

Re-evaluation of Thomism through the Lens of Advaita Vedanta

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The intellectual and spiritual encounter between Thomism; the foundational philosophy of the Catholic Church rooted in the synthesis of Aristotle and Divine Revelation and Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Adi Shankara represents one of the most profound and consequential dialogues in the history of comparative religion. For centuries, Western theology has relied on the sturdy metaphysical framework of Saint Thomas Aquinas to articulate the nature of God, the act of creation, and the relationship between the divine and the human. Thomism, with its rigorous distinctions between essence and existence, its doctrine of *analogia entis* (analogy of being), and its insistence on the Creator-creature distinction, has long been considered the gold standard for preserving the transcendence of God while affirming the reality of the world. However, as the horizons of theology have expanded to include the non-dual insights of the East, particularly through the works of pioneers like Raimon Panikkar, Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux), Bede Griffiths, and the "[Calcutta School](#)" of Indology, the sufficiency of the Thomistic categories has come under intense scrutiny.

While often presented as complementary or convergent by theologians who read Shankara through a Thomist lens (such as Richard De Smet and Sara Grant), further interrogation suggests that Advaita Vedanta offers a specific ontological robustness regarding the nature of the Infinite that Thomism, bound by its commitment to Aristotelian substance ontology, struggles to articulate. By examining the core tenets of Being, Creation, Simplicity, and Grace, and drawing upon the critiques of interstitial theologians, it becomes evident that the Advaitic understanding of *Brahman* challenges the Thomistic *Actus Purus* in ways that reveal potential limitations in the Western

dualistic framework of Creator and creature.

The objective here is not to dismantle Thomism but to subject it to the "advaitic spectacle," as Panikkar termed it; a perspective that refuses the dichotomies of monism and dualism. Through this lens, it is evident how the rigorous non-duality of Vedanta provides a vocabulary that may more fully protect the absolute transcendence and immanence of the Divine, an area where Scholasticism, with its heavy reliance on causal mechanisms and relational distinctions, risks compromising the very Infinity it seeks to defend.

The Historical and Theological Context

The meeting of Thomism and Vedanta is not merely an academic exercise; it is the collision of two "Absolutes." Thomism claims to offer a universal explanation of reality based on the harmony of faith and reason. Advaita Vedanta claims to be the *Sanatana Dharma* (Eternal Religion), the final realization of the nature of the Self and Reality. When these two systems meet, the question arises: can the categories of one contain the other?

Early missionary efforts, such as those by Roberto de Nobili in the 17th century, attempted to adapt Catholic Christianity to Indian culture, but the theological engagement with Advaita remained tentative. It was not until the 19th and 20th centuries, with figures like Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and later the "Calcutta School" (Pierre Johanns, Georges Dandoy), that a serious attempt was made to read Shankara through Thomistic eyes. They argued that Shankara was an "implicit Thomist" who, had he known Aquinas, would have agreed with the distinction between *esse* and *essentia*.

However, this "fulfillment theology", which posits that Vedanta is a preparation for the perfection of Thomism, has been increasingly challenged by theologians who have gone deeper into the Advaitic experience. Figures like Swami Abhishiktananda and Raimon Panikkar argued that

Advaita is not a "stepping stone" but a challenge to the very structures of Western thought. They suggest that Thomism, with its "Greek" reliance on duality, relation, and substance, may be ill-equipped to handle the "non-dual" (*advaita*) nature of the Ultimate.

The "Calcutta School" versus the "Ashramites"

The dialogue has largely bifurcated into two streams:

1. **The Scholastics (Calcutta School, De Smet, Grant):** These thinkers utilize Thomistic metaphysics to interpret Vedanta. They argue that Shankara's denial of the world's reality is actually a denial of its *independent* reality, which aligns with the Thomistic idea of contingency. They seek to show convergence.
2. **The Mystics/Ashramites (Abhishiktananda, Panikkar, Griffiths):** These thinkers emphasize the *experience* (*anubhava*) of non-duality. They tend to critique Thomism as too rationalistic and dualistic. They argue that the Thomistic categories ultimately fail to capture the radical oneness of the Advaitic realization.

