

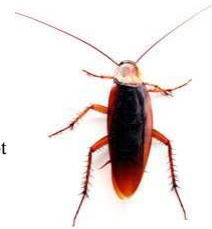
## Lecture 3

### Philosophical Themes in the *Upanishads*

## The Issue of Atman

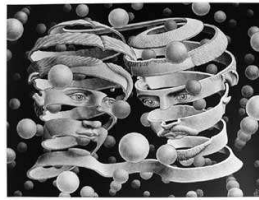
### 1. Who am I *really*?

- there is a difference between what we *appear* to be and what we *are*
- our five senses do not provide a satisfying answer



## The Issue of Atman

- we are never conscious of what does our perceiving
- but *this* is who we *really* are
- so: reality is never an object of consciousness:
  - we are that which sees but is not seen, that which is aware but not an object of awareness



## The Issue of Atman

- we are never conscious of what does our perceiving
- but *this* is who we *really* are
- so: reality is never an object of consciousness
  - we are that which sees but is not seen, that which is aware but not an object of awareness
- we cannot have this knowledge by becoming an object for ourselves
- to know who we really are, we must *identify* with what we are
  - no separation of knower and known
  - transformation *into* truth
  - satya

## The Issue of Atman

- Atman is knowing knowing itself
- Atman is *consciousness itself* that is not *consciousness of anything*
- Each of us *really* is consciousness itself
- We can experience this by going beyond the objects of consciousness, beyond subject-object duality (cf. yoga)

## The Issue of Brahman

### 2. What is reality *really*?

- What is there?
- Where does what there is come from? (what is the *basis* of reality?)
- *Upanishads* focus on *second* question
- "Brahman" is the name given to the basis of reality, whatever it is
- Brahman must be unlimited:
  - since it is the basis, there is nothing that could limit it.
- But this is not very informative.

## The Issue of Brahman

- *Chandogya Upanishad* says that Brahman is space (as in place)
  - space is behind the location of physical objects, waiting to be filled by *objects*
  - likewise, Brahman is behind real things, waiting to be filled by *beings*



"Wherefrom do all these worlds come? They come from space. All beings arise from space, and into space they return: space is indeed their beginning, and space is their final end." (1.9.1)

## The Issue of Oneness

3. Atman = Brahman
- Atman has no discriminating features
  - so: nothing distinguishes my Atman from yours
  - no discriminating features → Atman is one (not a plurality)
  - Brahman also lacks discriminating features: Brahman is also a oneness
  - there can't be *two* onenesses
  - hence: the reality of what you are is the same as reality itself: Atman *is* Brahman
- "We should consider that in the inner world Brahman is consciousness; and we should consider that in the outer world Brahman is space."  
-*Chandogya Upan.* 3.18.1

## The Issue of Plurality

### 4. Appearance vs. Reality

- the variety and plurality of objects in the world is not the ultimate reality
- ultimate reality is discovered by realizing one's Atman

- **tat tvam asi** (that is you)
- "This invisible and subtle essence [Brahman] is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is reality. That is truth. TAT TVAM ASI."  
-*Chandogya Upan.* 6.14
- **neti, neti** (not this, not that)
  - Atman is everything (as a whole) but nothing (in particular)

## The Issue of Maya

### 5. Knowledge of Atman / Brahman brings freedom

- no subject-object distinction in selfless awareness → no experience of oneself as distinct from others → no experience of oneself undergoing pain or illness or death

"One who sees this [that Atman is Brahman] does not experience death, sickness, or distress anymore."  
-*Chandogya Upan.* 7.26.2

## The Issue of Maya

- even though world of everyday experience is not ultimate reality, it still exists
- the appearances are *illusions*, not *delusion*
- world of appearances is world of **Maya** = illusion
- knowledge of ultimate reality does not remove illusions
- but it does allow one to enjoy the appearances: this is the path of joy
  - think magic shows (see next slide)



## Reading for Next Time

- *Upanishads*: 113-132
  - Chandogya Upanishad: 113-126
  - Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad: 127-132

also: **Quiz #2 next class!**

(covering material from Lectures 2 & 3)