All through Sankarites have criticised and condemned those philosophical doctrines which deny the existence of God as the Supreme and Absolute cause of the empirical phenomenon. But it must be noted at the same time that they have neither accepted the ultimate conclusion of the theistic philosophy. The theism professed under different forms on the basis of the Upanishads does not represent in their opinion the whole truth or the final truth either.

As staunch supporters of the Upanishadic cult Sankarites cannot but condemn those philosophical doctrines which do not conform with the faith embodied in the Upanishads. There are various passages in the Scripture which confirm undoubtedly the existence of God - the all-powerful omniscient being who is at once the creator, sustainer and the supreme arbiter of this whole empirical order. So Sankarites have condemned those doctrines which deny the existence of a Supreme Will that upholds this creation and rules over it by guiding the whole process according to the law created by itself.

In fact the Advaitins have pointed out that there are insuperable logical inconsistencies if we do not admit that the creation is from God. In the Sārīraka-Dhātya Sānkara has tried to prove that the creation or evolution of this empirical phenomenon cannot be explained satisfactorily unless it is admitted that God exists behind this creation.
Śaṅkara has tried on this occasion to show how the whole process of evolution propounded in the Sāṃkhya system turns to be utterly impossible only because the Sāṃkhya Philosophers do not admit that God exists as the main designer, the Supreme Supervisor and the basic ultimate cause of the whole of this creation.

According to the Sāṃkhya system Nature (Prakṛti or Pradhāna) unfolds this world out of its own being. But Nature says Śaṅkara, is insentient in character and being insentient Nature cannot possibly design this world in the form as it appears\(^1\). As the world appears to us, it seem that there is an intelligent author who designs all this thing perfectly according to its superior wisdom. Moreover, insentient Nature cannot have the activity through which it can unfold this world.\(^2\) Again if it is granted that such activity is possible in Nature though Nature itself is insentient, there arises a further inconsistency. Because, insentient Nature may have the activity but we cannot expect it to act in an intelligent and systematic way unless it is

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2. Sārīrakabhāṣya - II.2.2, P-492, Brahmaśūtra Śaṅkara Bhāṣya, Bombay Ed.
guided and ruled by an entity endowed with intelligence. Further, insentient Nature cannot start to activity out of its own accord. Who then stimulates it to activity? Again, it may be asked who sets the limit to the activity of Nature? The creation, as the Sāṃkhya philosophers also admit, cannot continue uninterruptedly for ever. Hence it follows that there is a limit to the creative activity of Nature. Therefore, the question is who sets this limit? Nature itself cannot impose this limit to its own activity. In fact, insentient Nature - if it acts at all without being guided by a separate entity endowed with intelligence - will act blindly. There cannot be a systematic process in its activity. Nor can it be maintained that not Nature itself but the Puruṣa - the soul endowed with intelligence, stimulates it to its creative activity and imposes limit to that activity. Such a proposition, as Śaṅkara says, is equally untenable, because the Puruṣa as the Sāṃkhya philosophers hold, has no interest at all in this cosmic evolution. Lastly, the contact of Nature with the individual soul (which the Sāṃkhya Philosophers entertain while they explain how insentient Nature starts on its activity with the help of the Puruṣa) - is totally impossible. Śaṅkara says that the proposed contact is impossible because the first effort necessary to establish this contact seems not to be possible whether we attribute it to Prakṛti or we attribute
it to Puruṣa. The first effort to establish the contact is impossible in Nature because prior to that contact Nature excludes all such activities. And it is impossible for the Puruṣa because the Puruṣa by its very nature, as it has been described by the Śāṅkya Philosophers, excludes all forms of activity; and as there is no third entity, says Śaṅkara, besides the Prakṛti (Nature) and the Puruṣa (the individual soul) it follows naturally therefore that the proposed contact necessary to stimulate Nature into its creative activity is totally impossible.

Thus Śaṅkara shows that even the Śāṅkya Philosophers cannot explain properly the process of evolution only because they deny the hand of God in the creation of this Universe. In Śaṅkara's opinion most of those inconsistencies previously mentioned will cease to exist as soon as it is admitted that Nature which unfolds ultimately this gross material world acts under the guidance of an omnipotent being i.e.Īśvara, who by His infinite power and unrestrained free will can do anything He likes.

