CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jaspers' concept of philosophy

It is not easy to point out what philosophy exactly is or how much it is worth studying because different philosophers have given different ideas to this problem. For some hold that philosophy is something extraordinary and understandable only to exceptional men, it becomes too technical and has frequently been divorced from the ideals and the concerns of the common man.¹ Some assert that philosophy is an amazing story of human effort to articulate a reasoned vision of the world and man’s place within or perhaps without it.

Moreover, some even argue that philosophy is good for nothing; it is a mere thinking in the void, and is essentially an exercise in metaphysics, abstract, theoretical and full of absolute dogmatism. In the eye of persons with scientific temperament, philosophy is a matter of personal affairs, it produces no universally valid results, whereas in sciences there is certain and universally recognized knowledge.

For Russell, Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge that gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind of knowledge that results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs. However, philosophy cannot claim to have any great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite

answer to its question. This is because as soon as definite knowledge concerning any particular subject becomes possible, this subject ceased to be called philosophy and becomes a separate science.\(^2\)

In order to understand Jaspers' conception of philosophy, it would be appropriate at the outset to begin with an analysis of the traditional philosophy, which has made a great impact on Jaspers' philosophy. While looking at the intellectual background of early part of the nineteenth century, it is found that there has been a gradual disillusionment with speculative metaphysics, particularly Absolute Idealism on the one hand, and there are also signs of disenchantment with the rigid doctrine of scientism, which looks at human existence only from the objective point of view on the other. It seems that scientific materialism has been gaining ground.

Jaspers' philosophy is a reaction against the traditional philosophies, one being called as materialism and another is known as idealism. Jaspers is very critical of materialism, the doctrine that all operations of our mind can be explained in terms of bodily functions. It recognizes only the physical things and mechanical laws as the fundamental reality. It regards mind or consciousness as a product of matter. As such, the materialists claim that to be relevant to the modern world, philosophy must adopt a scientific approach; it must deal only with what we can perceive or explain in terms of a scientific method. They criticize idealism for its emphasis on merely speculative thinking.

Thus, the materialists argue that philosophy is doomed to failure if it concentrates on the incorporeal things such as Platonic forms and

immaterial soul. According to materialism, human existence can be explained in terms of scientific objects like other beings in the world, since it is always subject to the law of nature. Moreover, materialism regards man as if he could be completely explained through mechanical process. This leads to the mechanization of human existence. For the materialists, it is absurd to suppose that there are acts of the free will in the senses of acts that are not the necessary outcome of mechanical processes. According to Jaspers, such a theory cannot explain human condition properly as it leaves no room for human freedom and transcendence.

Jaspers is also critical of idealism, because for him it never questions the adequacy of reason and ignores the significance of the historicity of the individual. He challenges the sovereignty of reason. For him, reason cannot be regarded as absolute. Thus, Jaspers criticises Hegel’s philosophy for its claim that the real is rational and rational is real. For Hegel, reason possesses unlimited power to know reality and therefore is regarded as absolute. Hegel contends that it is possible to integrate a complete picture of man and the world into a closed system. Man is conceived as a part of Being which can integrate all beings, and thus represents the total framework of reality.

Moreover, Hegelian system conceives the universe as an organic whole, consisting of parts that are systematically unified. The interconnected parts of this universe are ordered in accordance with rational principles. In other words, reason is a unifying principle of the universe. Hegel argues that reality can be grasped only through the process of reasoning, which is called the dialectical method. It begins with an initial

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proposition or the thesis, its opposite or the anti-thesis, and the comprehension of both or the synthesis. The synthesis may, however, lead to a new thesis and the whole triadic process may be repeated until it reaches the last stage at which the process of dialectic manifests the Absolute Spirit that embraces everything. As such, a dichotomy between the subject and object, thought and reality is overcome. As Hegel puts it:

The truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its development of the Absolute. It must be said that it is essentially a result, that only at the end is it what it is in very truth, and just in that consists its nature, which is to be actual, subject or self-becoming, self-development.\(^5\)

The Absolute spirit is the identity of the subject and object, the unity of essence and existence, the whole of reality is explained in terms of one Supreme Reason. Reacting to Hegel’s philosophy, which attempts to put reality into a fixed system and to submerge the individual in the universal, Jaspers holds that a system-builder is just like an intellectual spectator, who is not aware of his own existence.

