

FROM NON-PLURALISM TO PERPENDICULARITY

The Experience That Turned the System

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Orientation

This is an intellectual-biographical note recording the turn from which the entire Catharturgy Corpus issued. Trained as a scholar of Eastern religions and comparative studies, the author had arrived, by the time of his graduate thesis, at a fully developed nondual metaphysics — qualitative non-pluralism — on which good and evil, like up and down, are not ultimate opposites but apparent polarities that dissolve into a unified, non-plural ground. He endorsed this position in full. The turn came through an experience, around 2013 to 2014, while the non-pluralist work was still his active framework: an encounter with what presented itself under the name his nondual Thelema had assigned to the dissolved divine pole — Satan, identified in that system with the cosmic divine feminine, the Shakti of Vedantic Tantra imported into the West — but which was, in the event, nothing of the kind. It was not a vast impersonal principle resolving into the One; it was a small, particular, angry, bounded other. The mismatch between the cosmic category the metaphysics required and the petty particular actually encountered functioned as a falsification of non-pluralism: it presented a distinction that would not dissolve, and a metaphysics in which all distinctions ultimately dissolve cannot survive one that does not. Perpendicular ontology was the structure devised in answer — the account on which distinctions can be real and irreducible without being a flat opposition on a single axis, because they lie on different axes, perpendicular, distinct in substance, related only at the intersection. This note records the arc, held in the same three-readings discipline as the companion analyses, so that the experience is credited as the genuine hinge of the system without the system's validity being made hostage to the experience's ontology.

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I. The Position Held: Qualitative Non-Pluralism

By the time of his graduate thesis, written in 2012, the author had arrived at a settled metaphysics, and it was a nondual one. Trained as an undergraduate in Eastern religions and already the author of extensive comparative work, he had followed the path most Western thinkers take when they go East for their first principles: toward the dissolution of ontological distinction into a unified, non-plural ground. On this view good and evil are not ultimate opposites but apparent polarities, related as up and down are related — each meaningless without the other, neither finally real as an independent term, both resolving at the limit into the single reality of which they are the apparent faces. He gave this position its own name and a full-throated endorsement: qualitative non-pluralism, the thesis that the qualitative distinctions we treat as ultimate are, at the ground, not plural at all.

Within the Thelemic framework he then held, this nondualism had a specific and characteristic application to the problem of evil. Satan, in that reading, was not the conventional fallen adversary but the misrecognised cosmic principle — the divine feminine, the Shakti of Vedantic Tantra imported into the West, the Hadit and Baphomet pole of a non-dual existential relation in which what the dualist mistakes for evil is in truth one face of a coin whose other face is the figure of Jesus, the two dissolving into the single reality they jointly express. This is the elegant and seductive move of the whole nondual tradition applied to ethics: there is no real adversary, only the divine seen under the aspect of its own apparent opposition, and the work of wisdom is to see through the opposition to the unity beneath. The author held this not as a tentative hypothesis but as his considered position, and it was the framework still active in his mind when the turn came.

II. The Category Collision

The turn came through an experience, around 2013 to 2014, in the interval between the writing of the thesis and the completion of the degree — that is, while non-pluralism was still his working framework and not a settled past position he was revisiting. The fuller account of the experience itself is given in the companion analyses and is held there in the discipline of parallel readings; what matters here is the single philosophical fact it forced, and it can be stated exactly. A voice presented itself under the name his metaphysics had assigned to the dissolved divine pole — it called itself Satan, the fallen angel. And by his nondual Thelema, that name denoted the cosmic divine feminine, the vast impersonal Shakti-principle resolving into the non-plural ground.