The Metaphysics of Being (*Sat* and *Actus Essendi*): Essence and Existence

At the heart of Thomistic metaphysics lies the "real distinction" between essence (*essentia*) and the act of being (*esse*). For Aquinas, in all created things, what a thing is (its essence) is distinct from the fact that it is (its existence). A tree, a man, or an angel has an essence that defines its nature, but this essence does not guarantee its existence; existence is a gift conferred from without. God, however, is the unique exception. In God, essence and existence are identical. God is not *a* being among beings; He is *Ipsium Esse Subsistens*—Subsistent Being Itself. This formulation is Aquinas's brilliant solution to the problem of contingency. It establishes God as the necessary ground of all reality, the *Actus Purus* (Pure Act) without any admixture of potentiality.

This distinction serves a dual purpose: it secures God's absolute uniqueness and establishes the total dependence of the world upon Him. The world participates in being; God *is* Being. This participationist ontology (*participatio*) allows Aquinas to affirm the reality of the world. The world really exists, it has its own secondary causality, while denying it autonomy in the existential sense. The creature is "real," but its reality is borrowed.

The Advaitic Stance: *Sat* and the Denial of Duality

Advaita Vedanta, while superficially similar in its identification of the Absolute with Being (*Sat*), approaches the question of reality from a radically different angle. For Shankara, *Brahman* is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). Like Aquinas's God, *Brahman* is the only reality that exists by its own nature. However, Shankara's non-dualism (*advaita*) takes the implication of "Absolute Being" to a conclusion that Thomism explicitly rejects: if *Brahman* is Infinite Being, there can be nothing "outside" or "other than" *Brahman*.

In the Thomistic scheme, the act of creation brings into existence a world that is *not* God, even if it depends on God. This posits a scenario where reality equals God *plus* the world which presents a problem for the concept of Infinity. If the world is a real addition to being, then God alone is less than God plus the world. Thomists argue that the world adds nothing to the *perfection* of being, only to the *number* of beings. But Advaita argues that any assertion of a "second" reality, however dependent, compromises the "non-duality" of the Absolute.

For the Advaitin, *Sat* is not just the highest act of being; it is the *only* being. The world (*Jagat*) does not "participate" in *Sat* in a way that gives it a separate ontological standing; rather, the world *is* *Sat* when viewed correctly, or it is *mithya* (illusion/appearance) when viewed as separate. The "real distinction" of Aquinas, which grants the creature a distinct essence and a distinct act of

existence (albeit received), is seen from the Advaitic perspective as a concession to empirical ignorance (*avidya*). It solidifies the ego and the world-structure in a way that obscures the underlying non-dual reality. As Panikkar notes, the Advaitic view challenges the "artificial unity" or "reductionistic manipulations" of systems that try to bridge the gap between two distinct realities. Advaita suggests that the "gap" itself is the illusion.

The Robustness of *Sat* and the Porosity of *Actus Purus*

While Aquinas defines God as *Actus Purus* to deny passivity or potentiality, the term "Act" (*Actus*) itself is derived from Aristotelian categories of motion and causality. Even when purified of temporal motion, *Actus* retains a subtle connection to "operation" and "doing." *Brahman* as *Sat*, however, is often described as the static, immutable ground, or as *Svaprasiddha* (self-luminous). Critics of Thomism, including those influenced by the "Calcutta School," have argued that *Actus Purus* can inadvertently trap the Divine in a framework of functionality. Thomism implies that God is defined by His "act" of existing or creating.

Advaita's *Sat* is less vulnerable to this functional reduction. It is the substrate that persists regardless of creation or non-creation. The "Everything in Everything" modal ontology found in Advaita suggests a hologrammatic view of reality where the whole is present in every part, a view that some argue is more metaphysically rigorous than the part-whole participation model of Thomism. In Thomism, the creature participates in God but is *not* God. In Advaita, the *Atman* (Self) *is Brahman*. This identity statement (*Mahavakya*): "Thou Art That" (*Tat Tvam Asi*) establishes a robustness of Being that refuses to dilute the Absolute into a hierarchy of analogical participations. It asserts that the finite is merely a superimposition (*adhyasa*) on the Infinite, thereby preserving the Infinite's integrity more completely than a system that admits a multitude

of finite "beings" standing over against the Infinite.

The Creator-Creature Relation (*Creatio Ex Nihilo* vs. *Vivartavada*)

The Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) is the bulwark of Western theism. It asserts that God, in a free act of will, brought the universe into existence where previously there was nothing. This doctrine is intended to secure God's transcendence (He creates from outside the system) and sovereignty. However, this formulation introduces a profound dualism: the Creator/creature distinction. This distinction is "real" in Thomism; there is an ontological abyss between the Uncreated and the created.