Unlike Hegel who believes that actual existence can be explained by mere abstract idea, Jaspers argues that human existence cannot be explained by mere abstraction. For it is never complete and final. A finished structure of existence cannot explain the particular moments of an existing individual.

In Hegelian system, the individual is merely objectively viewed by reason, that is, human existence is looked from outside, turning into just one object among many objects. But for Jaspers, human existence is ever constructing and reconstructing itself by acts in concrete situations and defies by its dynamic character any conceptualization, and, therefore, cannot be put into a logical system. While Hegel engages himself with universal and abstract being, Jaspers shifts the problem of being from the abstract to the concrete, from being in general to a unique human existence. He attributes his philosophic development to the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

For this reason, Jaspers’ philosophical thought is profoundly influenced by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, both of whom he regards as the great exceptions, two embodiments of different possibilities of human existence. Their philosophy is a challenge to the assumption about human existence as a unique and concrete being. They have raised the questions to what it means to be human being. Both attempt to awaken us to our human conditions and introduce an entirely new way of philosophizing through their radical thinking.

Moreover, both Kierkegard and Nietzsche are not merely ruthlessly averse to reason but seek to portray a new intellectual attitude or way of thought that does not cling blindly to philosophy that does not reflect genuine truth about man and the world. Both admit that man and the world can be analyzed in various perspectives, but none of them can exhauste the being of individual. They question the supremacy of reason in its attempt to put human existence in a fixed form. They also suspect truth in the naïve form of scientific knowledge.

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Thus, Jaspers regards both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as close as twin for their addressing the problem of human condition. However, both are separated as poles apart when they come to the issue of Transcendence or God, one being a theist and another atheist. That is, Kierkegaard looks upon the whole affair of Christianity and finds that only few can claim to be a true Christian in the sense of the New Testament, which will be achieved by an honest confession of individual and the approval of God. That is to say, man must return to God in order to find out his real being. Nietzsche, on the other hand, expresses that God is dead. He sees no hope in religion and calls upon man to be strong enough to create and seek his own value and take responsibility for what he does. Nietzsche creates a superman in place of God. While in the state of loneliness in which we have nobody to turn to, Kierkegaard asks us to look for God, whereas Nietzsche calls for superman.

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are critical of scientism for its attempt to explain human existence as a whole only in objective terms. Kierkegaard is surprised at the learned professor who lives for the most part of his life with science but fails to understand that there is something more which cannot be scientifically understood. He argues that the system-builder is like someone who builds a castle, but lives next door in a shanty; he does not himself live within what he thinks.\(^7\)

Nietzsche too, is critical of types of scholars who have no genuine sense of their own activity, who cannot be true to themselves. Both were also against philosophical system of idealism, which explains the whole man as a self-enclosed rational being. Like both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Jaspers contends that system is something, which corresponds with what is

closed and settled, but human existence is precisely the contrary; it is open to endless interpretations. Man is incessantly recreating himself by his acts in concrete situations. This existential character of man makes it difficult to fit the individual existence in any logically constructed system. This is a reason why Jaspers uses the term “Existenz” to describe human condition.

Jaspers makes it clear that Kierkegaard’s conception of existence inspires him a lot. He says, “To Kierkegaard I own the concept of existence which has become standard for me in order to understand that for which I had exerted myself uneasily.” So it would be appropriate here to present the meaning of the term “existence” as given by Kierkegaard. For him, to exist is not simply to exercise an act of being, but has a more technical meaning. That is to say, to exist, strictly speaking, implies two characteristics: change and freedom. That which truly exists has not only come to be, but it is constantly engaged in change or coming to be in different ways. To exist is also to be free, to have charge of one’s own becoming. To have charge of one’s becoming means that one decides to act or not. If one decides to act, in what way he is to act. In this sense, only man is said to exist in contradistinction to mere living like other beings of the world.