What he encountered was not that. It was not vast, not impersonal, not a cosmic principle, and not in any recognisable sense the divine feminine. It was, in his own exact description, a tiny angry asshole of a voice — small, particular, bounded, petty, and malevolent. The label matched; the ontological category could not have been more wrong. This is the precise structure of the turn, and it is worth naming for what it was: a category collision. The metaphysics required that anything bearing the name Satan be the cosmic principle in apparent opposition, dissolving at the limit into the One. The thing actually present was a small particular other that did not dissolve into anything, that was not the imported cosmic feminine, that was simply and irreducibly a

bounded malevolent particular. The nondual frame had exactly one move available to it: to insist that this petty particular must really be the cosmic principle in disguise, that its smallness and malevolence were appearance and its true nature the dissolved divine. And against that insistence his own perception simply refused. Whatever this was, it was not the cosmic feminine wearing a small mask. It was small.

III. The Falsification

The philosophical consequence was decisive, and it operated not as an argument he constructed but as a falsification the experience delivered. A nondual metaphysics is, in its essence, a metaphysics in which all distinctions ultimately dissolve — that is the whole of its claim, that plurality is apparent and unity is real, that every opposition resolves at the ground into the single non-plural reality. Such a metaphysics can survive a great deal. It can absorb apparent evil by reading it as the shadow side of the good, apparent multiplicity by reading it as the play of the One, apparent opposition by reading it as complementarity. What it cannot survive is a single genuine distinction that will not dissolve — because if even one distinction is real, irreducible, and non-dissolving, then plurality is not merely apparent, and the central claim is false. One non-dissolving distinction is fatal to a metaphysics of universal dissolution.

That is what the experience presented: a distinction that would not dissolve. The thing encountered was genuinely other, genuinely opposed, genuinely particular, and it would not resolve into the cosmic principle the metaphysics needed it to be. The nondual model could only dissolve it — and dissolving it was precisely the move the experience exposed as false. He had held, in qualitative non-pluralism, that the qualitative distinctions were not finally plural. The experience showed him a qualitative distinction that was finally, stubbornly, irreducibly plural — and the position could not contain it. The thesis he had written and the framework he still held were, in that recognition, falsified: not refuted by a better argument, but broken against a particular that would not behave as the metaphysics required.

It is worth being clear about the form of the inference, because it is the part that survives independent of how the experience itself is finally read. The experience was the occasion of the insight; it was not the premise of the argument. The insight is structural: a metaphysics of universal dissolution cannot accommodate a non-dissolving distinction, and therefore the discovery of even one such distinction overturns it. Whether the distinction was revealed by a genuine other, surfaced by an autonomous complex, or thrown up by a destabilised perception, the structural point stands — the distinction either dissolves or it does not, and a single one that does not is enough. This is why the turn does not depend on settling the un settleable question of what the experience was. The companion analyses hold that question open in three parallel readings, and it remains open. The philosophical turn is secure regardless, because the insight it produced is true as a matter of structure and not as a matter of the experience's ontology.

A nondual metaphysics is a metaphysics in which all distinctions dissolve. It can survive almost anything except one distinction that will not dissolve. The experience presented exactly that — a small, particular, irreducible other that the cosmic-principle reading could not contain and could

only falsely dissolve. One non-dissolving distinction is fatal to the dissolution of all distinction. That is the whole of the turn.

IV. Perpendicular Ontology as the Answer

The question the falsification left was not idle, because the two positions ordinarily available to a Western thinker who has gone East and come back are both inadequate to it. The first is the nondualism just falsified: the distinction is apparent, all opposition dissolves into the One. The second is its familiar opposite, a flat dualism: the distinction is real and ultimate, and good and evil are two co-equal principles locked in opposition — the old Manichaean settlement, which preserves the distinction only by elevating evil into a second ultimate, a move the author found as unacceptable as the dissolution it replaces. The experience had ruled out the first; the second was no improvement, since a small petty malevolent particular is manifestly not a co-equal cosmic principle either. What was needed was a third structure, neither the dissolution of the distinction nor its elevation into a second ultimate.