Besides Śaṅkara has tried to posit Īśvara by means of reasoning from the teleological standpoint. As Śaṅkara says, we should admit the existence
of God who by His superior wisdom comprehends and
knows every thing and creates this Universe for
certain definite purposes, for realising some end
which the ordinary mind of an individual cannot even
conceive. The necessity of the variety in creation
in its different stages remains inexplicable in
Śaṅkarā's opinion, unless we admit that God, the
Supreme all-powerful being, exists as the main
designer and introduces this variety in creation for
some definite purpose.

Thus Śaṅkarītes have maintained and sup­
ported the theism in their various works. But this
should not be taken as their ultimate conclusion.
Because though from the empirical standpoint they
profess in the above manner, still from their meta­
physical standpoint, God is only a necessary postulate
of empirical and religious consciousness. On empiri­
cal and religious considerations therefore they have
partly supported the Vedāntic theism.

The Absolute, speaking properly, exists
transcending the theological concept. According to
the theological conception of being, God is the
universal spirit. But the supreme truth, so far as
the Advaitins hold, involves absolute nonrelational
existence. And as we have noted before, all those

1. See Śaṅkara: Kaṇoṇapāṇiṣad-Vākyas-Upanisads - p.106-107
(Foona Edition)
relational ideas as cause and effect, genus and species, the universal and individual - are but empirical ideas. Real identity excludes them. Bhāskara's doctrine of identity in difference (bhāsabhedā) has been rejected on this ground. Those relational ideas serve to be the fundamental basis of Bhāskara's doctrine supporting the possibility of identity and same difference at the time. So God conceived as the universal spirit - cannot be the highest or ultimate truth. God as universal spirit is a relational concept and involves as such empirical or pragmatic truth. In the Upaniṣads the Absolute has been described indeed as the immanent universal spirit. As the Upaniṣad says the Absolute is all in all in this Universe.

But Saṅkarites hold that from the empirical standpoint the Absolute has been asserted in the scripture to be the immanent universal spirit who exists pervading the whole empirical phenomenon. Indeed, viewed from the empirical standpoint we shall have to admit the above version of the Upaniṣad. The whole of this finite order rests on the Absolute and realises its existence through the Absolute. From the Advaita standpoint this finite order is not indeed ultimately real. The whole finite order is in reality
an illusory appearance. But the fact is, though this empirical world does not exist in reality, yet it exists so long as it appears in the plane of thought. Now the illusory object cannot exist by itself. It must have some underlying basis (adhisthāna) to support it. śaṅkarites on this point reject the view of the Buddhist philosophers who maintain that an illusory object can appear without any basis. This view according to the śaṅkarites is absurd, because we find it in our practical life that an illusory object appears as being superimposed on some real object that exists as its basis (adhisthāna). Therefore this empirical world - when it appears to us - appears as being superimposed on the Absolute. And the Absolute exists as the basis of each finite object which is false by itself but which realises its existence through the Absolute and therefore appears to us as real. Now, viewed from this standpoint, the Absolute is all in all in the Universe. The whole universe exists through the Absolute. Therefore we can identify the Absolute as the universal spirit, the all-pervasive existence, the inner life of the whole finite order. With the first awakening of the higher spiritual consciousness the individual also feels the presence of the Absolute. But viewed from the metaphysical

*Na hi niraḥdhiśṭāṇāḥ adhyāyaḥ drātāpūrva .....
(Fāńcā-Pāṇīka - p.240)
Brahmastra Sākara Bhāṣyag
(Part I) Calcutta Sanskrit Series)
standpoint the Absolute exists in reality transcending this empirical order. As the empirical world is not real but is false, and as we have wrongly superimposed it on the Absolute who exists as the basis of this illusory appearance, so ultimately, from the metaphysical standpoint, the Absolute exists in reality transcending this phenomenal cosmic order.

