

# Letter to the Editor

## **A Further Reply to José Segura**

It appears to me from José Segura's latest reply that to pursue the same arguments any further would only lead us further away from the underlying cause of our differences and, I believe, those between Stratford Caldecott and Lynn Bauman as well. Those who closely follow Guénon hold a belief about God which serves to set them apart, and although it differs in a way which is obscure, it can be explained, as I will try to show.

There is a profound ambivalence in some doctrines that appear to be simple and clear. For example, even if all sides are agreed that God is absolutely undetermined, there are at least two deeply different meanings which this principle can have. The one chosen by Guénon is that "absolutely undetermined" means "uniformly, wholly, and eternally undetermined."

This is to understand the Divine indetermination in a conceptually purist sense, rather like that of a Cartesian clear and distinct idea. Understood this way, the Divine nature must appear to be the negation of all that is determinate in creation and in ideas, extending to everything from the Trinity to dualistic relations of man and God.

However, any such pure indetermination *is itself a determination*, by reason of this purity, despite the verbal form of its expression. In other words, this idea of indetermination contains a contradiction, as the other one also does for different reasons. This does not (by itself) mean that either must be false, since the highest reality is bound to elude our clear concepts, but we must now compare the above with the alternative view.

This other idea of Divine indetermination arises from an apophatic

approach which negates everything, including even pure indetermination itself. The result is an Absolute which is both undetermined *and* determined equally, and, moreover, determined more perfectly than anything we know by that name in this world. This implies a different kind of contradiction, of course, but it allows the belief that the Trinity characterizes the Absolute itself, and the validity of dualistic forms of mysticism. Besides, this looks like the kind of contradiction one should expect in the “dazzling darkness” of the Divine nature.

Having no conceptually pure nature (for our minds), God, understood in this manner, would be the ultimate type of both determined and undetermined realities in the world, and so would not be liable to be *per se* the negation of either category. The issue, then, is whether we should treat the attribute of indetermination as a pure idea, or as something beyond distinct concepts. If Segura, and others who adhere to Guénon in this way, opt for the former alternative, are they not opting for a more limited idea of God?

The idea that duality is transcended only by a One which is beyond all categories of reason is also to be found in Proclus' *Theology of Plato*, Bk.III, Chs.iii & iv (Taylor tr.). Finally, I am indebted for this insight into apophatism to Philip Sherrard, in particular where he refers to this subject in Ch. 4 of his *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition*.

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