Comparative theologians have pointed out the metaphysical awkwardness of the *nihil*. If God is All, where is this "nothing" from which the world comes? If "nothing" is effectively a "something" (a potentiality outside God), then God is limited by it. If "nothing" is truly nothing, then the world comes from God (*ex Deo*). Aquinas admits the world is *from* God, but insists it is not *of* God's substance. This requires a complex intellectual gymnastics to maintain that the world is real but totally dependent, distinct but not separate in a spatial sense.

Raimon Panikkar and Swami Abhishiktananda found this dualism spiritually and intellectually constraining. Abhishiktananda, in his diaries, wrestled with the "horror" of a God who is "other," a "Thou" that eternally alienates the "I". He argues that the concept of creation *ex nihilo* solidifies a "world opposite to God," creating a duality that prevents the ultimate realization of Unity. For Abhishiktananda, the Thomistic Creator-creature distinction is valid on the level of *vyavaharika* (relative/pragmatic reality) but falls apart in the silence of *paramarthika* (absolute reality).

***Vivartavada*: The Logic of Appearance**

Advaita Vedanta addresses the problem of the One and the Many through the theory of *Vivartavada* (apparent transformation). Unlike *Parinamavada* (actual transformation), where the cause changes into the effect (like milk into curd), *Vivarta* implies that the cause remains unchanged while appearing as the effect (like a rope appearing as a snake).

In this model, the world is not a "creation" that stands ontologically separate from *Brahman*; it is *Brahman* appearing through the lens of *Maya* (cosmic power). *Maya* is the principle of inexplicable existence: it is neither real (*sat*) nor unreal (*asat*). This sophisticated category allows Advaita to explain the empirical world without attributing ontological duality to the Absolute. This naturally protects the immutability of God. In Thomism, God creates without changing Himself (a mystery often defended but hard to explain logically). In Advaita, the problem is dissolved: God does not actually *create* a separate reality; He merely *manifests* or *appears*. Thus, *Brahman* remains perfectly full and complete (*Purnam*). The creationist model, by positing a God who "acts" to produce a "result," inevitably drags the Divine into time and causality. *Vivartavada* avoids this by relegating causality to the realm of appearance.

Panikkar's Critique: The "Gap" of Creation

Raimon Panikkar critiques the Western interpretation of creation which sees the Creator and creature separated by an "unbridgeable abyss." He argues that Jesus himself never taught such a separation; rather, the experience of Jesus was one of non-duality ("I and the Father are one"). Panikkar proposes a "cosmotheandric" vision where God, Man, and World are three dimensions of a single reality, constitutive of one another. He utilizes the Advaitic insight to suggest that the "Creator" concept is a concession to dualistic thinking. For Panikkar, God is not "The Other"; God is the "depth" of all things.

Panikkar famously stated that "God created out of nothing" really means "God created out of Himself" (*a Deo*), a view that aligns closer to Eastern emanationism or *Vivarta* than strictly interpreted Thomistic *ex nihilo*. He suggests that the "nothing" is simply the "no-thing-ness" of God, not an external void. By reframing creation this way, Panikkar moves towards an Advaitic non-dualism that he feels is more faithful to the mystical experience than the scholastic insistence on ontological separation.

Divine Simplicity and Non-Duality (*Actus Purus* and *Nirguna Brahman*)

Aquinas's doctrine of Divine Simplicity is rigorous: God has no parts, no composition of form and matter, no distinction between substance and attributes. God *is* His goodness, His wisdom, His power. This is intended to be the height of apophatic (negative) theology in the West. Yet, critics argue that Thomism immediately reclothes this simple God in a multiplicity of analogical attributes. We speak of God's "intellect" and "will" as if they were distinct operations, even while technically denying it.

Furthermore, the Thomistic God is a "Person" or rather, three Persons in one Essence. Personhood implies relation, intellect, and will. While Aquinas purifies these terms, they remain anthropomorphic anchors. The concept of God as a "Supreme Being" who "knows" and "loves" creates a structural dualism within the Divine nature itself (the knower and the known), even if Aquinas tries to collapse them into one *Actus*. The criticism from the Advaitic perspective, voiced by figures like Swami Vivekananda and later academic Vedantins, is that a "Personal God" is inevitably a limited God, defined against other persons. This with the caveat there is nonetheless the concept of a "Personal God" within Hinduism as discussed later.