For this reason, Kierkegaard explains the criterion by which man can be described as “existence” by employing the following analogy. A man sits in a cart and holds the rein, but the horse goes along its accustomed path without any active control by the driver, who may be asleep. Another man actively guides and directs his horse. In one sense, both men can be said to be drivers. But in another sense it is only the second man who can be said to be driving. In an analogous manner the man who drifts with the crowd, who

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merges himself with the anonymous ‘one’, can be said to exist in one sense of the term, though in another sense he cannot be said to exist. For he is not the existing individual who strives resolutely towards constant state of becoming, making himself, as it were, by his repeated acts of choice. Again, the man who is contented with the role of a spectator of the world and translates everything into abstract concepts cannot, strictly speaking, be said to exist.

Nietzsche also is critical of scientific disciplines, which according to him interpret human existence in economic, technological, historic-political and sociological terms. He feels that by doing so the real value of man has been lost. So he is looking forward to the nobility and value of man. The value of man depends on what he makes or chooses through his freedom. Man must take care of himself. The role of Transcendence in the sense of God has been ruled out.

Even though Jaspers expresses his indebtedness to these exceptional thinkers, he is not satisfied with Kierkegaard’s preoccupation with the faith in God that excludes communication with others and thereby resulting in individualism. He is also in disagreement with Nietzsche’s denial of God and deification of man, which is, he argues, only leading to nihilism.

After taking into account the philosophies of both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Jaspers argues that philosophy cannot be reduced to any fixed system. For Jaspers, the new way of philosophy is philosophizing. He says, “To philosophize is to transcend.”10 That is to say, philosophical method is that of transcending the object. It involves transcending thinking, as it

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transcends the specialized knowledge of the sciences, which stems from mere cognitive orientation and goes beyond the world of empirical realities of existence. Cognition alone cannot exhaust the whole of reality, philosophizing is therefore a process of thinking, an inner activity in which the subject comes to genuine awareness of his possibilities.

Thus, Jaspers asserts that the main task of philosophy is to illuminate or reawaken man to his own authentic situation. He terms his philosophy as 'philosophy of Existenz' to describe his idea of the existential dimension of man. Jaspers emphasizes that philosophy cannot be put into a fixed system when it comes to deal with the problems of man, world and God, because it is always on the voyage of inquiry. He holds that neither naturalism nor any ontological formulations can claim to have the final answer to the authentic being of man.

As such, philosophy will be meaningful only if it brings man to realise his limitations, and awakens him to his immense possibilities that go contrary to the mere given accounts. Jaspers maintains that the charming feature of philosophy lies not in its answer but in its question. This is because every answer becomes a new question. However, one should not jump to the conclusion that philosophy offers no answer. Indeed, philosophy does offer the answer, but its answer cannot be absolute.

Since philosophy for Jaspers has a meaning only if it is able to lead man to awareness of being, it is accessible to all. For our own experience can provide us a sufficient basis for philosophizing. He holds that nobody can, strictly speaking, escape from philosophy; for anyone who rejects philosophy is himself unconsciously practicing a philosophy. So the essence of philosophy is not the possession of truth but the search for truth,

11 Jaspers, Way to wisdom, . p. 12
philosophy means to be on the way, its questions are more essential than its answers. Jaspers has been true to the spirit of philosophy, that is, “love of wisdom.” As he puts it:

We must presuppose a philosophic attitude whose passion
for the truth, in a continuing attempt to grasp one’s own
Existenz, achieves awareness of an unlimited range by
continued questioning.”