Perpendicular ontology was that third structure, and it is the exact answer to the problem the experience posed. Its claim is that distinctions can be real and irreducible without being a flat opposition on a single axis — because the terms need not lie on the same axis at all. On a single axis, two terms are either the dissolving poles of one continuum (the nondual reading) or two ends in ultimate opposition (the dualist reading); those are the only two options a single axis allows. But terms on perpendicular axes are neither. They are genuinely distinct — distinct in substance, the perpendicular relation being precisely one across which substance is not a shared coordinate — and they are related only at their intersection, transmitting pattern and not substance. The distinction is preserved absolutely: there is no dissolution, because the axes do not meet except at the single point of intersection, and along their lengths they share nothing. And yet evil is not thereby elevated into a second ultimate, because perpendicularity is not symmetry: the registers are not co-equal opposed principles but distinct dimensions, one of which may be the privation or disorder of the other rather than its equal and opposite.

This is why the privation account of evil, which the Corpus develops throughout, is the natural ethics of a perpendicular ontology and was impossible on the non-pluralism it replaced. Privation requires a real direction — a real away-from, a genuine departure from a norm that does not itself dissolve into the departure. A nondual metaphysics cannot supply this, because it has no non-dissolving norm to depart from; every apparent privation resolves back into the unity. But once the distinction is real and non-dissolving, privation becomes intelligible: evil is not the cosmic feminine misrecognised, and not a co-equal dark principle, but the disorder, the corruption, the privation of a good that remains real and undissolved beneath the corruption. The tiny angry particular was legible at last — not as the divine feminine in disguise, not as Satan the co-equal adversary, but as exactly what it appeared to be: a small privative thing, a disorder, a corruption that the perpendicular structure could finally place without either dissolving it upward into the divine or elevating it into a second god.

V. The Hinge of the System

The whole of the Catharturgy Corpus can be read as the working-out of the structure this turn required. The perpendicular registers, distinct in substance and continuous only at the intersection, are the generalisation of the single insight that some distinctions are real and do not dissolve. The dimensional indexing of substance, the kenotic-effluent cosmology, the privation account of evil and its extension into the Qliphoth of the hubs and the paths — all of these presuppose the rejection of universal dissolution that the experience forced. The system is, in its formal heart, an account of how distinction can be real without being either dissolved or doubled, and that account was demanded by an encounter with a distinction that refused to dissolve.

It is fitting to mark the shape of the development without overstating it. It is not a Hegelian synthesis, in which the thesis and its negation are preserved and blended; it is a genuine reversal followed by a reconstruction. The thesis was qualitative non-pluralism. The antithesis was not a doctrine but an experience — a particular that would not dissolve. And what followed was not a blending of non-pluralism with its negation but the abandonment of non-pluralism for a third structure that neither it nor a simple dualism could provide. Perpendicular ontology keeps what the nondual tradition was right about — that the registers are continuous, that creation is not severed from its source, that there is no ultimate dualism of two gods — while refusing what it was wrong about, the dissolution of all real distinction. It keeps what the dualist tradition was right about — that some distinctions are real and irreducible — while refusing what it was wrong about, the elevation of evil into a second ultimate. It is the structure that holds both truths, and it was an experience, not an argument, that revealed the need for it.

There is a final observation proper to the discernment discipline the author practises, and it cuts in his favour. A metaphysics overturned by an experience that confirmed what the thinker already wanted is suspect; a metaphysics overturned by an experience that pushed hard against the thinker's settled and cherished position is, by the author's own criterion, less likely to be mere self-confirmation. He did not want non-pluralism to be false; he had written its thesis and endorsed it fully. The experience took something from him — it cost him a position he had built and believed — and what it gave in return was harder, stranger, and less consoling than the elegant dissolution it replaced. That the turn went against his preference, rather than with it, is the mark, in his own framework, that something genuine occurred at the boundary, whatever its ultimate nature. The system that resulted does not depend on settling that nature. But it does owe its existence to the moment the dissolution failed, and a small irreducible other stood in the place where the metaphysics had promised there would be only the One.

The thesis was the dissolution of all distinction. The antithesis was not an argument but a particular that would not dissolve. The synthesis was not a blending but a third structure — perpendicular ontology — on which distinction is real without being either dissolved into unity or doubled into two gods. The system owes its existence to the moment the dissolution failed, and a small irreducible other stood where the metaphysics had promised only the One.

References and Related Papers

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