Nirguna Brahman: The Attribute-less Absolute

Shankara distinguishes between *Saguna Brahman* (Brahman with qualities, i.e., God/Ishvara) and *Nirguna Brahman* (Brahman without qualities). *Saguna Brahman* is the highest limit of the human mind: the Creator, the Lord, the object of devotion. But it is ultimately provisional. The highest reality is *Nirguna*; beyond all predicates, relations, and qualities.

This distinction is often misunderstood by Westerners as making the Absolute "abstract" or "void." However, Advaitins argue it is the only way to affirm the true Infinity of the Divine. To say "God is Good" is to limit God to the category of goodness (and implicitly oppose Him to evil). To say "God is Creator" is to bind Him to time. *Nirguna Brahman* transcends all binary oppositions. It is "Not this, not this" (*Neti Neti*).

The robustness of *Nirguna Brahman* lies in its total invulnerability to logical deconstruction. You cannot define, limit, or categorize that which has no attributes. Thomism attempts to reach this height with Divine Simplicity but is constantly pulled back by the requirements of Christian revelation (Trinity, Incarnation) which demand a relational, personal God. Advaita accommodates the personal God (*Ishvara*) as valid for worship (*Upasana*) but explicitly states that for the *Jnani* (knower of Truth), the personal aspect dissolves into the Impersonal Absolute.

Comparative theologians like Sara Grant have tried to equate *Nirguna Brahman* with the Thomistic Godhead (the Essence) and *Saguna Brahman* with the Trinity or the Creative Word. While this is a noble bridge-building effort, it ultimately highlights the divergence: for Aquinas, the Personal Trinity *is* the Ultimate Reality. There is no "higher" impersonal reality behind the Father, Son, and Spirit. For Shankara, the Personal is a mask of the Impersonal. The Advaitic position arguably

offers a more radical transcendence, freeing the Absolute from the "burden" of personality and relation. The *Isha Upanishad* discusses this Advaitic understanding of a 'mask' well.

Epistemology (*Analogia Entis* vs. *Neti Neti*)

To speak of God, Aquinas employs the *analogia entis* (analogy of being). We cannot speak of God univocally (words mean the same thing for God and us) because God is infinite. We cannot speak equivocally (words mean something totally different) because then we could know nothing. Analogy lies in the middle: words apply to God primarily and to creatures secondarily, but in a way that transcends our comprehension.

While brilliant, the analogy of being has been critiqued by both Protestant theologians (like Barth, who called it the "invention of the Antichrist") and Eastern thinkers as being too confident in human language. It presumes a "ladder of being" where creatures are similar to God. This similarity, Advaitins argue, is illusory. If God is Infinite, there is no ratio or proportion between the finite and the Infinite. Any analogy is ultimately misleading because it drags the Infinite down into the realm of name and form (*nama-rupa*).

***Neti Neti* and *Lakshana*: The Method of Negation**

Advaita employs *Neti Neti* ("Not this, not this") as its primary epistemological tool. This is similar to the Western *via negativa*, but it is applied more ruthlessly. It negates not just attributes like "finite" or "mortal," but also "creator," "knower," and even "one" (if "one" implies a numerical count).

Furthermore, Advaita uses *Jahad-Ajahad Lakshana* (exclusive-inclusive implication). When we say "Thou Art That," the direct meaning of "Thou" (the individual ego) and "That" (the universal

Lord) are contradictory. We must drop the contradictory parts (the limitedness of the ego and the remoteness of the Lord) to reveal the common substrate: Pure Consciousness. This is not an analogy; it is an equation of identity that requires the destruction of the terms themselves.

The Advaitic method is arguably more robust because it does not pretend to "describe" God. It aims to trigger an intuition (*anubhava*) by negating all false identifications. Thomism, by clinging to analogy, maintains a "theology" (words about God). Advaita points towards "silence" (the end of words). As Abhishiktananda noted, one must pass beyond the "concepts" of theology to the "cave of the heart" where only the *Atman* shines. The Thomistic reliance on rational demonstration and analogical predication is seen by the mystic as a "mental gymnastic" that can obscure the direct realization of the Self.

Theological Anthropology

In Thomism, the human soul is a created substance, a form of the body. It has a beginning in time (at conception) but is immortal by grace. It is distinct from God and will remain distinct forever, even in the Beatific Vision. The goal of human life is union with God, but never fusion; the "I" of the mystic remains distinct from the "I" of God. Simon Critchley in his book *Mysticism* (2024), for instance, does not even touch on Hindu mystics and Indic understandings of mysticism.