Jaspers, therefore, maintains that there is no proper definition of philosophy because it cannot be determined by something outside it. There is no genus above philosophy, under which it can be subsumed as a species. Philosophy denies itself, relates itself directly to godhead, and does not justify itself by any kind of utility. It grows out of primal source in which man is given to himself. It is not merely a theoretical analysis but must involve the individual and touch his being. Philosophy attempts to bridge the gulf between theory and praxis. For him, philosophy cannot be obtained by pure imagination or scientific method. No formulation and description can go deeply into the being of the individual. Jaspers writes:

Philosophy is the thinking in which we ascertain what we live by, what really is, what makes us be; it is the thinking in which we make our way to conceive that thinking, to test its certainty, and to illuminate its meaning and criteria. But true philosophy stays inconclusive as it systematically clarifies our basic knowledge that serves, so to

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speak, as a framework for both what we are and what for us there is.13

Yet, one may ask; if philosophy does not offer any definite doctrines or theories, would it be that there is no tangible criterion for delineating a universal model of man, world history and morality? Is it possible to say that philosophical wisdom is somewhat dependent on individual’s perspective and does not derive from any knowledge of some definitive domain and is virtually interpretative?

Jaspers clearly points out that even though we may not be able to define the nature of philosophy in a definite manner, it does not mean that philosophy has no criterion or method of its own. Rather, it has the methods of inquiry, but they are not fixed on particular objects. So, philosophical truth contains within itself the possibility of deep satisfaction, though it can be fulfilled only in a moment of time. This is because philosophical truth never resides in demonstrable knowledge, but in a historical consummation of human condition in which being itself is realized.

It is possible to say that philosophical wisdom depends on individual’s interpretation. But this kind of interpretation is not arbitrary, that is, it is based on facts in the world, not merely on a speculative thinking. It is only by experiencing philosophy oneself that one can claims to have understood or seen the real meaning of philosophical thought.

Since philosophy can be viewed in numerous dimensions, Jaspers points out that there are at least five aspects on which philosophy is based.

They are as follows; (a) the historical aspect (b) the thematic aspect (c) the genetic aspect (d) the practical aspect and (e) the dynamic aspect.¹⁴

(a) The historical aspect can be developed by taking a guide of chronology and geography, which forms a picture of the epochs and of their mysterious diversity. The assumption and modes of thought characteristic of the different epochs are the historical cloaks of the eternal question.

(b) The thematic aspect can be developed by turning to the problems and systems of thought, examining the history without concern for the chronological sequence to see what questions it has asked, what answers it has given. As such, we acquire a systematic view of various matters with which philosophy has concerned itself.

(c) The genetic aspect is to observe how philosophy has sprung at the beginning and at all times, from myth, religion, poetry and language. The independent existence of philosophy is hidden under these clouds, from which it draws its nourishment, but it can be dug out through our reflection.

(d) The practical aspect will lead us to see the reflection of philosophy in practice of the consequences of philosophy and observe conversely how it is subject to the conditions of practical existence.

(e) The dynamic aspect will help us to perceive the field of forces where philosophy gives rise to a battle of minds which can never be concluded in time, which seems to culminate in great comprehensive systems, only to break through them and appear in new forms.

These are the ways to approach a history of philosophy. But Jaspers emphasizes that these are not enough for understanding philosophy; one needs to know how to reflect on these approaches and treat philosophers of the past as if they are contemporary. With the help of the great thinkers, we

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may be able to grasp the core of philosophy, which becomes concrete reality only in the personal figures of the philosophers. Like other philosophers, Jaspers firmly believes that there is nothing absolute in a single philosophy. It is necessary for us to know the history of philosophy so that we can recognize the greatness even of those who are most alien to us, to seek out what is true in them, and to see which philosophy is useful and relevant to our existence in day to day life.

Moreover, Jaspers also mentions the sources of philosophy, which are of three kinds, namely, wonder, doubt, and contemplation on human condition. Wonder has been the source of philosophy since the time of Plato. It impels man to seek knowledge. When man looks around and sees things, he may wonder and ask what is all this? Wonderment makes man aware of his ignorance and impels him to look for answer. It may not give the answer once and for all but may be able to lead man who philosophises to an intrinsic satisfaction.

