



*Eliot Deutsch*

## The Aesthetic Turn

*Reading Eliot Deutsch on Comparative Philosophy*

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Reconciling the Irreconcilable:  
Some Critical Reflections on  
Deutsch's *Humanity and  
Divinity and Creative Being*

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*Daya Krishna*

Eliot Deutsch's philosophical enterprise has, in many ways, been a sustained challenge to the current fashions of the day. In the philosophical climate of the decades in which Deutsch has written, who would take seriously a philosopher who undertakes an ontological enquiry into truth when it has been long shown by Tarski, and agreed to by everyone, that "truth" is a quality not of being but exclusively of sentences or propositions? Truth cannot meaningfully be asserted of "white snow," though the sentence "snow is white" can be regarded as true in most circumstances. Who would care to read about humanity and divinity when everyone knows that God had been proclaimed dead long ago and that there are no such things as "essences" and hence there can be no serious talk about "humanity" either?

And yet on reading *Humanity and Divinity: An Essay in Comparative Metaphysics*, I was personally startled by its stunning originality. On almost every page there is something insightful to say, with perceptive comments on the history of philosophy as it developed both in India and the West. It is with this provocative early Eliot that I begin.

In this work, Deutsch starts his discussion with the well-known injunction "Know thyself" and asserts that the Self which one is enjoined to seek and realize is not the self which can be known as an object, or even the self that one experiences as the one which knows or feels or wills. The Self, then, which one is asked to "know" or discover or realize is neither the self that is an object to oneself or

even the "subject" that is the source of all that appears as it will have to be characterized in some way or other and that will necessarily falsify its character as Pure Subject. It obviously is the pure *ātman* of the Advaita Vedānta which not only has no predicates whatsoever but cannot have them in principle, and thus is identical with the Absolute or the Brahman which shares the same "predicament," as it also is bereft of all possibility of predication, characterization, and relation. The statement of the identity between the Self and the Absolute, or the *Atman* and the Brahman, is thus not a genuine statement as these are merely names of that which is one and the same, and cannot be characterized in any way whatsoever. The assertion of identity cannot even be based on some prior ignorance as in the case of the "morning star is the evening star," as the term *ātman* or the Self can never be correctly used for either the empirical self, or that which is the source of that empirical self (which alone can be the possible "referent" of the term in case it is ever used at all). There is thus "THAT" alone which may be spoken of either as *Ātman* or as *Brahman* or by any other name, as all names are bound to be arbitrary. Perhaps it might be better to call it just "X," as the usual names are heavily loaded with associations that are rooted in different philosophical and cultural traditions, themselves conditioned by space and time.

Yet, who would be excited by such an assertion? The term "X" arouses no emotions, has no mystical penumbra attached to it, and invites no one to make any effort at its realization. Thus, all thinkers who have asserted that reality can be affirmed only in this way and no other, have taken recourse to the notion of "experience" which, according to them, itself points to such a reality and in fact presupposes it in both a logical and existential manner. The way to the Self or the Absolute, or the *Ātman* or the Brahman, is thus made more exciting and concrete as it is supposed to be rooted in that which "appears" to be most real, that is, the fact of consciousness itself. Yet, consciousness is the most slippery foundation to build anything upon, even though thinker after thinker, both in the East and West, has taken recourse to it to build a firm foundation for their thought, and present it as if it were the most self-evident, indubitable truth. Descartes's "Cogito" is well known, and so is Śaṅkara's "witness consciousness" which alone remains constant amongst all that appears to it which invariably varies every moment. Deutsch also takes recourse to this and writes of spiritual experience as providing a firm foundation for all that he says about the Self and the Absolute

and their total identity. Yet, nowhere does there appear to be the slightest attempt to indicate what exactly is meant by the adjective "spiritual" which qualifies "experience;" thus making a dichotomous division in "experience" itself between that which is "spiritual" and that which is "non-spiritual." It will be difficult to maintain that "experience" *qua* experience can be distinguished in this way, as normally "experience" can only be distinguished in terms of the types of "objects" which are experienced.