This transcendence of the Absolute has been clearly expounded in various works. Nescience or Avidyā, which is at the root of the whole relational and empirical appearance has got two modes - the cosmic cum generic and sub-cosmic cum particularistic—the psychic (called respectively Mulājñāna and Tulājñāna). Now the transcendent truth appears as God—the Universal spirit through the medium of Avidyā. Avidyā in cosmic scale determines the being. So it appears as the universal spirit and thus involves the relativity which is not inherent in it. Avidyā—which thus determines the being, has got three stages of expression namely, Sthūla, Śūkṣma and Kāraṇa, that is, gross, subtle and causal. And the cosmic Avidyā determines the being along with its three subsequent stages of expression. So the universal being exists or appears in three forms, namely Virāt, Hiraṇya-cakra and Śūtrātman and Śiva. The Absolute as Śiva involves the

*Svatabhaisatdāntaṁ tu māyāṁ sūkṣmaspratītaḥ
Śūtrātmā sthūlāpāpyaiva Viṣṇuḥ dāyate parah
(Pancadasi - Chp.6/S1.4)
association with the causal state of Māyā, and therefore, God is the highest concept in the fold of Māyā. But the metaphysical being exists transcending even this highest concept. This has been implied by the epithet Tūrīya (lit. means the fourth) which has been frequently used to indicate the transcendent truth beyond the fold of Māyā. The Absolute is, therefore, Tūrīya taken by itself. Since avidyā itself is a false entity and since the association of the real and unreal or the real and false cannot be real, but is accidental and false, so Being in reality exists transcending all those concepts - even the highest concept that is Śiva, even when it appears as the universal being due to the determination of avidyā.

Moreover the theological concept involves a personal character with the moral, ethical and spiritual virtues ascribed to it to imply the absolute perfection. God is, therefore, a personal being determined by specific qualities. In fact, Impersonal Being that exists defying the comprehension of thought cannot be in anywise the object of religion. It is God as the personality that is the object of worship and thus has determinate existential. The personal character or the personality implies ontological difference. Therefore, the personality of the Being stands in irreconcilable opposition to the basic and ultimate identity postulated in the Advaita Philosophy. Hence in the Advaita system the ultimate
truth is indeterminate and impersonal being.

In the Upanishads however the Being is described as both determinate and indeterminate, that is, personal and impersonal. The Advaitins hold that on empirical considerations the indeterminate being has been entertained in its determinate aspect in the Bruti. But from the esoteric standpoint the Bruti professes the indeterminate character of the being. Thus, metaphysically, reality involves indeterminate existence. Due to this fact the Advaitins maintain the distinction between the sacupa-tattva and the nirguna-tattva. These are not two different entities. It is the self-identical principle all throughout. But so far as our experience goes, reality includes these double aspects. But to the Advaita Philosophers the integral identity and the absolute sameness of the being is the ultimate truth. Hence neither of these double aspects is ultimate. Accordingly Saṅkarites hold that the determinate aspect is but an appearance. It is created by avidya and it appears to empirical consciousness. Suresvara explicitly asss that of those two aspects - one, i.e. the determinate aspect is created by avidya - the root cause of delusion (Brh. Vārttikas - 2/11).

The main reason underlying the denial of the ultimate reality of the theological concept is in the position of religion as we find it in the Advaita System. In the Vedānta religion has a prominent place.
The first glimpse of the highest spiritual truth is attained in their opinion with the dawn of religious consciousness. Because with the dawn of religious consciousness thought rises above the finite and external world and comprehends the eternal truth that otherwise escapes thought. But as thought cannot be wholly emancipated from the finite and illusory influences, and as it cannot forsake its inherent synthetic activity, so the transcendental truth appears in a different form—foreign to itself when it appears as the object of religion. It involves, in other words, determinate existence and appears as a personal being and thus courts the difference (the difference of God from an ordinary individual), though in reality it excludes all those facts and involves a different character.

Viewed from the Advaita standpoint all those perfections as love, beauty and goodness (goodness according to our moral ethical and spiritual standard) that we attribute to the Being when it appears as God are all invented by thought and are superimposed on the Being. The supreme truth involves indeed absolute perfection. But at the same time reality excludes the determination by specific qualities. On this basis Sankarites distinguish the Unāsvatattva from Jñayatattva. Here also the entity is same. But the same entity appears in different form when it becomes the object of religion. Viewed from the Advaita standpoint in fact, art, aesthetic morality or religion how far noble and elevating their ideals might be, belong to the realm of immanent consciousness—that
that is within the empirical fold supported by Avidyā. They have no reality, therefore, viewed from the standpoint of undivided consciousness or pure intuition. So in the Advaita system God is an appearance of the transcendental being. Within the fold of Maya the Absolute appears in that form though in reality it has a different character.

