

The Notion of Totality in Indian Thought

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The East has *seen* totality in a far more consistent and systematic way than the West; and India more so than any other civilisation in the East.¹ When the *Swami* Siddheswarananda came to France to lecture on Vedic philosophy, he entitled his address, 'Outline of a Philosophy of Totality'.² The expression could have been applied to the philosophies of India as a whole. But the world of thought, coextensive with culture, is far broader than philosophy. It is no exaggeration to assert that India is the land of totality *par excellence*. Is it not even, according to one dictum, bigger than the world . . . ? The notion of totality, implicit or conscious, poetic or theoretical, original or final, is present throughout Indian culture, both in its religion and in its arts, both in its customs as in its language. The *Mahabharata*, the largest epic poem ever conceived, proclaims: everything in the *Mahabharata* can be found elsewhere, but what is not in the *Mahabharata* cannot be found anywhere. Whilst the absolute beginning of a piece of Western music is in keeping with a dramatic time analogous to that of the Creation, Indian music seems to come from the eternity of a universe without transcendence. The body takes on a cosmic meaning through dance. By performing the *tandava*, the cosmic dance, Shiva Nataraja ('Lord of the dance') endlessly creates and destroys worlds. Indian art is an art of proliferation: both the reiteration of motifs sculpted in architecture and the litanies and metaphors spun out in epic poetry are symbolic attempts to capture the totality of the world. Every single element, being, movement or thing within this continuous space and time points towards all the others. The texts describe the sky of Indra with its web of pearls arranged in such a way that when one looks into one, one sees all the others reflecting in it; in the same way, each object of this world is not merely itself but comprises every one of the others and actually *is* all the others. The culture of India is one of plenitude, presence and continuity. At the opposite extreme, Japan developed a culture based upon the values of emptiness, absence and the interval. When a guru speaks, Valmiki and Vyasa know that it will take them many scores of verses.³ A Zen master's reply to his disciple takes up a single-line anecdote, or a word, or even a silence. At the other extreme, hundreds of statues line the *gopuram* of the temple at Madurai: not all of the thirty-three million gods 'recognized' in the writings are there, of course, but at least their unbelievable abundance gives us a plausible image of them.

The whole of India thinks according to this principle of completion: *sanskrit*, in Sanskrit, means 'perfect', 'complete'. The agglutinative character of this language, rich in phrase-words, has undoubtedly reinforced, if not determined, the Indian genius for totality. Furthermore, the encyclopaedia is everywhere, in a general as well as a specific sense. The *Kama Sutra* lists sixty four sciences that a high-caste woman has to possess. Epics are encyclopaedias; temples are encyclopaedias in stone. Yet another sign of this genius

for totality is the way in which India, from the first Indo-European invasions, seemed to integrate foreign gods instead of excluding them.⁴ A limitless syncretism, since even Islam⁵ was the object of many attempts in history.⁶ An ecumenism corresponds to this syncretism. The greatest thinkers of modern India are all ecumenicists: Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi.

True Hinduism, one might say, is the *varnâshramadhharma*. In other words, the Hindu is not just one who considers the cosmos as a totality in which one and the same law (*dharma* in Sanskrit) regulates the body of physical, psychical and social phenomena shared by all beings, planets, animals, humans; but also, above all, one who believes that this *dharma* affects beings according to their category (*varna*, caste). *Dharma* is the law of the universe; it's order is not eternal but incessant, since although the universe is destined to disappear, it is also destined to be reborn after its disappearance. At the heart of *Dharma*, every domain, every order has its own *dharma* which is the imperative signifier of it's essence, and thus of it's existence.

Absent in logic or grammar, this effect of totality is present in perception: we say that we see a monkey in the tree, whereas we only see part of a monkey in a fragment of tree. The whole, say the Nyāyā-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, is not the totality of its parts; one can see a tree without seeing all its leaves. Having said this, if there were no perception of parts, there would be no perception of the whole, in whatever way one understands it.

