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By Subhasis Chattopadhyay,

Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO)[[xxxiv](#)] needs consideration as a valid method through which to test the verities of Biblical exegesis. However, the challenge here is with both the object and ontology (the ‘real’). What is (the) ‘real’ and who is the subject which relates to the (which/what) object? A few examples will clarify the pitfalls of OOO in Biblical or, for that matter, other textual exegesis. Mark Dyczkowski, who is undoubtedly one of the greatest living exegetes of the Anuttara Trika, in one of his lectures points out the similarities between the Fall (of Adam and Eve) in the Bible and the story of Yama and Yami in the Riga Veda. Further, in the same lecture available freely on YouTube, Dyczkowski says that though it is believed that there is no concept of Original Sin in Hinduism, yet Yami’s incestuous desire for Yama, has been condemned as an absolute moral wrong in the Hindu Scriptures and it is precisely at that point when Yami desires coitus with her brother, Yama, sin, as it were, enters the created world as we know it now. This view is negated by Swami Narasimhananda, the current editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, who contests Dyczkowski’s reading of the Yama-Yami event:

The incident of Yama and Yami comes in the tenth chapter of the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda. The word papa in Sanskrit means vice as opposed to virtue and does not by any stretch of imagination mean ‘original sin’ as understood in Judeo-Abrahamic faith-traditions. Also, incidents where a wo/man’s sexual advances are spurned by a person are found in

many scriptural texts of Hinduism, even those between siblings. To conflate this incident with that of Adam and Eve only betrays a basic ignorance about Hindu theory and praxis. Also, if it were indeed a case of original sin, why do we not find any instance of this in praxis?

(Swami Narasimhananda mailed me at 5:38 pm, 15th May, 2019. His email from Advaita Ashrama, Uttarakhand was in reply to my telephonic conversation with him and my subsequent email for clarification to him, dated 14th May, 2018, sent at 4:39 pm, Indian Standard Time.)

Swami Narasimhananda's erudition is clear from his translations and annotations of both *Svarajya Siddhi* of Gangadharendra Saraswathi and the *Maitrayaniya Upanishad*. Therefore, it will be erring on the side of foolishness if we do not take this Totapuri-lineage Advaita Vedantin monastic seriously, and only go by what Dyczkowski has to say of the Biblical Fall and the Yama/Yami story. An Assistant Professor in English, who chooses to remain anonymous, made the connection between the Biblical Fall and the story of Yama and Yami. She informed this author that in both versions, a woman is shown to be the villain. So, in short, we have now three ontologies about the sin-event: Dyczkowski's interpretation, the Swami's contesting interpretation, the English teacher's gendered interpretation. Moreover, for this author, a voice which needs to be heard in our attempt to un-hide things hidden from this world, and which we will all do well to read is Stephen Greenblatt's book, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (2017). Greenblatt's approach is different and worth looking into when we start reading *Genesis*. However, let us further test both OOO and interreligious dialogue before we progress further within Biblical exegesis.

When Christian missionaries[xxxv] to India encountered Hinduism, they were first horrified by Hindu polytheism. Conversely, when Hindu scholars and monks went to the First World, they sanitised Hinduism of polytheism and presented a unified world view, and both Christians and Hindus appropriated Advaita Vedanta[xxxvi]. Both religious groups found solace in reading each others' religious texts through the lens of Advaita for reasons covered by this author in

the last blog post on this website. Now we can, for the sake of normative religious dialogue add another category to this effort at finding common ground between Christianity and Hinduism. Christian pneumatology sees a Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The (Anuttara) Trika (mentioned in the *Vijñāna Bhairava*) sees Divine Power as Triune: Parā, Aparā and Parāpara. Concretely, this accretes in the holy trident of Hindu Shaivites, where each prong of the trident is one of the forms of this Divine Power. The body of the trident is, as it were, the unifying principle or Truth, that is, Sadashiva. Therefore, at first glance, it seems now that Hinduism is also triadic and anticipates Christianity. Trika seems to provide a more hospitable world-view than Advaita Vedanta for the latter in its purest form, does not admit of God per se. However, the Trika worldview is theistic in its simpler forms and therefore, it is nearer to Christian ontologies. But this is a wrong (false) comparison (analogy). The Trika and Christianity have nothing in common, even though Christianity and the Pratyabhijna have commonalities at the level of mysticism. We will have scope to return to the Pratyabhijna when we study specific passages of the Bible, especially in the New Testament. The point here is that in the case of the Fall, OOO being more objective fails to provide a suitable hermeneutical framework and this same OOO is useful in discerning the truth (ontology) of the fallacy of comparing [xxxvii] (object of the ontology of OOO) the Trika with the Triune God of Christianity. So how do we approach Biblical commentary? The best advice comes from the Auschwitz survivor and *Torah* commentator Emmanuel Levinas:

“To maintain that the relationship with a neighbor, incontestably set up in saying, is a responsibility for the neighbor, that saying is to respond to another, is to find no longer any limit or measure for this responsibility, which “in the memory of man” has never been contracted, and is found to be at the mercy of the freedom and the fate, unverifiable by me, of the other man. It is to catch sight of an extreme passivity, a passivity that is not assumed, in the relationship with the other, and, paradoxically, in pure saying itself. The act of saying will turn out to have been introduced here from the start as the supreme passivity of exposure

to another, which is responsibility for the free initiatives of the other. Whence there is an “inversion” of intentionality which, for its part, always preserves before deeds accomplished enough “presence of mind” to assume them. There is an abandon of the sovereign and active subjectivity, of undeclined self-consciousness, as the subject in the nominative form in an apophansis. And there is in subjectivity’s relationship with the other, which we are here striving to describe, a quasi-hagiographic style that wishes to be neither a sermon nor the confession of a “beautiful soul.””

(Lévinas Emmanuel. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Translation of the 2nd ed, 1978. Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts. Springer Science + Business Media, 1991. p. 47)

Therefore, now having very briefly surveyed the hermeneutical problems of the Bible which is not the task at hand here, this author will now proceed to the main work at hand, which is to annotate the Bible in the spirit of Levinas. Emmanuel Lévinas shows us how we should enter into the heart of the presumed (O)ther. And to enter the hearts of the Other, we need to see the Bible as a special genre: it is a religious text distinct from other texts. It has in it components of literature; but it is not all literature since:

“The inherent word of God in the biblical text is of course refracted through many authors who were not disembodied voices of revealed truth. They were, rather, circumstance-situated men and women of faith (as are we all) who said what their circumstance permitted and required them to speak, as they were able, of that which is truly inherent. It is this human refraction, of course, that makes inescapable the hard work of critical study, so that every text is invited to a suspicious scrutiny whereby we may consider the ways in which bodied humanness has succeeded or not succeeded in being truthful and faithful witness. Each of us, moreover, would concede that some bodied human witnesses in the text succeeded more effectively than some others.”

(Brueggemann, Walter. "Biblical Authority: a Personal Reflection." Essay. In *Struggling with Scripture*, 5–31. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. p. 12)

It is to seek the humanity of the Bible and the divinity of the human beings who populate the Bible that we begin our exegetical journey.

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[xxxiv] Graham Harman's books on OOO are deceptively lucid and yet, they are about truth-claims rather than truths. It seems at first glance that Harman has been able to effect a paradigm shift in philosophy but in fact, he cannot successfully show the whatness of the ontic real or define the subject which Martin Heidegger defined so well within Continental philosophy in the last century. But OOO is emerging as a new domain in hermeneutics and theology, therefore, it is important to show OOO's limitations here. I have discussed as much as briefly as I could of this foundational error in Harman due to lack of space in a forthcoming review of Harman.

[xxxv] Both Roman Catholics and the various Protestant branches of Christianity.

[xxxvi] I have extensively discussed the appeal of Advaita Vedanta to all manners of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist celibates.

[xxxvii] In reality, the truth is that the Trika is about Shakti (which is roughly cognate to Divine Power), while Christianity is [about the weakness of God](#) which I discussed in the first post in this exegetical endeavour. The Trika's telos is Advaita Vedanta and it is based on the theories of cyclical existence and non-teleologic destructions and Karma. Christianity is

theistic, non-cyclical and based on a definite telos of history when Jesus will come again in all His Glory.

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