Doubt represents the uncertain part of mind, yet it gives rise to a critical examination of all knowledge and thereby leading to the certainty. Without radical doubt there can be no true philosophical thought. For this reason, Jaspers regards doubt as the road to certainty.\textsuperscript{15}

Finally, contemplation on human condition, which appears itself in the ultimate situations such as suffering, death, struggle and guilt, is according to him the most profound source of philosophy. This point will be elaborated in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{15} Jaspers, Way to wisdom, . . . p. 19
However, Jaspers points out that though these three sources, which we have thus far discussed, remain in force, they are not adequate. They can operate only if there is communication among men. Only in communication can man become himself; he is not merely living but fulfilling life. The ultimate source of philosophy is the will to authentic communication, which embraces all the rest. He further states that philosophy upholds the aspiration to attain the meaning of life beyond all worldly purposes, that is, it helps us become authentic men by being aware of being. In order to point out the objective of philosophy, Jaspers writes:

Philosophy aims to find reality in the primal source, to apprehend reality in my thinking attitude toward myself, in my inner acts, to open man to the comprehensive (encompassing) in all its scope, to attempt the communication of every aspect of truth from man to man, in loving contest, and to sustain the vigilance of reason in the presence of future and in the presence of that which seems alien to it.\(^{16}\)

**Philosophy and Science**

With regard to philosophy and science Jaspers, first of all, makes it clear that from the very beginning both made a stride for the same goal, that is, they spring from a desire to achieve the highest and most certain knowledge. But after the development of the specifically modern sciences, they become different from each other. All possible fields of scientific research have been conducted with the great success, so much so that science claims to obtain the universal validity. As a result, philosophy has

\(^{16}\) Ibid. pp. 13-14
been dismissed as an empty idea without demonstrable hypothesis, while science is conceived as methodical, cogent universally valid insight. Sciences can claim to have progressive development while philosophy cannot. For example, the modern sciences are far more advanced than the Greek scientists. But with regard to the development of philosophy even in the present century, we cannot say that it has progressed far beyond the philosophy of Plato or Buddha.

So the very nature of philosophy is above the unanimous recognition of all. Philosophy looks for certainty, yet such a certainty is not of the objective or scientific sort, but it is an inner certainty in which a man's whole being participates. Here some questions arise: Are both philosophy and science related to, or totally different from each other? What is the suitable role of philosophy in the modern world? Can both go together in search of truth?

According to Jaspers, there are two main schools of thought that react to the above questions. The reaction is going like this; philosophy may stand at an end because of sciences taking over all its subject matter, yet there is still scope for philosophy. That is to say, it can provide the knowledge of its history first as a factor in the history of sciences themselves, then as a phenomenon in the history of thought and finally as a factor in preserving the knowledge of the philosophical texts. For this reason, under the influence of modern sciences, some philosophers, Husserl for example, have attempted to develop philosophy as a foundation of science and thereby dismissing traditional philosophy as unreal.

Moreover, the positivists, A.J. Ayer for example, hold that philosophy is the logical analysis of language and classification of the meaning of
words and concepts. They also approve the scientific trend of philosophy, which, they claim, is capable of providing us with cogent and universal knowledge. Being unsatisfied with this reaction, Jaspers argues that if philosophy were identical with science, then it could be carried on only by the specialists with a narrow circle of experts standing aloof from a common man.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast to the first reaction, the second states that philosophy is by no means related to science, for its real concern is not with the world of experience but with feeling, intuition, the Absolute Idea, which alone can give authentic truth. All scientific truth according to this theory is questionable because it depends for its existence on the world orientation, which is changeable and unreliable. Philosophical truth, in contrast, is absolute and reliable because it is sustained by reason that is universally valid. Philosophy, therefore, is completely different from science.

These two reactions, according to Jaspers, seem to spell the end of philosophy. For, whether it is the slave of science or whether it denies all sciences, it has in either case ceased to be philosophy. Jaspers pointed out that such a problem developed from three factors, namely, (1) the spirit of modern sciences, (2) the ancient and ever recurrent attempt to achieve universal philosophical knowledge and (3) the philosophical concept of truth, as it was first and for all time elucidated by Plato.

(1) Modern sciences have brought into the world a lot of contributions not only in terms of technology but also in terms of information that gives a new foundation to the purpose, scope and unity of

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p. 199
their fields of inquiry. For Jaspers, the spirit of modern sciences can be characterized in the following ways:  

(a) *Nothing is indifferent*, that is, in science every fact, however big or small it may be, is a legitimate object of inquiry. There is nothing left undiscovered or passed over in silence.