Perhaps this is where one ought to look for the fundamental difference between Indian philosophy and Western philosophy: whilst the latter continually aims for the right word, the former continually aims for the right image. Indian thought, like Indian religion, from which it cannot be separated, is essentially iconic. India never had faith in reason alone to arrive at totality⁷ – and one might even contend that it was because totality was sought after, more than nature, spirit, or even God, that intuition and poetic imagination contribute towards moulding a large part of Indian philosophy. 'How to live without fragmentation?', asks Krishnamurti, 'every answer derived from a concept, he establishes, is only an additional fragmentation'⁸; and the philosopher will defend the right for man to be *freed from the known*.⁹ The *Upanishads* even define loss within the Whole, a fusion with it as *deliverance*. India has developed an eschatology and a soteriology of totality.

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Like all the Indo-European languages, with the notable exception of French, Sanskrit has two words with different roots to speak of two kinds of totality: *vishva*, an extensive, disseminated, plural totality; and *sarva*,¹⁰ an intensive, unified, integrated whole. *Vishva* is revealed totality: most of the principal gods in the Brahmanic pantheon have a name or a quality beginning with *vishva* – thus Shiva is Vishvanatha, Lord of the universe. The whole expressed by *sarva* does not try to include everything. For instance, the celebrated *sarvam dukham*, 'all life is suffering', the first 'Noble Truth' of Buddhism, does not mean that each moment of existence is painful, but rather that everything which exists or appears to exist is ephemeral. All suffering is a separation.

Nevertheless, there is nothing absolute about the opposition between extensive totality and intensive totality: just as in French we commonly say 'a totality' to mean 'a whole', or in Greek *pan* and *holon* eventually merge into one, so in Sanskrit *vishva* and *sarva* exchange their meanings and values. Consequently, the principal difference has shifted emphasis from, on the one hand, the whole considered globally, whose parts are so well

integrated that their singularity can no longer be recognised (in the same way that drops of water are no longer discernible in the ocean), to on the other hand, the aggregate which leaves its constitutive heterogeneous parts visible. Sanskrit provides many words to designate collection and series. The law of the internal composition of *wholes* (their greater or lesser coherence, the relations that they maintain with their parts) was one of the favourite themes of Indian philosophers. *Skandha* is the whole composed of external parts. *Samashti* designates an aggregate made from parts constituting a collective unity but separable from one another, like the trees of a forest.

Certainly, there is no *one* thought to India, no more than there is only one European thought, for if, from a distance, all things eventually merge into one (as the heads in a crowd have no face), the differences shine when you look closer: just as Europe, India had its monism (the Vedānta, one of the six *darshanas* or schools of philosophy), but also its dualism (the Sāmkhya, one of the other *darshanas*, which distinguished between spirit and matter to the point of contraposing them). These *darshanas* represent totality in a contradictory fashion. It is nevertheless true that the thought of totality is so consubstantial with India that concepts were moulded and developed which were without equivalent in the West before modern science: *prāna* (the sum of energies in the universe), *akasha* (the material sum of the universe). India totalizes totalities: cosmic Being, the totality of all beings (*samashti*), is itself a being. There was a school in India (the Vedāntasara) which considered that the consciousness of the supreme Lord of the universe is identical in his essence to the total sum consciousness of multiple individuals. The theory of correspondences guarantees the homology of internal equilibrium through the control of breathing (through *yoga*) and macro-microcosmic harmony. India identifies Being and the Whole¹¹, but one should not look for any dialectic in this identification. Whereas speech is divided up (it obeys the rhythm of time), knowledge immobilized, and action is always fragmentary, *vision alone* can preserve the integrity of the Whole. It is in vision that the hope of the believer in the temple of his god and the exaltation of the saint and the mystic meet.

