

**‘Thinking’ without ‘Things’: without
identity, without Non-contradiction, and yet
‘Thinking’ still.**

If one ‘thinks’ one is supposed to think about ‘something’. But is this necessary. And, in any case, what is a ‘thing’, Is, for example, a ‘problem’ a ‘thing’, and yet as everyone knows, we think about ‘problems’, and if problems are not ‘things’, what are we thinking about. And philosophers are supposed to think even about ‘thinking’, and ‘thinking’ certainly is not a ‘thing’.

Thinking, then, need not be about a thing. But what is a ‘thing’. Has a ‘thing’ to be necessarily ‘somewhere’, located in Space and need it have a temporal discussion also; space, time coordinates as, it is generally ‘said’. But as both space and time are indefinitely divisible, shall the notion of a ‘thing’ need some restriction and, at the other end, vitational shall any restriction to be imposed on what will constitute a ‘whole in space or time, or both.

Science to-day ‘works’ at both ends and creates seemingly unnecessary problems at least for those who want to understand what it say:, if not also for itself. The ‘universe’ according to it is around 14 billion years

old and there are ‘particles’ that last only a millionth of a second, and yet both are ‘things’, presumably because they have given them a ‘name’ and whatever, is given a name, because a ‘thing’, just as ‘say’, God or **Brahman** or **Iswara**.

But ‘particles’ are also supposed to have ‘wave-like’ properties, and ‘waves’ certainly are not ‘things’, at least the sort of things that ‘particles’ are. Shall we then distinguish between types of ‘things’, But why think in terms of ‘things’, at all? Does it help at all, or just create more confusion Shall ‘forces’ be also treated as ‘things’, for Science wants to talk about physical reality in terms of “Fundamental Forces” which it wants to reduce to as few as possible. But is “gravitational force” a thing; and what sort of a thing would “electro-magnetic force” be which has to have a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ change with intrinsically in-built properties of ‘attraction’ and ‘repulsion’ in it.

What sort of ‘properties’ a ‘thing’ should have in order to be a ‘thing’, and has it to be ‘locatable’ in space and time if it is the sort of ‘thing’ that has necessarily to be so, for it is supposed to be that sort of ‘thing’, But space and time are supposed to be ‘infinitely divisible’ in principle and, if so, ‘things’ would become ‘momentary’ “ point-instants” having an “illusory continuity”, like the alata –cakra or the revolving ‘Wheel of Fire’, as the Buddhists argued long ago. But the problem relating to how a ‘thing’ is to be understood if arithmetical and geometrical considerations are brought into the picture, is far

complicated and complex than the application of the arithmetical operation of 'divisibility' seems to make it. We will have to accommodate the 'irrational', the 'imagination and perhaps even the 'Transfinite Alaphs' of Cantor into the heart of 'things'. And, not just this we will also have the difficult problems of 'choice' in respect of the geometry we would like our 'thing' to be located in.

If this were all, even then the problem would seem 'insoluble' but, unfortunately for those who want to 'understand' a 'thing', the 'difficulties' do not cease just here. A 'thing', if it is to be a thing, must have properties, relations and powers of effectively, causality and making some difference by the very force of its being just what it is. Each of these creates problems of its own, but the more fundamental emanates from those that are characterized as being 'incompatible' as in case the one, whether it be 'property' or 'relations, or 'power', obtains, the 'others' cannot, and if they 'appear' to do, the 'thing' cannot be regarded as a thing in the 'real' sense of the term 'contradictory' and 'contradiction' are the usual traditional name deriving from Aristotelian logic and considered as a characteristic of sentences, propositions or judgments which, in Aristotle, had to have the same subject a requirement which is not needed in modern sentential logic where 'negative', seems to function independently and is concerned only with the 'truth-value' of the proposition or the sentence or the judgment, and not with the 'actuality' of the 'exclusion' of the property or the relation or the power concerned.

The ‘exclusion’ need not necessarily be ‘experiential’ in the empirical sense of the word. Nor need it be purely definitional, as some have tried to say. Even in mathematics, there are ‘exclusions’ as otherwise the term “ Non-Euclidean geometries” would make no sense and the question which of them is ‘true’ of the “physical world” make no sense.

But what is this ‘exclusion’, this power of ‘negation’, on which the whole argument for understanding the notion of a ‘thing’ depends and on which it is built. “This is not that” is supposed to be the heart of being a ‘thing’ without which the ‘understanding’ of ‘this’ would be impossible as it would not have a distinctive ‘identity’ of its own for being understood as what it is. But ‘difference’ need not necessarily lead to ‘exclusion’ or ‘incompatibility’, as has generally been thought. The Aristotelian formulation of the law of identity as “A is A” is prima facie incompatible with his formulating of the Law of contradiction or the Law of Excluded Middle If “ A can be B”, as it necessarily has to be if “ A cannot be both B and Not B” and “ A must either be B or not-B”, then “ A just cannot be simply A, but has to be something else also, a ‘something’ symbolized by “B”.

The purely abstract notion of ‘identity’ as symbolized by Aristotle is, this, not only empty but meaningless, something to which Moore indirectly pointed when he distinguishes between a statement such as “pleasure is pleasure” and “pleasure is good”. The current

reformulation of the law on which the notion of a “thing” rests does not fare any better. It shifts the problem from the ‘referent’ of a world to its ‘meaning’, and sees meaning in terms of the ‘use’ of the word, and understands the law as an stipulative imperative to keep ‘use’ of the ‘word’ or the ‘term’ unchanged in a particular cognitive discomic as the discussion about what is claimed as ‘knowledge’ would become ‘self-defeating’ if the normative injunction were not observed.

The reformation shifts the problem to the identity of ‘discomic’ or ‘context’ and makes the law ‘normative’ in a way whose par-reaching implications have not been seen. Logic becomes something like ‘ethics’, an a priori conditional pre-requirement of the possibility of inter-subjective discussion and argumentation amongst human beings, just as the latter may be understood as an a priori conditional pre-requirement for ‘living together’ as ‘human beings’ amongst human beings.

But what is overlooked by those who argue like this is that whether it be ‘discussion and argumentation’ or ‘living together’ each, in its own way, not only involves but demands a continuous re-shifting modification and change in the “illusory identity” of each and all of the linguistic and behavioural signs or signs that are transmitted, reflected back in converse transmission amongst participants who are continuously in motion intellectually and emotionally for more than the so-called “observers in motion” about whom physicists do no tire of

talking since Einstein appeared on the scene. And, what is no analogue or parallel in light which, as a signal, is, have not only a constant velocity, but a velocity faster than which there cannot be, for even if it were to be there human beings, constituted as they physically are, will not be able to know it.

But linguistic and behavioural signals in inter-subjective communication which occurs in ‘discussion and arguments’, and ‘living together’ does not suffer from the ‘limitation’, which ‘signals’ in physics seem to suffer from. The whole world of space and time with its indefinitely extending past and future can be talked about and discussed, as also that which is beyond space and time, or to which these categories do not apply. But, what is even more, all the “prepositional attitudes” can be communicated both linguistically and behaviourally, just by the inflation of a tone or emphasis in your opinion or a movement of your head or hands or some other gesture and, if one so likes one may use the word ‘No’ and reduce the whole to an utter ‘nullity’ by its negation.

(DAYA KRISHNA)