(II)
The thesis that God is an appearance of the Absolute has been finally established by entertaining the Vivartta Theory of Creation. According to the Vivartta Theory, creation supposed to be real is false in reality. The creation of the finite order has been depicted indeed in the scripture (the Upaniṣads). And according to the Scripture the Absolute is both the material (Upadana) and the efficient cause (nimitta) of this empirical universe. All through, the Scripture maintains the identity of both of these causes in the Absolute Brahman. The whole finite order is, therefore, designed or created by the Absolute and it emerges also from the Absolute. The identity of the material and the efficient cause in the Absolute has been maintained therefore, in all the systems of the Vedānta Philosophy. And on this basis the theistic Vedanta has identified the Absolute as the omnipotent, omniscient being who creates this world out of its own being and sustains
this world by its own existence. Thus, on the basis of the version of creation expounded in the Sruti, the theist philosophers of Vedanta have succeeded to substantiate their theory that the supreme truth is the all powerful deity - the God of religion.

On empirical considerations Sankarites also accept the cosmological argument based on the authority of the Sruti. According to the Advaita Philosophers, in fact, we cannot prove the existence of God by any other means save and except by the cosmological argument accepted on the authority of the Sruti. They have noted also that the logical induction of the Prakritikas and the Naiyayikas is insufficient to prove the existence of God. Indeed, according to the logical induction, God is an external contriver only who designs this world out of the materials outside of itself. But the metaphysical being viewed properly cannot be an external contriver only. If we accept God as an external contriver only it will lead us to dualism, which is a philosophical surd. Moreover this has been noted by the teachers that logical induction fails ultimately to substantiate that an omnipotent, omniscient being is the creator of this Universe. God conceived as an external contriver only like an ordinary man cannot incorporate
absolute knowledge and the absolute power) though being the creator or the designer of this greater world, He may embody a far greater degree of knowledge and power than can conceivably be possessed or developed by any ordinary designer. Therefore, the cosmological argument on the basis of the 'Sruti has been accepted. But this has been accepted from the empirical standpoint only.

From the metaphysical standpoint the Advaita Philosophers neither accept the creation as real nor they maintain the identity of the causes in the Absolute. If the creation is accepted as real the plurality and difference can not be rejected as false. So, the Advaitins do not accept the creation as real though from the empirical standpoint they describe it according to the Vedantic cosmology. Again the Absolute as a nonrelational being cannot be either of those causes mentioned above. The Absolute as the ultimate cause should realise its character in relation to its creation. And this relativity cannot be avoided in the conception of a creative and purposive God.

There are other reasons also. The dynamic character of the evolution implying changes in the Absolute has been totally denied by the Śākhārites. The transcendental truth involves immutable eternal existence. But if the Absolute exists as the evolving cause (Upādāna), the change and mutability that should befall it according to the Natural Law can not be avoided by any means. The