The sacrificial acts (which the *Brahmanas* poetically glorify) only count if they constitute a totality (*sarvakritsna*), because in India the Whole is likened to a sacrifice. This civilisation is genuinely haunted by a fear of the unfinished. So sacrifice remains in constant danger.¹² Acts must be finished: 'Let everything be uninterrupted' is a recurrent formula in the *Brahmanas*. 'Starting from various discontinuous constituents, days and nights, etc., the sacrificial process results in three reconstructed totalities, perfectly concentrated within their respective centres: the altar in space, the excess day in time, and the innermost Self in the total person (*atman*)'.¹³ In India, totality goes from the one to the infinite. When the *raga* begins, it seems to continue from immemorial time, as though materializing out the night. Inaugural events are cyclical, like a sunrise. In India, there is no original silence like that which our Western music rests upon.

The unfinished and the remainder, two modes of non-totality, are at the origin of problems that open onto tragedy. The *Mahabharata* recounts how the destiny of Abhimanyu was sealed when he was five months old, still inside his mother, Subhadra. One evening, Subhadra and her husband Arjuna discussed the future of their son. Arjuna, who foresees his son's destiny as a great warrior, reveals to Subhadra a strategic secret that he alone knows: the way to penetrate a *chakravriha*, a military formation in a spiral raised to an infinite power, which allows one to encircle the enemy while cutting him off from any possibility of retreat. The child listens within his mothers womb, but falls asleep in the

course of the tale. Many years later, Abhimanyu will know how to penetrate the circle but will never have learned the way to get out of it, and it is this ignorance that will cause his death on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. As regards remainders (from ceremonial meals, for instance), they are the object of painstaking precautions. A cosmogonic myth splendidly illustrates how the whole is preserved thanks to the remainder.

At the end of each cycle, when the entire universe is destroyed, there remains the cosmic serpent Sesa whose name means 'the remainder' in Sanskrit. Vishnu is lulled asleep upon him: a night of Brahma thus begins (billions of years on the human scale) during which the image of the old abolished world is preserved within the god's dream. When the night is on the point of coming to an end, a lotus stem rises from Vishnu's navel, Brahma appears in the middle of the corolla and armed with the Vedas, drawing the image of the vanished world from the dream of Vishnu, he recreates another world identical to the old one. A new cycle can thus begin again, which will last a day of Brahma (once again billions of years for men), and so on and so forth into eternity.

The remainder is thus not inert. It has nothing to do with leftovers, for which it is so often mistaken. Quite the contrary, it is on the basis of this remainder that *everything* can begin again. An analogous thought governs the philosophy of action. An act is never *finished*, exhausted in the time of its effectuation; like a tree, it bears fruit, it produces effects that are slow to ripen; and these effects, far from being vague and faint traces, are in turn transformed into causes for new acts. So there is an endless cycle of acts as there is an endless cycle of universes: the acts do not perish. It is a field in which these two extremities, the cosmic and the individual, seem to meet – in India this word *sesa* names the lineage left by the man whose body is consumed upon the funeral pyre.

Krishnamurti¹⁴ pointed out that since it is impossible to see the whole of the heavens in a single glance while passing from one small window to another, one should abandon all windows. Yet the Indian tradition has produced its most beautiful works, both in the literary and the artistic domain, by systematically disregarding this precept. India was a civilisation of proliferating totality. The totality of the Veda itself, supposed to be complete, is never closed off: it is open to commentaries (the *Brahmanas*) and to commentaries on commentaries (the *Upanishads*); so much so that Indian writing presents a positively unique case in the history of thought by nurturing a single organism behind its expansive variety. In order to obtain an equivalent in Western civilisation, one would have to imagine a Bible that combined Thomas Aquinas, *Paradise Lost* and Kierkegaard in one and the same *opus*. Proliferation is an expression of a totality undeterred by the infinite. It is omnipresent in India, both in epics and in sacred texts, both in the notes picked from a sitar and on the façades of temples. Like all religions, Buddhism loves litanies, only much more so. *The Perfection of Wisdom* lists the 108 names for the perfection of wisdom.¹⁵ The litany is to language what the accumulation of motifs is to the plastic arts: an expression of totality in its extensive form, through an enumeration striving towards exhaustiveness.