Perhaps what Deutsch wants to convey by the term "spiritual" is that it is not experience of any "object" at all, but rather a state of "experience" which has no "object" whatsoever. In case this understanding of the term "spiritual" is correct, then it will have to be understood in a purely negative way, and thus would necessarily refer to that which it denies, as without that it would not be understood at all. There would also be the problem as to whether the terms "experience" and "consciousness" mean the same thing or are different. In the former case, the terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual consciousness" would be interchangeable, while in the latter case, they would not be so. But whether identical or different, both the terms raise problems which have not been reflected upon by all those who have taken recourse to them to build their imposing structures of thought.

"Consciousness" inevitably raises the question as to whether it admits of qualitative and quantitative differences within it and whether it can possibly admit of its own complete cessation. Consciousness, as we all know, can be clear or confused, intense or dull, tired or awake, focussed or wandering. It can also be lost or gained, as when one says "I lost consciousness" or "I have gained it once more." There may be some problems regarding the first person use of such a phrase, but there can be none about their use in the case of others. Not only this, one may desire or want to become "unconscious" as when one wants to go to sleep. Not to be able to sleep is one of the worst things that can happen to a person and, if this is so, then one cannot accept that "consciousness" or "experience" is always intrinsically desirable *per se*. It is, of course, true that even in sleep, one may dream and, if one dreams, one may be said to be having an experience and if one is having an experience, then one is conscious, at least in some sense of the term. Would then one make a distinction between experiences which occur when one is awake as when one dreams? But then would one also make a distinction between these two

states—the waking and the dreaming? Shall we then have to postulate radically different states of consciousness which again are distinguished not intrinsically but by “something” which is, at least *prima facie*, external to consciousness?

The Advaitins, as is well known, have talked of dreamless sleep and have made much of the fact that when one wakes up one says that one had a very sound sleep. But they have not asked the simple question as to whether there is a continuity between the dreaming and the dreamless state, or if there is a radical break between the two, just as there seems to be between the waking and the dreaming consciousness. Not only this, they have not reflected on the situation where one, on being asked whether one had a dreamless sleep or not, says “I do not know.” For, if one were conscious, then one could not make such a statement. Similarly, there is the problem of what has been called, in physiological psychology, the threshold of consciousness where a stimulus has to reach a certain intensity in order to become an object of awareness or consciousness. There is, as experiments have revealed, a shifting margin between intensities where it is difficult to say whether one is aware or not of the stimulus that is being conveyed to the sensory organs. The notions of “sub-conscious” and “sub-liminal” present the same kind of questions, especially for those who treat “consciousness” as some sort of substantive entity or an absolute which knows no diminishing or “limits” as, in principle, it can have none.

The dependence of consciousness on external conditions is a problem which has hardly been faced by all those who have argued for its ontological primacy. Nor have the variations and experience due to both “external” and “internal” conditions been either the subject of critical reflection or seen as raising almost insuperable difficulties for the views propounded by idealists in general and Advaitins in particular. The effect of drugs on states of consciousness is well known, but besides this there is the everyday experience of fluctuations in the state of consciousness by fleeting ideas, images, personal relationships, aesthetic objects, apprehension of meanings, and a host of other such things which seem to find no place in the literature that deals with the subject. There is also the faculty of attention by which one attempts to focus consciousness on certain aspects so that one may change one’s state of consciousness for the better. The whole range of meditative techniques developed in different traditions try to do this in one form or another. Along with this, there is the problem relating to “levels” of consciousness,

particularly the one where the second-level consciousness observes the first-level consciousness and achieves a certain detachment from it.