(b) *Nothing is absolute*, for modern science holds that an all-embracing system that reduces everything from one or a few principles is impossible. Even the modern physics, which sets forth the unprecedented world-system, covers only one aspect of reality. Thus, modern science by definition is unfinished as it progresses toward the infinite, whereas ancient science in every one of its forms presented itself as finished.

(c) *Special branch of sciences must be integrated*, the modern science, unlike ancient sciences that were unrelated to each other, strives to be integrated into a universal frame of reference. This is because it is not possible for each particular science to grasp the knowledge as a whole; scientific disciplines must be interconnected in order to obtain the whole picture of reality.

(d) *Only practical knowledge is acceptable*, the modern science attaches value to the practical knowledge rather than possibilities of thought. It accepts only knowledge that can be applied as an instrument of discovery, even though such knowledge is subject to a continued modification in the process of investigation.

(e) *Nothing is taken for granted*, the modern science provides an amazing attitude of inquiry into knowledge. It obtains knowledge on the basis of unprejudiced inquiry and critique without any preconceived ideas.

(2) The attempt to achieve a universal knowledge has been a common purpose of both philosophy and science from the very beginning. The

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18 See Jaspers, Way to Wisdom., pp. 151-153
ensuing philosophers, Descartes and Kant for example, believed that philosophy, like science, strives for a total and certain knowledge, which sets up itself not as a factual reality but as a self-contained doctrine. This leads to the impression that philosophy and science are identical.

(3) The concept of philosophical truth formulated by Plato still retains original meaning of philosophy; love of wisdom. It is the truth that one cannot put on display in public, but one can penetrate through understanding of his being. For Jaspers, both modern science and the total philosophical system cannot surpass philosophy as laid down by Plato.19

Though Jaspers holds these three factors responsible for the confusion between philosophy and science, which results in regarding science as a source of a new kind of foundation that charges its opponents with stupidity; he praises the spirit of science for its leading us to the understanding of the principles, limitations and meaning of our knowledge. For him, science teaches us to know in full consciousness of the method by which each stage of knowledge is achieved. It produces a certainty whose relativity i.e. dependence on presuppositions and methods of investigation, is its crucial characteristic. Moreover, Science gives us a wonderful method, as it is accepted that in the course of scientific development only what is truly known is permanently preserved, the rest is eliminated through critique.20

Jaspers argues that whenever confusion occurs regarding the meaning of science one should take these tasks into consideration, namely, (1) the idea that total philosophical knowledge is scientific knowledge must be exposed as false, (2) the sciences must be made pure through constant struggle and awareness in the cause of scientific activity itself and (3) a pure

19 Ibid, p. 153
20 Ibid, p. 156-157
philosophy must be worked out in the new conditions that have been created by the modern sciences. For a pure science requires a pure philosophy.\textsuperscript{21}

For this reason, Jaspers holds that both science and philosophy complement each other, as philosophy is always alive in the science and vice versa. Philosophy can be called science in so far as it presupposes the sciences. There is no tenable philosophy outside the sciences. Philosophy has a distinct character but is inseparable from science. "Anyone who philosophizes must be familiar with scientific method."\textsuperscript{22} He believes that any philosopher who has no knowledge of scientific disciplines may mistake uncritical rough drafts as definitive knowledge, or else may emerge in emotions and passions that can lead to stubbornness and a narrow fanaticism.

For this reason, Jaspers stresses that to philosophize is to strive for scientific knowledge, for it is the only way to genuine truth. It is scientific knowledge that makes philosophical truth possible. Philosophy without science is empty and science without philosophy is blind.

Moreover, Jaspers states that science is a marvelous discovery, which man can rely upon more than on anything else. It is the most significant achievement in history of mankind; it is the great achievement on which the future of man depends, and therefore must be regarded as a pre-requisite of all human dignity. Without science, the search for knowledge eventually is nothing.