-Theistic-
Theistic Philosophers (like Bhāskara and others) solve this contradiction indeed by mentioning the supernatural power of the all-powerful being, God or the Absolute, they hold, transcends the change and mutability though it exists as the evolving cause. From the empirical standpoint, Saṅkarites also accept this solution. But viewed philosophically this is no solution at all, and the Advaitins find out this fact. So from their metaphysical standpoint they have denied it to be a solution at all. From the metaphysical standpoint, therefore, the Absolute is not really the underlying cause. Judged from the standpoint of religion the solution put forth by the theistic philosophers cannot be rejected as it affords the pragmatic satisfaction needed by the worshipper. This in fact readily appeals as the best solution to the religious mind, because in all forms of religion God is the ideal figure of perfection and includes as such the highest pitch of perfection in power, knowledge and activity. And the finite mind fails to comprehend in its totality the divine power which is infinite. So in all forms of religion the supernatural power is attributed to the deity. But metaphysically, this is no solution, as all metaphysical solutions are based on rational thinking. This is obviously a riddle and contradiction that the Absolute transcends change and modification though the empirical world emerges out of its being. The -Advaitins-
Advaïtins note this fact. The real is always rational in their opinion. Riddle and contradiction imply falsity. Therefore, the Saïkarites conclude that the Absolute transcends the change and modification because the evolution is not real. And as transcendent intuition also does not support the dynamic character of evolution so this has been confirmed that the whole thing has been designed by āvidyā or Māyā. The Absolute Brahman in association with āvidyā appears as the evolving cause. The supernatural power attributed by the theist-philosophers to support the evolution is nothing but āvidyā or Māyā, which has been defined by the teachers as a mysterious principle which falls short of reality. In association with āvidyā, therefore, the Absolute Brahman appears to us as the cause-material. And this association itself is only a false appearance since āvidyā itself is false.

As this empirical world cannot emerge from the Absolute, so it cannot also be designed by the Absolute, because there is absolutely no purpose which can account for this designing. Indeed the very impulse or urge for the creation is impossible in the Absolute because reality is absolute bliss. The being identical with bliss can neither have any unfulfilled desire nor any unrealised hope which can stimulate the being to activity of this kind. From the empirical standpoint Saïkarites solve this contradiction by explaining the creation as a sportive activity which has been suggested in the Brahma-sūtra (2/1/33). The creation being a sportive activity, 

-says-
says Śaṅkara, there is neither any personal interest nor there is any effort in its execution. It is playful spontaneous activity. Emphasising the point that the creation is a playful spontaneous activity and there is neither any purpose or any effort on the part of God, this has been added that if there is any effort or any purpose behind the playful activity of man, it is nil in this playful activity of God.1 Thus with the theistic philosophers, Śaṅkarites admit that the whole creation is the spontaneous expression of the creative will. But metaphysically even this spontaneity is inconsistent. Viewed properly, this is more or less an anthropomorphic conception imposed on the being. So the teachers of the Advaita School deny from the esoteric standpoint the above interpretation. Vācaśpati says that there is neither any effort nor any purpose in designing this appearance because it is not real.2 So Śaṅkara also says at the conclusion that we should not forget that the creation is not real ultimately because it is the consequence of avidya or Māyā?

In this way, Śaṅkarites confirm that the Absolute is neither of those causes. And this leads us ultimately to the conclusion that the omnipotent omniscient being or God of religion cannot be the highest truth so far as it is.

1. Yadi nāma loke lilāsvapi kīmīcit suktam pratyogam utprekatam, tathāpi naivātra kīmīcit pratyogam utprekatam saktam, āptakāmāsruteh (Śārīraka-Bhāṣya - 2/1/33, p.481 - Nirnaya Sagar).


3. Śārīraka Bhāṣya - 2/1/33 p.481, Nirnaya Sagar.
viewed from the metaphysical standpoint. The logical induction as we have noted before fails ultimately to substantiate the existence of God. And the cosmological argument of the theistic philosophers (of Vedanta) based on the scriptural authority is not also ultimately tenable viewed from the metaphysical standpoint - though it has been accepted from the empirical standpoint.