Ultimately, all the questions relating to “experience” or “consciousness” encounter a foundational difficulty arising from the fact that what we “know” is only about the consciousness or experience of one who is human, that is, one who has a body, a mind and faculties which are usually designated by terms such as reason, imagination, memory, attention, and so on, and who has a capacity for self-consciousness and who can engage in a conceptual activity which symbolizes thought in some objective medium which itself can be deciphered giving rise to fresh thoughts which are not merely a replica of the old, but always add something to it. A person, about whose “experiences” we are talking is not only a “knowing being,” but also one who feels and acts and changes his consciousness and experiences through such an activity. Besides this, human beings are surrounded not only by nature consisting of the stars, sun, moon, and plant and animal life but also by other human beings with whom one is in constant interaction and whom one affects not merely in terms of pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering, but also in terms of meaningful living. We do not know what the term experience would mean in the case of most living beings, even though we know that most of them feel pleasure and pain as that is perhaps involved in the very definition of what a “living being” means. There seems to be a little exception in the case of those who have entered the human world such as pets or domestic animals with whom one has a close interaction, but it is only in the case of human beings that we not only consider them as having “experiences” like ours, but also try to induce those which we consider desirable in them through such efforts as we think would most likely produce them. The traditional relation between the spiritual master and the disciple is a paradigmatic example of such a situation, though it obtains in almost all other fields as well. This is as true of the so-called Advaitic experience in the spiritual realm as of others which are also usually described as belonging to that realm.

“Spiritual” experiences, thus, are not of one type only and there has always been a dispute about their classification, and the hierarchy between them. There has also been the problem of the relationship between these different kinds of spiritual experiences and whether they should be regarded as stages in the realization of some one ultimate spiritual experience which is considered to be the highest or whether they are seen as coordinate, complementary, or even as different

formulations of one and the same experience which intrinsically is incapable of any formulation at all. The Advaitins, of course, have held that theirs is the highest, almost by definition. Deutsch appears to subscribe to this view also as he contends that because reality is non-dual in terms of the phenomenology of experience, it denies, by definition, the possibility of there being anything other than itself which could possibly replace it in any way whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> But, definitions, even if they happen to be existential or phenomenological are only tautologies and do not prove anything. It just is not the case that all spiritual experiences necessarily are of ultimate oneness or non-duality, as the records of such experiences in all traditions testify to the contrary. There is, of course, the non-Advaitic experience of oneness, but so also there are experiences which deny the ultimacy of such an experience. The non-Advaitic Vedāntins, from Yāmunācārya to Vallabhācārya in the Indian tradition, attest to this and the controversy between them and the Advaitins is based on this very fact. It is also true that one finds Advaitic strains in the profound spiritual experiences recorded in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, but they have generally been considered as not articulating correctly the truth of the experience if it is interpreted as controverting the accepted "orthodox" position as sanctioned by their holy texts.

Even those modern mystics such as Sri Aurobindo, who have acknowledged the Advaitic spiritual experience as one of the highest that man can possibly attain, have urged that there are other experiences which are coordinate with it in authority and some which may even be regarded as conveying the truth of ultimate reality better than it. There have been others like Ramakrishna who, in modern times, have personally attested to the validity of Advaitic experience and yet have continued to lead an intense life of devotion to Kālī, the Mother Goddess.

The history of spiritual experiences thus shows not only that there is no such thing as one single spiritual experience, but also that there is no unanimity about either the hierarchy or the interrelationships between them. Deutsch has taken recourse to the well-known idea of sublation in the Advaitic tradition to provide a firm foundation for the assertion that the spiritual experience of ultimate identity between the Self and the Absolute is the highest that there can possibly be as it is the experience of undifferentiated reality that has no "other" to itself. He has made an original use of the concept and urged that the experience is both noetic and axiological at the same time and has coined a new word, "subration," to convey

