~~the~~ <sup>The</sup> present.

(The greatest bulk of indian philosophy could In this sense, sense <sup>(be)</sup> (said to be a Philosophy of history, not a philosophical reflection on external events, but a philosophical meditation on the historicity of being, on the peculiar temporal charac<sup>a</sup>ter of the human being and the whole cosmos, which is so configured that nothing is lost, <sup>all</sup> ~~it~~ accumulates and all emerges into a present which condensates all the actions and 'realities' past. This is so much so that to consider a being <sup>only as that which</sup> ~~what~~ (it is now, neglecting what it was and ignoring what it shall be, could be said a philosophical sin.

The awareness of historicity, or saying it again, of karman, is inbuilt in the asian mentality so that it is almost taken for granted that I 'am' a condensed result of the past, that all what I have is simply historicity, that there is no original newness nor genuine beginning, that revolutions are childish

childish, if we want to say it politically, if <sup>one</sup> they thinks that they can begin with a / 'tabula rasa'.

The traditional concept of avatâra or descension of the divine - which has been so misleadingly sometimes translated as incarnation - is intimately connected with the karma theory. And it is this which gives to the avatâra its modalistic character in terms of the christiaa theology of the Trinity. The justification of the avatâra is precisely because the cosmic history, i.e. the law of karman shows experiencially a kind of negative inertia, so that the world is by itself going downwards, as it were, and it requires the intervention of the divine, of the non-karmic order again and again in order to keep the world going. We have then the two fundamental options of historicity: history as a degradating process or as a ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ an up-hill path. The indian solution tends to accept the idea of a redeeming power which saves the karmic world of getting more and more intricated into such a density of relations which would bring about a kind of ontic ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ asphyxia.

### 3. Karman and Man

I am ~~pretty sure~~ that I ~~am~~ <sup>may</sup> not be reading into indian Scripture and Tradition, but reading from them if I assert that the ~~contemporary idea~~ ~~that~~ of the



karma theory does both, elevates the whole world unto the human sphere and abolishes human privileges putting man on the level of the rest of the universe. In other words, there is a universal law which governs both man and the world without distinction. The karmic structure is common to man and the rest of ~~the~~ beings. Some have seen this as a degradation of man down to the level of mere things. Others may prefer to say that it entails the enhancement of the whole contingent world up to the dignity of the human beings.

One thing<sup>s</sup> remain<sup>as</sup> for sure, the whole realm of being is under one and the same law and this law is a temporal one or rather an historical one, it is the law of karma, which says that the structure of reality is of such a kind as to allow mutual interactions along space and specially time, but not as Newton's physical laws of action <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ reaction. On the contrary, these laws are built ~~in~~ in the same pattern of reality. Being is karmatic, being is temporal and historical. Being has a dimension in which the separation in space, <sup>which</sup> ~~so~~ makes ~~the~~ individuals, or in time, <sup>which</sup> ~~so~~ makes things and multiplicity, is no longer considered sufficient and ultimately valid. Each being is either an abstraction, and thus an ~~artificial~~ artificial and antinatural separation and cut from the existing and given reality, or somehow a reflection of the <sup>whole</sup> universe.

is The law of karma gives expression to the fundamental human condition; ~~but~~ at the same time <sup>it</sup> allows for an overcoming of it, not by postulating a 'better' and thus idealistic human condition, but by transcending it altogether. Man is more than man, but as long as he is man, he has not only to play the human game, but also there is no avail to escape his human condition. He will cease to be a man and this may be his hope: not to prolong indefinitely, not even with embellishments, his human condition, but by abandoning it totally and without regretting it, because even on his earthly life he has discovered the glimpse of that other shore which does not exist, but which allows him to pierce through space and time and, abandoning all human values, reach, not later or somewhere else, that other form of life ~~existence~~ which is neither separable nor distinguishable from his every-day karmatic ~~life~~ existence. Only an irresistible joy bubbles up. The end of man is man, but when that end is reached, man ceases to be man and this is salvation: not a jump outside history, nor a negation of it, but the realisation that man <sup>is</sup> ~~being~~ history and <sup>that</sup> ~~history~~ ~~not~~ ~~being~~ ~~like~~ ~~man~~ ~~is~~ ~~only~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~time-being~~.

R. Panikkar