The creation has been described indeed in the Scripture and all through the Absolute has been described as being both the causes. But the Advaitins hold that this should not be taken to be the ultimate conclusion of the scripture because from its esoteric standpoint, the scripture has denied and rejected all those facts which it has admitted and professed on empirical considerations. The fact is, the whole empirical world is an appearance without reality, and the ultimate truth is absolute non-relational existence devoid of all differences and transcending all determinations of thought. But neither of these two facts can be comprehended until the pure intuition is opened and the faculty of pure reason grows within. Hence the esoteric import of all those teachings cannot be perfectly followed by an ordinary individual. In fact, prior to those conditions the negation of the empirical world would only mislead the neophyte and enquirer of truth. To the ordinary mind the abrupt denial of this phenomenon implies absolute negation. And it will lead him ultimately to the agnostic conclusion or absolute scepticism ending in negation. According to the Advaita Philosophers,
Philosophers, this is the reason for which the creation has been described in the scripture. Besides there is another reason and that is, we cannot negate anything unless it is posited. Following the practical reason we posit the existence of this empirical world and we accept the creation as real. The Bruti also posits the empirical world and accepts its creation following the trend of our practical reason. Then ultimately, it negates the appearance and denies the creation to be real. So the author of the Sankhya-SarIraka (Chap.II: S1.61) says that the Vivartavada presupposes the parinamaavada. According to the former theory (Vivartavada) the existence of this empirical world and its creation are all illusions. They are false from the metaphysical standpoint. According to the latter theory (Parinamaavada) the thing is just the opposite i.e. the empirical world is real and not false. The Advaitins hold that this thesis and anti-thesis (nvamana and avnava) together are the methodology adopted in the Bruti for leading us ultimately to the realisation of the transcendent reality. Describing the creation and confirming thereby that Brahman is the absolute cause, the transcendent being excluding all determinations is posited as the omnipotent omniscient being. The determinations in this way and the personal character imposed thereby makes the character of the being intelligible to the ordinary mind.

Thus the cosmological argument of the theistic philosophers (of Vedanta) has been wholly rejected.
The Advaitins establish that in association with avidya, the Absolute appears as the Lord of the Universe. Without this association, avidya cannot project this appearance. As the teachers hold, the mysterious principle called avidya or mâyâ according to its functions, is insentient in character, and, therefore, it lacks self-expression. The transcendent being expresses and illuminates avidya when it comes in its touch, and reveals also the appearance projected by avidya. Thus ultimately the cosmic appearance realizes its character through the transcendent existence that reveals it. Again, avidya as well as its projections rest on the being that transcends them. The Absolute exists as the basis or as the underlying support of the cosmic appearance which is projected by avidya and which is equally false like avidya.

For this reason the dialecticians state that we can maintain the identity of both the causes in the Absolute even if we maintain the Vivartha Theory of Creation. The Absolute is the efficient cause since the appearance is apparently designed by the Absolute because the whole appearance realizes its character through the Absolute. Again, the Absolute is the material cause, because like the evolving cause the Absolute exists as the underlying basis and the main support of the whole of this cosmic order. But, in fact, slightest reflection shows that the Vivartha-vada...

*There are double functions of avidya: Creative (Vikṣepa) and epistemological (Vārāgra). The same mysterious principle is named mâyâ and avidya - according to its creative and epistemological functions, respectively.*
simply involves the denial of the causality imposed on the Absolute. Originally the Absolute is not, therefore, the Cosmic Lord. It is the mysterious hand of Āvidyā that makes the Absolute appear in the rule of Śiva - the Lord of the Cosmos.

Viewed properly, the Advaita School fundamentally diverges on this point from the theistic school of Vedānta. From the Vedāntic standpoint God is not an external contriver isolated from the rest of the world. But God is the immanent basis of the whole empirical world. Vedānta has conceived God as our indwelling spirit, our inner intelligence. He thinks therefore all our thoughts and wills, all our actions. He is the centre of knowledge and activity and He is the original source of life. This idea is obviously monistic at its root. And according to this idea the whole of the finite world is inwardly and outwardly related to that one Being who pervades the whole of this finite order of existence.

Now from the metaphysical standpoint, Śaṅkaraites cannot accept the above idea of God, because they do not admit like the theistic philosophers (Vedānta) that the Absolute involves immanence in transcendence. To the Advaita Philosophers the Being involves absolute transcendence though accidentally being the basis of the illusory projections designed by Āvidyā the Absolute appears as the immanent Being, and this we have emphasised time and again. Besides the relativity that the Absolute must involve with its immanence provides another inconsistency and surd.

-The-
The immanence of the Being, if we acknowledge it, will imply ultimately the existence of the empirical world. And if the empirical world really exists the plurality and difference cannot be regarded as false. So also the omniscience and omnipotence of the Being are hypothesis entailed by the exigencies of religion. Gitsukhaśārylica says, therefore, that the omniscience of the Being implies its association with avidya. Omniscience or all comprehensive knowledge implies firstly the existence of all and secondly the relation of the Absolute with all. And this is possible only through association with avidya. Avidya projects this appearance and through the medium of avidya the transcendent being encounters the relation which it excludes in reality.