this simultaneous relegation of one experience by another which unequivocally declares it to be both less real and less valuational. In his own words, by "subration" is meant "the process whereby we disvalue a previously valued content of consciousness," and "When something is subrated, it is believed by us to have a lesser degree of reality than that which takes its place."<sup>2</sup> But however intense and overpowering the feeling of the new experience being more real and valuational may be, there is no guarantee that one would never revise such a judgement and think oneself to have been mistaken. The experience of love is a classic instance of such a phenomenon which, when it occurs, is felt by everyone to possess a kind of reality and value in comparison with which everything else seems to be meaningless. Yet, as everybody knows, such a feeling does not last and, many a time one feels that one was mistaken in one's judgment, if not deluded altogether. The experience with respect to many works of art shares some of the same characteristics. Many a time, one returns to work which had aroused joy and wonder along with a sense of reality that far transcended the ordinary world in which one lived, only to discover that the magic is no more. Deutsch has used the word "judgment" in the context of his notion of "subration," but judgments are always subject to revision and there is never any finality about them. Not only this, if the experience is a human experience, one has to "return" from it to ordinary day-to-day levels of experience and even if one "feels" that the latter are less real, they have a compelling necessity about them and can be regarded as unreal only at the risk of becoming "mad" or "insane" in the sense that one will not "know" how to handle them properly. The fading memory of the luminous self-authenticating experience of the transcendent oneness can hardly help one in dealing with the multiple problems that arise at each of these levels to which one has to "return" because one happens to be an "embodied" human being. One may, if one is a spiritual genius, withdraw from all these levels and return again and again to the transcendent experience, but one cannot build any bridges between them, particularly if the experience of the transcendent is conceived in strictly Advaitic terms. There can be, strictly speaking no "crafting of person" about which Deutsch has written so eloquently in his book entitled *Creative Being: The Crafting of Person and World*,<sup>3</sup> written some thirty years after *Humanity and Divinity*.

There is no way down from the Absolute to either the world or the embodied self at any of its levels, and thus, the whole world of human experience of which

Deutsch and others build their contention is left hanging without any relationship to that which they consider alone as real. This relegation of the whole realm of experience not only to complete “unreality” but, utter “valuelessness” makes not only all human enterprise “meaningless” but also renders completely “unintelligible” the relation of the Absolute to the self and the world. The difficulties which the Advaitins have had with regard to the interpretation of the *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.2 is evidence of this. For Deutsch, the difficulty should be even greater as he bases his case on “experience” itself and not on any scriptural authority or argument, and though he talks of the “phenomenology of experience,”<sup>4</sup> he forgets that, strictly speaking, “phenomenology” starts with a bracketing of reality and, hence, cannot make any metaphysical pronouncements.

It is, of course, true that Husserlian phenomenology took a turn to what has been called “constitutive foundationalism,” but this obviously was a suicidal turn as it forgot the “bracketing” which was the necessary prerequisite for the “original” phenomenological enterprise.

The recourse to the idea of subration, as we have already pointed out, cannot help as experience *qua* experience always claims reality and it is only “external” considerations that make one pronounce or judge that what was or is experienced is not real. The past experience which is declared to be unreal on any grounds whatsoever has still to be remembered for what it was because, unless this is done, no pronouncement can be made about it. The same, surprisingly is the case, with an experience that is being “experienced,” which at the moment when it is being experienced is judged to be “unreal.” For example, the movement of the sun across the skies, though actually experienced as “moving” is still judged to be “illusory” or “unreal” due to theoretical considerations that do not make any difference to the experience *qua* experience. Here the grounds are theoretical and consist in considerations of consistency and coherence. Also, normally an experience cannot be said to contradict another experience as Deutsch says and even a judgmental contradiction can arise only when the subject of the judgment remains the same. No “judgment” can occur in principle at the level of the spiritual experience of the Absolute about which Deutsch has written because there the very possibility of any reflective consciousness being present is denied. Nor can there be any “memory” of the past experience of plurality and multiplicity which could be declared as “unreal” on axio-noetic grounds.

The only way to save the situation is to suggest that the memory of the Advaitic experience of the Absolute renders the experience of the plurality and multiplicity when one returns to it, seemingly unreal and valueless. But, then, it will be a remembered experience, and it is not necessary that the comparative judgment would necessarily continue to remain the same with the lapse of time. There is, of course, the deeper objection that as the subject of the judgment is different in the two cases, one cannot meaningfully talk of any contradiction between them. A comparison between experiences is, in any case, a difficult thing, as not only can the memory paint the past experience in colors that it did not have when it occurred, but also because the actual experience with which it is compared may undergo radical transformation in axio-noetic terms. There is little reason to believe that the experience of multiplicity and difference has always necessarily to be disvaluational in nature just because it is an experience of multiplicity and difference.