L. Dumont emphasises that, in the West, ontological unity is an indivisibility – in India, it is a totality, a multiplicity organised through its oppositions, more often than not hierarchical. Whence the fundamental sense of *enumeration* throughout the whole of Indian culture.¹⁶ A being of reason is constituted by enumerating its parts. L. Dumont cites the example of the kingdom, whose texts list its constitutive elements in order of importance: a hierarchy that integrates it in relation to the system of values and unifies it within the universal order.¹⁷

All essences are contiguous in a thought of the continuum. One thing summons up another, which calls up a third, and so on until the series, eventually returning to its point of departure, is exhausted. Indian aesthetics is more characteristically syncretistic than synthetic. India has words for the union of poetry and painting, and for that of painting and music; in contrast to Europe which, outside of theatre and the project of the total work of art, has always thought them as separate. The *Vishnudharmottaram* illustrates this idea with a story, where it is as if each art is swallowed up by the next: a king wished to learn the art of painting but he knew that in order to paint, he first had to learn to sculpt to provide his pictures with the required model. But to sculpt meant that he had to understand movement and gesture, and so take up dance. As dance in turn implies a good knowledge of rhythm, it requires the instrument and vocal music. Now music draws its inspiration from poetry. In this way the king realizes that in order to take up just one art, he has to learn them all.

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The word *loka* at once designates the world, the universe and men. *Prâna* is the infinite and omnipresent force that reveals itself in the universe as movement and energy, and in the body as nerve impulse and thought-force. *Cosmic consciousness* is the highest degree of consciousness for Yoga. One *Tantra* says: what is here is elsewhere, what is not here is nowhere. The order of beauty, according to the Vedânta, is not only nature but the entire universe (*prapanca*) which includes the physical universe (*jagat*) and the universe of souls (*jiva*).

If knowledge is identical to its object, then universal knowledge is identical to the universe. Reality and knowing join together: one becomes what one knows. The sole theme of Vedântic philosophy is the search for unity; the Hindu mind – in contrast to the Chinese mind – is not interested in the singular for its own sake,¹⁸ it seeks the general. What is the thing that it suffices to know in order to know everything? This is its sole theme. Just as one knows all about clay from knowing one sod, so the knowledge of one thing is enough for us to know the entire universe. This is its sole aim. The *Sutra of the Garland of Buddha* (*Buddhavatamakasutra*) develops the idea of the interpenetration of all things: mind, universe and Buddha form just one thing. This school especially is one 'of totality'.¹⁹ In Buddhist thought, 'the fundamental inseparability, the interdependence of all sensory beings can be apprehended on the basis of emptiness conceived as a fertile translucence, like the mirror which receives and bears a variety of images without the diversity of reflected images threatening the unity of its natural luminosity.'²⁰ Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion, said that the drop of water is in the ocean and the ocean is in the drop of water. The whole of this universe can be reduced to one single thing (*akasha*). Everything we see around us, everything we feel, touch, taste is simply a differentiated manifestation of this *akasha*. India is not unaware of singularity – contrary to what is too often and too quickly assumed. Singularity alone is perceived, whether in its human, individual modality, or in its material, elementary modality; and only singularity too is perceived as a totality that expresses the universe. This is because, for thinkers in India, individuality is defined more by (intrinsic) indivisibility than by (extrinsic) separation.²¹

Within the context of Brahmanism, the cosmic totality (*samashiti*) appears in the light of divine consciousness. It is reduced to a point. A *point* of consciousness – just as a point of time is all time, and a point of space is all space. It is possible that the name of Vishnu

comes from the root *vish*, to penetrate, to be everywhere. The god's three steps spanned the worlds. The famous verse from the *Upanishad* that made such an impression on Schopenhauer²² expresses this identity of singularity and totality.