However, Jaspers goes against the tendency that tries to reduce philosophy to science. This tendency Jaspers calls "scientism" as it regards

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, p. 159
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 159
science as the absolute knowledge, which is confused with philosophy, and is a practical tendency to expect everything from science. According to Jaspers, no knowledge can be regarded as absolute. He thus rejects materialism, which claim that philosophical problems can be solved through scientific methods and that there is no reality beyond science, for whatever is discovered by science is real. Why does Jaspers protest against scientism? He points out that scientism, apart from its attempt to reduce everything to the field of scientific knowledge, brings about the sense of absolutism that may lead to unwanted consequences.

Jaspers further makes it clear that both philosophy and science are different, particularly with respect to their methods. Scientific methods have specific objects of inquiry whereas philosophical methods have no fixed objects. The object of philosophy is the whole being. To philosophize is to transcend the objects since they function as road-signs indicating the direction of philosophical transcending. But since our thinking is inseparable from objects, the history of philosophy is an account of how the progress of human thought has succeeded in transcending the direction of philosophical transcending. Jaspers makes it clear that in philosophizing we must not fall under the spell of the object that we use as a means of transcending. Instead, we must remain as masters of our thought and not to be subjugated by them.

Now the question is: Is philosophy more or less than science? Jaspers points out that whether philosophy can be said to be more or less than science depends upon the perspective we take. That is to say, it is more than science if it is being regarded as the source of truth that is inaccessible to

\[23\] Ibid, p. 161
scientifically binding knowledge. Philosophical thought is inward action; it appeals to freedom, it is a sermon to transcendence.

Philosophy may also be less than science because it does not gain any tangible results or any intellectual binding insight. While scientific cognition is identical throughout the world, philosophy despite its claim to universality is not actually universal in any shape or form. He also points out that philosophy is more than science in the sense that it is the source of truth that transcends the limit of scientific knowledge, while science confides itself to the world of objectivity. Jaspers puts it:

Science always pertains to particular object, the knowledge of which is by no means indispensable to all men, whereas philosophy deals with the whole of being, which concerns man as man, with a truth which, wherever it is manifested, moves us more deeply than any scientific knowledge.²⁴

From the above statements it follows that if objectivity is realized, the world would be exhaustively intelligible to human consciousness as such. But there are vital forms of consciousness lying, as it were, above and below the level of public knowledge and incapable of being wholly reduced to its form and norm. The more or less of obscure and fugitive sensations, perceptions, feelings, intuitions, intimations of the private consciousness, which are in part the raw material of public knowledge are intractable to scientific method. These are unpredictable manifestation of reality, which are uniquely personal self-determination of the free personality. These

²⁴ Ibid, p. 8
vitaly important elements do not pass through the filter of the most resourceful and reliable science.

From the above discussion it follows that philosophy according to Jaspers is not against science, but it is not synonymous with science either. Philosophy is concerned with ‘transcending-thinking’, since it goes beyond the realm of the world orientation on the one hand, yet on the other hand it commits itself to a systematic study of an object or the physical world. It always strives for accuracy in all its predictions. Moreover, the modern sciences are concerned with definite object and facets of human enterprise with the world. In contrast, philosophy searches for the meaning of being and of the world as a whole.

Jaspers therefore maintains that philosophy and science are not one and the same, though they are related to each other. For without knowledge of sciences, philosophy would remain obscure. Without philosophy, science would engage only in world-orientation and thereby leading to dehumanization. As Jaspers puts it:

Only the sciences bring us face-to-face with the factual content of appearance, only the sciences teach us to know clearly the way things are. If philosopher had no current knowledge of the science, he would research without clear knowledge of the world like a blind man.25

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25 Jaspers, Philosophy of Existence, p. 11
While science is analytical description, philosophy takes an integrative approach. That is to say, science wishes to resolve the whole into parts, the organism into organs, and the obscure into the known. It does not inquire into the values and ideal possibilities of human existence. It narrows its gaze resolutely to the nature and process of things as they are. Philosophy, on the other hand, is not interested in describing a fact; it looks for the meaning of Being and the world as a whole. To observe process and construct means is science. To have a comprehensive vision is philosophy. Science without philosophy, facts without perspective and valuation cannot save us from havoc and despair. Science gives us knowledge, but only philosophy gives us wisdom.