The judgment about an experience, whether in terms of reality or value, is never so indubitable as Deutsch seems to assume. It is a commonplace fact with regard to aesthetic experience that when someone differs from our judgment, particularly when the other is supposed to know more about the realm than we do, we begin to doubt our own valuation of the object concerned. Similarly, what is apprehended in perceptual experience, particularly in scientific contexts, is hardly intelligible without the whole paraphernalia of interpretation that is based on theoretical considerations. The analogy is not entirely irrelevant as, even in the case of experiences which are considered to be spiritual, one is advised many a time by the spiritual preceptor not to understand them in the way one has understood them.

The issue of the primacy of the experience in the spiritual realm has perhaps been most thoroughly discussed by Wilhelm Halbfass in his chapter entitled “The Concept of Experience in the Encounter between India and the West” in his well-known work *India and Europe*,<sup>5</sup> where he has argued that the overriding emphasis on spiritual experience in neo-Vedāntism is hardly corroborated by the way the issue was considered in traditional Advaitic texts. He suggests that though the words *anubhūti*, *anubhāva*, *sakṣatkara*, *darśana*, and so on, are used in the Advaitic texts, ultimately they are not treated as an independent ground for the assertion of either the truth or validity or value of that experience. Instead, it is the

Veda which is treated as the touchstone by reference to which the experience itself is to be judged, as it alone contains “an objective structure which guides, controls and gives room to legitimate experience as well as legitimate argumentation.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, if the *apauruṣeyatva* (“authorlessness”) of the Veda is accepted, as the “orthodox” Advaitins from Śaṅkara onwards are supposed to do, then the “experience” of the identity between the Self and the Absolute cannot be that of any human being.

The situation, of course, is not as simple as the above quotation from Halbfass may seem to imply, and Halbfass himself is aware of this. But, as the non-Advaitic Vedāntic *ācārya*-s from Yāmunācārya to Vallabha also appeal both to the spiritual experience on the one hand, and the Vedāntic texts on the other, it is clear that neither the texts nor the experience can be interpreted or understood only in one way and not in another. The giving up of the authority of the so-called *Prasthānatrayi* texts by Caitanya and his absolute reliance on the experience of *bhakti* alone confirms this further as, according to him, the ultimate spiritual experience is that of *Acintyabhedābheda* and not that of *Advaita* or *abheda* as the orthodox Advaitins have always contended.

Deutsch ignores this long discussion between the Advaitins and the non-Advaitins which has had a long history in India not only from Śaṅkara onwards, but even before him. Samantabhadra, for example, had argued against the notion of Advaita which was obviously known to the philosophical world of India before Śaṅkara, as he is supposed to have lived earlier. According to him:

If the principle of Advaita should be established by means of reason (*hetu*), there must exist a duality (*dvaita*) between reason and what is proved (*sadhya*). If the principle of Advaita should be established without reason, why should not dualism too be established from mere words alone?<sup>7</sup>

Besides the controversy between the Advaitins and the other schools of Vedānta, there was also the parallel discussion with the Naiyāyikas, particularly after Śaṅkara Mīśra (1430 A.D.) had written his work entitled *Bhedāratnam*.

Deutsch perhaps feels justified in bypassing this many-sided debate as, according to him, the logic of thought is not identical with the logic of reality<sup>8</sup> and hence the former is not only incapable of grasping the latter but is also completely irrelevant to our understanding of it. But, then reality could not be a subject of understanding either, at least in the usual sense of “understanding.” The desire to

understand it would, according to this view, be completely mistaken as perhaps would be all other attempts to relate oneself to whatever is real through any other faculty that one might possess. But, if this is accepted, then it would be impossible, in principle, to understand either the human being or reality for we can only relate to whatever is real as human beings. If human beings are “diverted beings” as Deutsch calls them, then how can one hope for any understanding of either humanity or reality, for a being which is essentially flawed in its very nature can, in principle, do neither?

Surprisingly, Deutsch along with many others, has also talked of the Absolute as creative being. But, if the “Absolute” has essentially a creative side to it, then how can that which it has created be “diverted” or “flawed”? And, if it is so, in any sense of the term, then it can only be seen as a reflection on the creative power of the Absolute itself. This is, of course, the old problem of “evil” to which there is, and can be, no solution. But if one accepts that the Absolute has a dynamic, creative side to it, then neither man nor the world can be seen in such completely “negative” terms as all Advaitins, including Deutsch, do. Deutsch, of course, has not only accepted the essential creativity in the Absolute, but also given a detailed description of the categories in which, and through which, this creativity unfolds in the realms of feeling, mind, and understanding.