Within universal immanence, any singularity can be a reflection of the totality: the king's throne,²³ and the chariot,²⁴ are cosmological symbols; the pillar²⁵ is the axis of the universe; the altar of fire, a model of the world. Just as Mauss spoke of the total social fact, one could speak of the total symbolic object with regard to these objects, like the seesaw (*dola* or *hindola*), which cluster together a multitude of meanings.²⁶ However, the most complete cosmic symbol is the lotus: the one that is most consistently used in the iconography, in both the Buddhist and the Brahmanic traditions, because it acts as a seat for the gods and as a plinth for statues. It's vertical structure (it's roots go down into the earth, it's stalk cuts through the water – the intermediary world – and it's flower opens out to the light) and it's horizontal structure (it's eight petals refer to the eight points of direction²⁷) express the totality of the universe in it's spatial dimensions. It's dynamic process (the bud represents the past, the open flower the present, and the seeds, the future) and it's cyclical rhythm (the lotus flower opens out with the day and closes up at night – an image of the cycle of rebirth, *samsara*) connote the totality of the universe in it's temporal dimension.

Indian cosmologies are geometrical, in contrast to most Greek cosmologies; and they are built upon structures that are terraced (the mountain, cosmic man) or interlocking (the circles and squares of *mandalas*²⁸). The unity of the totality of being, as in Europe, is guaranteed by a network of correspondences,²⁹ combining the enumeration of parts and the systematicity of the whole. Even though totality is represented geometrically in Indian thought, it is organic and not mechanical. This is shown by the fact that in Sanskrit *anga* means both limb of the human body and a part of the whole. The disciplines of the Veda, for example, are called 'the six *anga*', which belong to it as integral parts (phonetic, metrical, grammar, etymology, astrology and ceremonial). The parts of a temple are explicitly related to the limbs of a human body; and just as the body also symbolizes the universe to which it corresponds, each term (Veda, body, temple, cosmos) is the mirror image of all the others.

The different parts of cosmic man's body refer to different parts of the universe: the general structure of this 'cosmophysiology' is that of a Figure 8 represented in Jaina 'cosmograms' by a richly ornamented woman, whose dress is fitted at the waist yet flares out at the bottom, thus referring to the three levels of the universe. The spinal column is Mount Meru, which is the axis uniting worlds. The square of correspondences coexists with the circle in order to symbolize the totality. The four castes, the four elements, etc., spring from the four parts of Purusha's dismembered body.

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'Brahman is everything' declares the *Mundaka Upanishad*;³⁰ but the *Isa Upanishad* states contradictorily: 'It is inside everything / It is outside everything'.³¹ The *Brahmanas* say: 'I placed every world within my own person and my own person within every world'. But there is a great deal of difference between pantheism (everything is divine) and 'panentheism' (the universe is the divinity). 'Panentheism' is a pantheism of the *Whole*.

The deity, whatever name one gives it – Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi (the goddess): all these signifiers are interchangeable – comes both to inhabit the universe and to adorn

it. The universe is its residence, and it is the universe's clothing. In India, the deity is universal, not in the way that Yahweh, God, or Allah are – i.e., they are gods for the universe – but in the sense that it is universal in and through the universe. Hegel repeatedly cited this passage from the *Bhagavat Gita* in which Krishna is compared to the thread that holds the pearls of a necklace together: the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana* recount the same episode when Yashoda, Krishna's mother, discovers the divine nature of her child. One day, Krishna's playmates came to tell Yashoda that Krishna ate earth. A furious Yashoda asked her son why he had done this but, dauntless, he denied it with the utmost vigour. So Yashoda looked in her child's mouth, and saw the entire universe with the earth and sky, the oceans and mountains, as well as every being. One tradition relates that Yashoda sees herself in Krishna's mouth, picking him up from his knees and suckling him.

Today, popular colour prints show Vishvarupa, the universal form of Vishnu, whose body includes the totality of beings and things. Hindu iconography has played endlessly upon these compositions: the androgynous figure of Shiva³² and composite figure of Krishna³³ have to be understood as symbols of totality.