It is clear that Vedānta starts as religion and ends as philosophy as the knowledge of truth. Religion like morality cannot be the ultimate truth though they are stepping stones to the realization of the latter consummation. Vedānta does not repudiate religion since it is the foundation and starting point of the quest of truth. Philosophy could not arise and fructify without the religious mind working behind it. Religion is the alpha of spiritual life and the ultimate realization of Absolute monism is the omega of it. It is the happiest consummation which cannot dawn all on a sudden. Hence

1. Tattvapradīpikā - 4/P-374-375, Bombay Ed.
Vedanta begins with the theory of Creation, as this affords the necessary exercise to the higher mind impelled by the religious need. And if it ends by repudiating the whole initial procedure, it does not commit the guilt of ingratitude because the claims of truth are higher than pragmatic needs, and religion, though a higher expression of the spiritual mind, does not transcend the pragmatic sphere.
III

Different Theories of God

On the basis of our previous analysis we arrive at the conclusion that the Absolute involves concentration in the frame-work of Māyā when it appears in the role of Iśvara. In other words, the Absolute is defined, delimited and demarcated by Māyā in its purest and illimitable form, and then the Absolute appears as God.

Now, though all the teachers fundamentally agree, still there is some difference among them. So we have different theories of God. Some of the teachers hold that the pure transcendent consciousness (Buddhanāt) appears as God being reflected in Māyā. According to these teachers, therefore, God is only the reflection (Pratibimba) of the original absolute being. Sarvajñātāma Muni, the author of the Samkṣepa-Sārīraka, entertains this view, and the same view has been maintained also in the Pañcādahā. But the author of the Vīvarāya holds a different view because, in his opinion, the reflection (Pratibimba) of the transcendent consciousness in Māyā (or Āvidyā as he says) appears not as God but as the finite individual (jīva). So God is not the reflection of the original being. But He is the original being itself existing as the prototype of the reflection that appears as the finite individual. God is, therefore, called Bimba - the original or the prototype of the-

1. (a) Ca. 9. a. S. Sārīraka - 1/46
(b) Māyānīvīstavapūrṇaśvāra - 3/153
2. Śā. Māyābhāsakaṇavarteśvarītī - 6/155
the reflection. Thus, according to the first theory—
(the theory according to which Īśvara is only the
reflection of the original Absolute Being)—God exists
being entrapped and enveloped in the network of māyā.
But according to the second theory—(which suggests
that God is not the reflection but the prototype of the
reflection), God exists outside this network though He
is conditioned from outside by the same māyā. To be more
explicit, according to the second theory, God exists
indeed in touch with māyā but the latter cannot draw Him
within its own orbit.

This has been said in support of the latter
theory that God escapes all these distortions and all
those limitations visible in the finite individual—
(though, like the latter, God also exists being condi-
tioned by māyā), only because as the prototype of the
reflection He exists outside the network spread by māyā.
The Vivarāṇa explains how the individual is affected by avidvā, while God
remains nonaffected by its distortions. As we find it
in our practical life, the reflection that appears in
the mirror is distorted by the scratches—(if there
are any)—in the surface of the mirror. But the original
of that reflection escapes the distortions. In the same
manner, the reflected consciousness in avidvā that appears
as individual becomes distorted through avidvā, though
originally it is pure and free from all distortions. But
God as the prototype of this reflection escapes this,