Advaita posits a radically different anthropology. The core of the human being is the *Atman*, which is not created, not born, and does not die. The *Atman* is not a "part" of *Brahman*; it *is Brahman*. The "individual soul" (*Jiva*) with its ego and history is a superimposition. Liberation (*Moksha*) is not going to a heaven to see God; it is the realization that "I am Brahman" (*Aham Brahmasmi*).

This view offers a psychological and ontological hardiness that appeals to modern seekers of 'spirituality' over religion. It solves the problem of alienation. There is no ontological distance to

cross. We do not need to *become* something we are not; we simply need to wake up. Thomism, with its insistence on the "creatureliness" of the soul, enforces a permanent subordination. The creature is always "nothing" in itself, sustained only by God. This can lead to a spiritual psychology of unworthiness and infinite debt. Advaita affirms the supreme dignity of the Self—"You are the Infinite".

Grace (*Gratia*) vs. Knowledge (*Jnana*)

Thomism relies heavily on Grace. Grace is a supernatural gift infused by God to elevate the soul. Salvation is impossible without this external aid. It is a transaction between two wills: the human and the Divine.

For Advaita, liberation is by *Jnana* (knowledge). This is not intellectual data, but direct insight. While *Ishvara's* grace (*anugraha*) can help remove obstacles, the ultimate realization is not a "gift" given to a "recipient," because there is no recipient separate from the Giver. The realization is intrinsic. The "Grace vs. Works" debate that plagued Western Christianity is sidestepped by Advaita, which views both grace and effort as belonging to the realm of *Maya*. In the ultimate state, there is no one to be saved and no one to save. This is absolutely contrary to Biblical notions of Justification and a clear understanding of the Advaitic position can be found in the *Nirvana Shatkam*.

Abhishiktananda critiqued the Western "externalized" conception of grace. He moved from a theology of "fulfillment" (Christ fulfills Vedanta) to a theology of "mutual enrichment" and finally to a near-total adoption of the Advaitic non-dual experience, where the "I-Thou" of grace is transcended by the "I AM" of realization. He found that the Thomistic category of grace kept the soul in a state of duality, preventing the final plunge into the Abyss of God.

The Intercultural Synthesis : Panikkar and Abhishiktananda

Raimon Panikkar stands as the giant who attempted to mediate these worldviews without reducing one to the other. He critiqued the Thomistic reliance on "substance" and substituted it with "relation" (though distinct from the Advaitic non-relation). His concept of "Cosmotheandrisms" (the Divine, Human, and Cosmic are invariant dimensions of the Real) attacks the Thomistic separation of God and World.

Crucially, Panikkar introduced the concept of 'Tempiternity' (*tempiternidad*). Thomism strictly separates Time (creature) and Eternity (God). This creates the problem of how God interacts with the world without changing. Panikkar argues that reality is tempiternal; time and eternity are two sides of the same coin. The eternal is found *in* the temporal, not *after* it or *above* it. This draws heavily on the Advaitic non-difference of *Nirvana* and *Samsara*. It offers a more robust philosophy of history and presence than the scholastic "frozen eternity" of the *Nunc Stans*.

Swami Abhishiktananda: The Cave of the Heart

Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda) lived the tension of Thomism and Advaita in his own flesh. His diaries reveal a progressive disillusionment with the "Greek" categories of his seminary training. He found that the Trinity, when viewed through the "Advaitic spectacle," opens up into *Saccidananda*. He famously equated the Father with *Sat* (the Source/Silence), the Son with *Chit* (the Logos/Knowledge of the Self), and the Spirit with *Ananda* (the Bliss of Non-Duality).

However, Abhishiktananda went further. He critiqued the "I-Thou" relationship which is central to Christian prayer. He argued that as long as there is a "Thou" invoked, the ego remains solid. The ultimate prayer is the silence where "Thou" dissolves into "I" (the universal I of God). "The

monistic Vedanta is the simplest form in which you can put truth," he quoted Vivekananda, acknowledging that the dualistic approach was a "mistake" or at least a lower stage. His later writings suggest that the Christian claim of "uniqueness" and "history" must be relativized in the face of the absolute Advaitic experience. The Thomistic framework, which supports the uniqueness of the Incarnation and the Church structure, appeared to him increasingly as a "mythos" valid for the devotee but transparent to the sage.