The specificity of Western philosophy in relation to Oriental philosophy (China, India, Islam) lies not so much in its hypothetical autonomy with respect to religion (Plato cannot be separated from Orphism, Descartes and Kant are inseparable from Christianity), than in the fact that, only in the West, has knowledge been sought and reflected upon for itself. In the West, the ultimate goal of knowledge was knowledge for its own sake; whilst in China, in India or in Iran, salvation or deliverance represented the ultimate end, knowledge being reduced to the level of means. In this respect, then, the thought of totality in India, through the identification of the *atman* with the *brahman*, plays a truly salutary role in annulling the consequences of *karma*, this type of dead memory built up by the string of actions, which Indian metaphysics (not only Hindu) makes the very motor that turns the circle of rebirth (*samsara*). To stop the wheel of ill fortune (contrary to what Chinese Taoism thinks and dreams, it entails no longer living) one must dissolve into universal *brahman*. More than Greece, India has turned its attention to the mystery of ignorance, which it defines as a separation from the Whole. It is not knowledge that comes to fill a void and gain ground at the expense of an innate ignorance but, conversely, ignorance whose negative presence limits a naturally total knowledge.

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Heidegger said of Parmenides' remark about the identity of being and thinking that it is the fundamental theme of the whole of Western thought, but the East largely relies upon the same idea. In India, Vedantic Advaitism³⁴ is the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. The *Brahman* (the universal Self) is the totality and the *Atman* (the individual self) identifies with it – in the two senses that this verb possesses in French: on the one hand, it is assimilated into the *Brahman*; on the other hand, it finds self-consciousness in it. The incorporation of *Atman* into *Brahman* is like that of the water in a jug that has been plunged into the ocean: in spite of being temporarily delimited by the sides of the jug, it is still ocean-water. To a great extent, Indian metaphysics rests upon the opposition – unknown in Europe, which has concentrated upon the conflict of essence and appearance – of revealed totality and unrevealed totality. Revealed totality is deduced from the absolute from which it issues; unrevealed totality is concealed within it.

Moreover, there is no rigidity in these systems: Hinduism (and the caste system from which it cannot be separated) is a non-totalitarian 'totalism': no transcendent power imposes its dogmas and directives, and *leaving* (by renunciation or conversion) is always possible. Never has one of the six *darshanas* constituted an exclusive orthodoxy. A beyond exists outside this absolute-totally, an infinite that doesn't get imprisoned within the bars of language. According to verses 45 and 46 of the *Rig Veda*, human language represents only a quarter of possible language. It is thus forced to break up the primordial unity of the cosmos into numerous elements. One would have to have the other three quarters of language at one's disposal to be able to express the One-whole in words; but these three quarters are the language of immortality itself, and ordinary men have no access to this. Only the seers know this total language but they keep it secret.

India is the land of syncretism and eclecticism both in the domain of philosophy and in those of art and religion. In the history of Indian thought, it has always been the rule to borrow from one's opponent's theories. Can you imagine, in Europe, Descartes accepting substantial forms, or Marx taking up the transcendental? It is not rare, in India, for us to come across analogous pairings.

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If one considers vision as vision, it remains invisible; if one considers non-vision as vision, there is no longer anything invisible about it. If one regards knowledge as knowledge, it is left unknowable; if one regards non-knowledge as knowledge, there is nothing unknowable about it.³⁵

Bodhidharma

For Buddhism, the whole, whether individual or cosmic, is an illusion. Hence the recurrent use of the term aggregation (*skandha*) implied by the idea of impermanence: the self is not self-identical. As regards the universe, it too is only a veil of illusion (the veil of *Maya*). So it appears that Buddhism radically rejects the idea of totality. Yet this idea will reappear by means of its very negation. Glasenapp spoke about 'acosmic³⁶ theophanisms' with regard to those philosophies in India which, like Mahāyāna (or even Vedānta) Buddhism, affirm totality by negating the world. Certainly, Buddhist 'Voidism' absorbs the whole into nothing, and makes this world one of illusions; but there remains a deep relation between Buddhism and totality: *nirvana*, 'understood as a kind of absolute awareness of the totality of phenomena'.³⁷