The use of the term “categories” is puzzling as it normally denotes the forms which “Being” or “thinking about Being” has necessarily to take and thus involves the notions of ontological or epistemological necessity which, when used in the context of the Absolute, seems, at least *prima facie*, to deny its absoluteness. Not only this, the detailed delineation of the categories seems arbitrary. The categories of feeling, for example, have been given as *rhythm*, *proportion*, and *integrity*. It is difficult to see how these may be said to characterize exclusively what are generally understood as feelings and their relation, if any, to the dimensions of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, suffering and happiness, which normally are supposed to belong to the realm to which the term “feeling” is supposed to refer. Similarly, the categories of *purpose*, *memory*, *the ideal*, *equilibrium*, and *continuity* which are supposed to belong to the mind do not seem to be all of a piece. How *memory* is to be considered as a category seems baffling indeed. The relation between *purpose* and *the ideal* is not very clear; nor does one understand why *equilibrium* should not be considered as a category of feeling rather than that of the mind, and does

not *memory* involve *continuity*? And in case it does so, why should the two be mentioned separately?

The categories of understanding present the same problem, as they include besides *space-time* and *causality*, *universal* and *relation*. The first two have been combined as one, and remind one of Kant who had, however, treated them as *a priori* forms of sensibility. To treat *causality* and *relation* as separate categories seems anomalous, as *causality* presumably is itself a relation between events.

However, what is perhaps even more disturbing is the complete absence of what may be called categories of action or will or that which is designated by the terms, "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong," "virtuous" and "vicious" or "evil." Perhaps, the categories of *purpose* and *the ideal* under the categories of mind and the category of *integrity* under that of feeling are supposed to perform this function. But, the "moral" dimension seems to be missing in the discussion of the categories; presumably as in the Advaitic framework, there is no room for the reality of the "other" in relation to whom the whole realm of obligatoriness arises. The "self-enclosed" and the "self-sufficient" Self of the Advaitin appears to have no place either for the "starry heavens above," or "the moral law within." In fact, the realm of morality and action are conspicuously absent from Deutsch's framework, as they are found nowhere in the index to the book. Even the mention of "goodness" is in the context of a "loving being" and has little to do with the real conflicts of the diverse obligations which one has towards others. This is inevitable if the human being is not considered a socio-political being or embedded in nature, society, and culture. The moment one denies temporality, the realm of action vanishes and all the problems that it poses vanish into this air. The conflict between *dharma* and *mokṣa* is well known in the Indian tradition, just as the relationship between knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*karma*). But Deutsch's thought knows of no conflict, as he has "situated" himself firmly in the Absolute where all duality and conflict ceases.

The problem perhaps lies with treating the Absolute as an ontological necessity, and that, too, as completely undifferentiated, as if any "difference" would contaminate its purity, forgetting that such a way of conceiving the "real" can only be a necessity of human thought, having little to do with whatever is "real-in-itself." Deutsch, of course, has grounded his notion in an axio-noetic experience which, according to him, is intrinsically incapable of being "subrated" by

any other experience. The only reason for this intrinsic impossibility seems to be that it is implied by and strictly follows from, the very nature of the experience as defined by him. But the Absolute in any of its forms is a "demand" of human experience when it is self-consciously reflected upon. The duality of subject and object within experience appears to be unresolvable unless it is completely overcome within consciousness itself. The Absolute, as K. C. Bhattacharyya argued long ago, is needed to resolve the "existential unintelligibility" revealed in all experience to a self-consciousness that reflects on it. But, as Bhattacharyya observed, this resolution can be attempted in diverse ways, as the existential unintelligibility revealed appears to be different at the level of "knowing," "feeling," and "willing." Thus "experience" itself, according to him, reveals the alternative directions in which the resolution may be sought through a spiritual praxis, which, in the Indian tradition is called *sadhana*. From this arises the notion of alternative absolutes which equally perform the function for which they are postulated, that is, the experiential resolution of the paradox found in experience itself.

