

to suffer (*see* The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:42) like Sri Ramakrishna chose to suffer of his own free will. Nonetheless Agamben should now supplant Derrida *et al* within the social sciences and humanities since it is not grammatology which demands our immediate attention, but the rise of fundamentalism. The world is teetering towards a Third World War as Pope Francis has warned; where Yazidi women, for instance are being sold in the bazaars of The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; a non-state which is nonetheless hell on earth—Dante’s *Inferno* realised. Agamben’s critique of Pilate warns us of the consequences of inaction and the futility of asking ‘Quid est veritas?’ and then doing nothing when confronted with the truth. The answer to what the Supreme Court of India has asked, the question with which we began this review, is that we have to either choose harsher punishments for perpetrators of heinous crimes or let our minors be raped. There is no middle ground. Agamben in the best philosophical fashion, following Frank Kermode, opts for the morally convenient ‘sense of an ending’ rather than condemning Pilate once for all. Agamben is himself morally ambiguous and thus sees Pilate as not entirely morally culpable. The *New Testament* on the other hand is certain of Pilate’s complicity with evil. Dante, whom Agamben tears apart, was convinced that a wrong is a wrong and nothing can justify violence against the non-violent; there are absolute evils as there is one absolute Good. Immanuel Kant is more existentially honest than Giorgio Agamben.

Lest our intellectual honchos find this reviewer lacking in rigorous homework, he quotes the following from a very lucid article, which naturally finds Agamben suitable for defence of a man who stands for the fragmentation of India:

The contemporary Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben has written in a manner that is both intellectually persuasive and ethically pressing, about a figure found in ancient Roman law called the homo sacer. This is a man who is the most vulnerable denizen of the political community, because his absolute vulnerability is the condition for the absolute power of the ruler. ...

Agamben delves deep into the political and philosophical treatises of ancient Rome to

understand this strange figure because he finds, within the murderous space of the Nazi concentration camp, the same utter abandonment/banishment that does not make sense in the inclusive framework of modern citizenship. ... Thus every person in Auschwitz, according to Agamben, is a homo sacer: neither a criminal, nor a sacrificial victim, and yet consigned to death (Ananya Vajpeyi, ‘The Bare Life Of S.A.R. Geelani, Ph.D’ <<http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/the-bare-life-of-sar-geelani-phd/226458>> accessed 26 February, 2016).

This *homo sacer* that Agamben strives to make explicit is not the *homo sacer* who is Jesus, the Suffering Servant. Agamben uses sacred motifs to deconstruct major faith traditions.

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One Self

Nome

Society of Abidance in Truth (SAT),
1834 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA
95060, USA. www.satramana.org.
2015. viii + 648 pp. PB. \$24.95 ISBN
9780981940977.

Another Q: What of a situation of extreme engagement of the senses in violence in a concentration camp? There may be torture, starvation, or extreme pain. Can one still connect with this Knowledge under such violent circumstances?

N.: The violence or injury is to the body only. The Knowledge is intrinsically bodiless. The situation has no effect. ...

N.: If we want to eliminate sensory pain, an anesthetic will do, but giving someone an anesthetic does not endow her with wisdom. Nowhere has the [Ramana] Maharshi, Sankara, or ... the Buddha, recommended anesthetics as a practice. ... The Wisdom, which is Self-Knowledge ... is not reached by the senses ... The idea that you are a sensing entity or a nexus point of all the senses is only imagined in the mind. When you do not imagine such in the mind, you are unaffected, just as space is unaffected by whatever seems to coursing through it. (312–3)

One of the strong objections against Advaita Vedanta is that it does not adequately address the lived experience of those who face annihilation due to genocides tacitly supported by extremist Semitic thinkers like Musa Cerantonio. Arne Grøn writes: ‘Religion deals with phenomena that carry an infinite significance for humans that they themselves do not master. Would this give us a lead in understanding what the religious can do in responses to mass atrocities? The short answer would be that this depends on whether religion can address the limit of ethics, as an ethical limit (Arne Grøn, ‘The Limit of Ethics—The Ethics of the Limit, *The Religious in Responses to Mass Atrocity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds Thomas Brudholm and Thomas Cushman (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009), 38–59; 51).

This simple solution to Grøn is that there must be an external evil entity whose *esse* is as real as the *esse* of God apart from being *not*-God. This non-being is evil. We humans want to *master* theodicy. This is a logical fallacy because evil within Western religions participates in the *becoming* of the good; the *Felix culpa*. Further, since the mercy of God turns evil to good, it is not impossible that this evil is itself an illusion since an Aristotelian opposite—evil in this case—can never be less than what it opposes. Advaita Vedanta solves this problem of evil and Nome in simple language addresses and resolves the problem of evil in this book. A world view that does not tackle the problem of evil is a deficient world view. This reviewer is moved by the simplicity of Nome’s style throughout the book. If one were to begin studying Advaita Vedanta; this book is an excellent supplement to the basic texts. Master Nome is a follower of Ramana Maharshi and this book is a fitting tribute to that saint of Arunachala.

One aspect of the book needs to be highlighted in this age of incessant talk and constant connectivity: Nome rightly insists on the importance of silence and its nuances throughout this book. Language with its elisions and aporias is important in philosophy since it sorts out what Jennifer L Geddes terms ‘the double bind’ (*The Religious in Responses to Mass Atrocity*, 21) which

one encounters within the language of Western theodicy. Nome’s book is a response to this *double bind*, both in content and form and erases the venom in the thoughts of the likes of Cerantonio mentioned above. This is a timely rejoinder to the rise of the ISIS in the Middle Eastern Levant.

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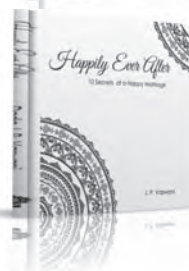
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