The *bindu*, the point, designates the value zero;³⁸ and yet the same sign also symbolised the universe in its unrevealed form, that is to say before its transformation into a world of appearances (*rūpadhatu*). The comparison of the uncreated universe with the point is due to the fact that the latter is the most elementary geometrical figure, but nonetheless capable of generating every other possible figure, line and form (*rūpa*). Hence, too, the meaning of zero, which is at once null quantity and the most fundamental arithmetical concept since it is the basis for the most functional system of numeration. This is how Indian philosophers could bring together the *nothing* and the *whole*. It is possible to find an equivalent to this paradoxical conjunction in Europe: in vanity paintings, the globe (symbol for the totality of knowledge and power) signifies nothingness.

Furthermore, in the third century BC, under the reign of the emperor Aśoka, a Buddhist school of philosophy was formed that was called 'panrealist' (*Sarvastivādin*). It asserted the substantial and *simultaneous* reality of everything, including that of the past and the

future – a logical way of sealing the gap that time produces inside totality. Even abolition (of passions and rebirths) must be understood as a mode of being. This is how a mediate totality is thought – on the basis of a void that in India as in China is never equivalent to Western *nothingness*.

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(Translated from the French by Richard Stamp)

Notes

1. The present article is rewritten from a chapter taken from a work (*La Philosophie*, volume 3 of *La Totalité*) to appear with Champ Vallon in Autumn 2000.
2. Swami Siddheswaranda, *Quelques aspects de la philosophie védantique* (Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1967), p. 73.
3. A myth tells of Shiva's devastating temper when he sees that Parvati, his wife, had fallen asleep during his speech – which had already lasted for many thousands of years . . .
4. More recently, there was the assimilation of English democracy and administration by a quite radically opposed system (the caste system).
5. The religion furthest from Brahmanism in every way.
6. The Dīn-I-Ilāhī of Akbar and the Sikh religion.
7. But neither did Europe, far from it.
8. Krishnamurti, *L'Éveil de l'intelligence*, trans. A. Duché (Stock, 1975), p. 632.
9. Krishnamurti, *Commentaires sur la vie*, vol. III, trans. N. Tisserand (Buchet-Chastel, 1974), p. 384 ff.
10. This is the same root that one finds in the Latin *salvus*, healthy, in good health.
11. Consequently, we do not follow E. Guillon's thesis, *Les Philosophies bouddhistes* (PUF, 1995), p. 9, which opposes the thought of the Whole to the thought of Being with regard to the substantialisation of *brahman* in the *Upanishads*.
12. 'Each time the gods notice a fissure in sacrifice, they close it up with inserted lines: these lines form the suture of sacrifice. Just as someone continually gathers the edges of a garment with a needle, so the one who knows how repairs the break in sacrifice', cited by L. Silburn, *Instant et cause. Le discontinu dans la pensée philosophique de l'Inde* (De Boccard, 1989), p. 88.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
14. Krishnamurti, *Commentaires sur la vie*, vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 381.
15. *La Perfection de sagesse*, trans. G. Driessens (Seuil, 1996), pp. 189–191.
16. For instance, the piling up of metaphors in epic literature, the superimposition of motifs and sculptures upon temple surfaces.
17. L. Dumont, *La Civilisation indienne et nous* (A. Colin, 1975).
18. Hence the lack of portraiture in painting, which only began with the Persian-influenced miniature.
19. E. Guillon, *Les Philosophies bouddhistes*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
20. S. Arguillère, 'La réalité de la totalité dans l'idéalisme bouddhique' in *Nirvana* (Éditions de l'Herne, 1993), p. 275.
21. India is not aware of the thematic and the conflict of subject and object, of self and other, which to a great extent make up the foundations of classical Western philosophy. In addition, the gift and the sacrifice are not seen as subtractions chipping away at an original totality but as points of radiating energy. (On the contrary, very early in the West the self is defined as an owner of goods and faculties, as an indirect consequence of which sacrifice and the gift are seen as reductions of the whole.) In India, the ascetic *deprives* himself of nothing, even though he *abstains* (from nourishment, from pleasures), yet he *pours out* – that is to say, into the universe from which he is never separated – the energy condensed within him.
22. [Translator's note: The phrase in question is perhaps the following: 'I am all this creation collectively, and besides me there exists no other being.' It is cited twice by Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, vol. I (New York: Dover, 1969), pp. 181 and 205–206.]