Brahmasutra Sankara Bhāṣya - P-I.
Calcutta Sanskrit Series.
though He exists (as the prototype of the reflection) in
 touch with Māyā and courts therefore the relativity, and
 appears with personal character - which the original being
 as detached consciousness * excludes altogether. Besides,
 as God exists outside the network so He can rule and =
 dominate over Māyā. Whereas in the case of the individual
 it is Māyā which rules and dominates over him and completely
 overpowers him by its delusive spell. But those who enter-
 tain the theory of reflection (pratibimbahsvaravāda) equally
 explain how God excludes all those imperfections that the
 finite individual involves. Sarvajñātāma Muni says for
 instance that, the egocentric consciousness is at the root
 of all those imperfections that we find in the finite
 individual. But this egocentric consciousness is not
 possible in God*. Indeed the above consciousness arises
 out of imaginary association and false identity of the
 self and not-self or the self and the mind. And for this
 association and identity - again the true nature of the
 self must remain concealed so that the individual should
 lose sight of the distinction that exists between the
 self and not-self. How the individual cannot comprehend
 this distinction because cidhyā screens his consciousness.
 But cidhyā cannot screen the self-revealing consciousness
 that belongs to God though God exists being entwined by
 Māyā. Therefore God always remains conscious of the
 ultimate truth and never for a moment courts those imper-
 fections that the finite individual involves. The author

*Samskāra-Sārīraka - Chapter 1/01.180.
of Pañcadāśi (Vidyāranya) says again that this should not be disputed that God exerts in power and knowledge from the individual and dominates over Maya (though He realises His own character through it), because all these have been affirmed in the holy writ itself. Besides those two theories there is a third theory maintained by Vācaspati. According to Vācaspati the transcendent consciousness appears as God, when it exists as the underlying basis (āhava, abhishāna) of this appearance. According to this view, the transcendent consciousness is only the basis of avidyā or the basis of the illusory projections through avidyā. And as the basis of avidyā the Absolute appears as the immanent universal spirit whom we identify as God and superimpose consequently other attributes befitting that position.

These are the three main theories current in the Advaita Philosophy. Though there is much difference among the teachers, still their ultimate conclusion is always the same. They believe, in other words, that God appears in the empirical level supported by the mysterious principle—inexplicable in character and opposing to knowledge. Madhusūdana says that all those differences among the teachers are natural indeed, because the distinction as God and individual is created by thought. It is not ult-

1. Pañcadāśi - VI/SI-159
2. Bhāmasūtra Sāṅkara Bhāṣya, Bombay Ed. See also - Śiddhāntavindu - "Ahyānaśārayiktes caityanyom Īśvara..." (Śiddhāntavindu - Dasobloki - SI.1)
3. Śiddhāntavindu - Dasobloki - SI.1.
ultimately valid. As the distinction as God and individual
is created by our thought in the empirical level under the
influence of avidyā, so from the metaphysical standpoint
this distinction itself is an illusion.

In fact all those theories we have noted before
have been entertained by the teachers belonging to the
moderate school. The moderates always maintain an empirical
scheme side by side with their abstruse metaphysical solution
which negates all those existences enumerated within that
empirical scheme. Now within the empirical scheme God has
been separately enumerated, and to show the distinction of
God from the individual, all those different theories have
been put forward as tentative explanations. But the absolutes
who explain their position purely from the esoteric
standpoint and therefore deal only with the ultimate meta-
physical solution do not separately enumerate the existence
of God. They try to show that through ignorance and error
of the individual the impersonal being appears in the role
of Isvara and thus courts the distinction which does not
exist in reality. We may note here at the conclusion that
Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī belongs to this group of the absolutes.

It ought to be remarked that Vācaspati Miśra also
makes it up that God is only the presupposition of the
individual minds and not an independent entity as the other
theories have done. But Vācaspati believes in the empirical
reality of the world order and of the individual souls. He
does not endorse solipsism, but his approach and line of
argument—
argument if systematically worked out, has an irresistible
tendency to lead to this conclusion, which cannot be a
popular theory, because it not only sponsors acosmism
even in the phenomenal plane but also relentlessly lays
the axe at religion. Solipsism may be hard to refute
but it is both to shock even the best mind on this side
of transcendental realization. Religion and morality,
though they may lack ultimate metaphysical validity, are
too profound and sacred assets to be lightly brushed aside.
Solipsism on the contrary is apt to degenerate into the
cultivation of a purely selfish outlook so far at any rate
as imperfect men are concerned, though we cannot ignore that
even Madhusūdana Sarasvatī gives his seal of approval to it
as the highest rung in the ladder of spiritual life. But
it ought to be cultivated by the select few as an esoteric
doctrine, which must be their close preserve. The other
theories have the advantage of affording satisfaction both
to the neophyte and the adept and this accounts for their
popularity.