On Hindu Ontology

In comparing the two systems, one observes that Thomism is a philosophy of distinction and order. It excels at categorizing, establishing hierarchies, and affirming the value of the finite individual. It is a cataphatic fortress that gives the intellect plenty of furniture. However, this strength is its weakness when approaching the Infinite. By defining God so precisely (Pure Act, Essence=Existence, Trinity of Persons), it risks domesticating the Mystery. It creates a "God of the philosophers" that is conceptually distinct from the world, leading to the logical problems of interaction, evil, and the competition of beings (God + World).

Advaita Vedanta, conversely, is a philosophy of identity and negation. It excels at deconstructing boundaries and pointing towards the Ineffable. Its strength lies in its radicality. It does not compromise the Infinity of *Brahman* to save the reality of the world. If the world contradicts the Infinity of *Brahman*, the world must go (it is *Mithya*). This intellectual courage creates a system that is internally watertight against the problems of dualism.

The Problem of "God + World"

The most potent argument for the robustness of Advaita over Thomism is the "mathematics of the Infinite."

- **Thomism:** Infinite God + Finite World =?
 - If the result is "More" than God alone, then God was not truly Infinite (limited by the lack of the world).
 - If the result is "Same," then the world is an illusion or adds nothing real.
 - Thomism tries to hold the middle ground (world is real but adds only "extensive" not "intensive" being), but this is often seen as a verbal solution to an ontological contradiction.⁵
- **Advaita:** Infinite Brahman + World (Maya) = Infinite Brahman.
 - Since the world is not a second reality but an appearance, the math holds. Infinity remains Infinite. *Purnamadah Purnamidam* (That is Full, This is Full; from Fullness comes Fullness, Fullness remains).

This Advaitic equation offers a more stable metaphysical ground for the Infinite. It avoids the "theistic mutualism" (Dolezal's term) where God and world interact as partners. Advaita preserves the Aseity (self-existence) of God more strictly than classical Theism, which requires a creation to manifest God's glory (even if freely willed).

The Problem of the 'Person'

Thomism's insistence on God as "Person" is emotionally satisfying but metaphysically perilous. Personality implies limitation (I am I, and not You). Advaita's trans-personal Absolute includes the personal but exceeds it. This is arguably a better understanding because of the human person since it can account for the personalistic experience (at the level of *Saguna Brahman*) while also accounting for the mystical experience of total absorption (at the level of *Nirguna*). Thomism struggles to account for the apophatic experience of "melting away" without resorting to vague

language about "union of wills." Advaita provides a precise ontology for the disappearance of the ego.

The Convergence in the Cave

While Thomism and Advaita diverge on the status of the world and the individual soul, they converge in their ultimate objective: the beatitude of the human spirit in the realization of the Absolute. Catholic theologians like De Smet have argued that if we strip Aquinas of his Aristotelian baggage and read his "Act of Being" as "Pure Consciousness," and if we read Shankara's "Illusion" as "Dependence," the two systems move closer. However, this irenic harmonization often ignores the sharp edges. The divergence is real. Thomism is committed to the reality of the distinction; Advaita is committed to the unreality of the distinction.

Advaita provides a metaphysics that safeguards the absolute transcendence of God and solves the logical contradictions of the Creator-creature relationship, the Hindu understanding of Brahman and Maya offers a radical, framework as mentioned earlier. It avoids the pitfalls of dualism that have plagued Western theology—the problem of evil, the gap between God and Man, and the conflict between science and religion (since Advaita deals with consciousness, not material causality). The problem of evil is an insurmountable problem within theism. For a better understanding of this problem within Judaeo Christian paradigms, see Nikolai Berdyaev on the persistence of this problem and of course, William Rowe's 'fawn'.

As Raimon Panikkar concluded, the future of theology may lie not in a victory of one over the other, but in an "intra-religious dialogue" where the dogmatist learns to dissolve the rigidity of his beliefs within non-duality. In this light, Thomism appears not as an error, but as a magnificent, albeit provisional, structure; a cathedral of concepts that must eventually be left behind when one enters the cave of the heart to meet the fire of the Real.

The "divergence" is thus the difference between a map and the territory. Thomism maps the cosmos and the Creator with exquisite precision. Advaita burns the map and reveals that there was never any distance to travel. In the realm of the Spirit, the philosophy that burns the map may indeed be the more robust guide to the Truth that is "One without a Second" (*Ekam Evadvitiyam*).