23. Through the mediation of four elements represented by their symbolic animals (*makara*, *kāla* and *naga* for water; *hamsa* and *kinnara* for air; *vyakala* for fire; elephant and lion for earth). J. Auboyer, *Le Trône et son symbolisme dans l'Inde ancienne* (PUF, 1949), pp. 105 ff.
24. The body (*kosha*) of the chariot corresponds to the intermediary space (*antariksha*) between Heaven and the Earth, the axle (*aksha*) represents the axis of the world, and the two wheels, at once combined and separated, are Heaven and Earth.
25. The pillar (*skambah*) that stands in the courtyard of certain temples. 'In the Skambah has this universe entered completely' (*Atharva Veda*, X, 7).
26. Indeed, the seesaw is not merely playful: it symbolizes abundance and power, it refers to erotic games and represents the Sun (compared by poets to a golden swing that travels to and fro from one end of the sky to the other).
27. Our four points of the compass and the four intermediary directions.
28. The *mandala*, in square and/or circular form, is a symbol and a summary of the universe. Drawn and painted, it represents an aid for meditation. The plans for temples and *stupas* are *mandalas*. The Jaina *svastika* (which Nazism transformed into a sinister emblem by pivoting it 45 degrees) also has a cosmic meaning. Its four arms represent respectively the universe of the gods (the top arm), that of men (the left arm), that of animals (the right arm), and that of hell (the bottom arm).
29. In the same way that the point potentially contains the entire universe, the simplest *mantra*, the syllable AUM, which begins every sacred hymn tirelessly repeated by devotees, and which is inscribed upon all kinds of media, from stone to paper, by way of earth and skin, this simplest *mantra* is supposed to summarize and condense the universe. Its three phonetic elements (A, U, M) govern an endless series of triads which takes in the totality of things and beings (the three gods of Trimurti, the three worlds, the three higher castes, the three qualities, the three components of personality, etc.).
30. II, 2, 11.
31. J. Varenne, *Sept Upanishads* (Seuil, 1981), p. 76.
32. The image of Shiva in Ardhanarishvara represents not only the synthesis of the masculine and the feminine but also that of Purusha and Prakriti. The English language has a word that designates this iconographic condensation: *syntheticism*. See M. Unvala Jamshedji, 'Syntheticism in Indian iconography', *Journal of Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Bombay, vol. 1, no. 2, 1925.
33. Some paintings show Krishna in the form of a hybrid animal; a peacock head and neck, leg of an elephant, leg of a tiger, a cow's chest, back and leg, a cobra for a tail and a human arm – a symbolic way of signifying the universal power of god, his identity with all the beings of nature.
34. Monism (a philosophy of one substance). *Advaita* means non-duality in Sanskrit.
35. *Le Traité de Bodhidharma*, trad. B. Fauré (Éditions Le Mail, 1986), p. 78.
36. Hegel used the term 'acosmism' (absence of world) to describe Spinoza's philosophy.
37. H. de Glasenapp, *La Philosophie indienne*, trans. A.-M. Esnoul (Payot, 1951), pp. 354 and 356.
38. Let us not forget that zero was an Indian invention.