One may not accept Bhattacharyya's formulation, but one would expect that any serious reformulation of the Advaitic position would take into account what he has to say on the issue. Deutsch has done nothing of the kind. He has chosen to attempt a major reformulation of the Advaitic position without taking into account the radical reformulation of this position by one of the most original thinkers in the Indian tradition in recent times. The lapse is not understandable, particularly as he himself has made the axio-noetic dimension of experience the central foundation for his reconstruction along with the notion of "subration" that he has used so creatively to render the Advaitic position intelligible.

It may be interesting, in this connection, to see the insoluble problem that Deutsch has set for himself by starting from the self as Absolute, as something already accomplished, at least at the metaphysical level, and not something that is apprehended as an ideal to be actualized and realized by a spiritual praxis which can only hypothetically postulate it as something to be approached. Once one has accepted the identity of the Self and the Absolute as already accomplished, one cannot meaningfully talk of "crafting" a person except in the sense that one tries to actualize on the phenomenological plane what is already realized at the ontological level. Yet, Deutsch tries to suggest other directions for "crafting" both the person and the world that have no relation to this. In his work entitled *Creative Being*:



*The Crafting of Person and World*, he suggests, for example, that not to acknowledge one's "background, parentage, race, color or whatever . . ." as an inevitable raw material in terms of which one has to craft oneself would be a piece of "self-deception." But this goes completely against the Advaitic insight as, according to it, one has to de-identify oneself with any objectivity whatsoever, including that of one's body, mind, and intellect, not to talk of background, parentage, race, or color, and so on. On the other hand, if a person is "a diverted being because life, as he is born into it, demands it of him" and if "diversion is a natural consequent for man as a social, material, mental being," then how can one ever hope for any realization of the self as Absolute, while living "in the body" and leading a life in society along with all that it involves? How, then, shall there be even a reconciliation between the vision that is unfolded in *Humanity and Divinity* and the task that is envisioned in *Creative Being: The Crafting of Person and World*, only Deutsch can tell and, perhaps even he cannot as this contradiction lies at the very heart of human reality, and man has not been yet able to resolve it, either in thought or action.

Yet, there can be little doubt that these two works of Eliot Deutsch have presented so innovatively and powerfully these two contradictory dimensions of human seeking in a way that challenges each human being to think afresh, and turn perhaps alternatively, to the twin task of "crafting" oneself and/or "realizing" the oneness with the ultimate reality that always is present in the depths of one's own being. Never before has a Western thinker so internalized a non-Western mode of thought and developed it as creatively as Deutsch has done the Advaitic insights in his *Humanity and Divinity*. Also, perhaps, no one else has written so well about the creative challenges that each person faces in the lifelong task of crafting oneself into the "person" that s/he becomes.

Deutsch has talked of aesthetic necessity in this connection and suggested that the creation of a personality is analogous to the creation of a work of art and requires all the imagination and the sensitivity and the coming to terms with the raw materials that one is given, and about which one can do little except to mould them in the light of imagination and the sensitivity that one possesses. But where in all this is the fact of mutual interdependence and collective creativity without which no thinking about the human situation can be complete, whether it be conceived of essentially in terms of total transcendence of whatever man biologically

or socio-culturally happens to be, or in terms of those immanent ideals which accept these and all that goes with them as defining the human situation as we know it?

Perhaps that is the direction which Deutsch's thought may take in the future, or of someone else who might wish to continue what he has thought still further. Yet, there can be little doubt that in any further construction that one may wish to attempt, one would have to take the rich insights which may be found on almost every page of these two books, and for that, one will have to be thankful to Deutsch who has provided them in such rich abundance.

### Notes

1. Deutsch (1970):12.
2. Deutsch (1970):10–11.
3. Deutsch (1992).
4. Deutsch (1970):12.
5. Halbfass (1988):378ff.
6. Halbfass (1988):388.
7. *Āptamīmāṃsā*, Verse 26. In Nakamura (1983):283.
8. Deutsch (1970):26.

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