It can be concluded that even though philosophy and science may be distinguished, the connection between them offers the great possibilities for us to strive for truth and freedom of thought. Philosophy is indispensable for awakening man to his potentialities. But scientific knowledge is also important in accomplishing this task. In this connection, Jaspers points out the significance of the relationship between philosophy and science. But he rejects scientism. He emphasizes that man cannot philosophize in a complete abstraction for the situation of his temporal existence. Scientific knowledge is thus required for philosophizing.

**Philosophy and Religion**

Apart from philosophy and science, Jaspers also points out the relation between philosophy and religion notably Christianity. Jaspers holds that religion is not the enemy of philosophy but something that essentially concerns it and troubles it. But thereafter they become separate and

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contrasted with each other. Their difference can be characterized as follows; religion has its cult that is bound up with a peculiar community of man, arising from the cult, and it is not separate from the myth. Religion always embodies man's practical relation to the transcendent, as distinguished from the profane or unholy. Believing in the transcendent or supernatural power is the peculiar character of religion. Without faith the true sense of religion has vanished. The role of religion throughout history of mankind can scarcely be ignored.

Philosophy, on the other hand, has no cult, no community led by priests or monks. It is not interested in looking for supernatural being that endows with a sacred character standing apart from beings in general. Philosophy is a product of the individual freedom, not of socially determined conditions, and it does not carry the sanction of a mass. Philosophy has no rites or rituals as mentioned in a primitive mythology. For Jaspers, philosophy emerges from free thinking. It can never grow old because it takes the most fundamental question of existence.

While religion regards God as the actual living Being, of which man can have a direct experience through his revelation, philosophy considers God as the transcendent with which man can have a direct encounter through his freedom. In other words, from religious point of view, any attempt to arrive at God by thought is vain, and therefore man can know God only through revelation. For philosophy, on the other hand, the Transcendent is not derived from revelation but from the illumination of human existence.

Religion for Jaspers requires revealed faith as necessary condition for knowing God. But philosophy protests against such faith as it claims to
know the truth existentially. For instance, the Christians always claim that only those who believe in Christ will have eternal life. This claim according to Jaspers is not convincing because the inner transformation of man from his own self-will to boundless self-sacrifice and devotion is not to be found only among the Christians.  

For this reason, Jaspers makes distinction between religious and philosophical truth. Religion faith implies dogmatic belief in the established religious doctrines. It may be blind irrational and closed. Philosophical faith on the other hand is not blind irrational and dogmatic. It is voluntary and open. Jaspers also makes difference between religious or revealed faith and philosophical faith. The former leads to violence and fanaticism. Religious faith is bound to the symbols or objects, whereas the latter leads to tolerance and open mind as it can respect and accept people for what they believe and practice. Religious faith is bound to the symbols or objects, whereas philosophical faith transcends objects whatsoever.

Jaspers firmly believes that although philosophy is in contrast with religion in many ways, it is helpful to religion in striving to broaden the areas of knowledge. The quest for Transcendence is common to both philosophy and religion. That is to say, philosophy extends scope of our vision from truth in particular religion to the truth in all religions i.e. to see what is universal in all religions. In this sense, philosophy and religion complement each other. As Jaspers remarks:

Philosophy, always in the form of individual effort, strives to realize universality, to preserve men’s

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27 Jaspers, The perennial scope of philosophy, p. 89
openness, to concentrate it and illuminate it in its unfathomable depths. Whether such endeavour can contribute any spark, whether the predatory work of philosophy, which is to be used religions, can be determined by no plan. But in all philosophical effort there lies a tendency to aid religious institutions, whose practical value is affirmed by philosophy.\textsuperscript{28}

Religion for Jaspers represents the objectivity of our religions to God as propagated by religious authority. But one should not understand religion only in the form of institution because in this context, religion enables man to resolve to accede to its doctrine as valid and reliable way to realize God. This implies that religion provides us the opportunities to be Existentz at the moment one chooses to participate in it or reject it.

Jaspers is not adherent of the institutionalized religion, he, nevertheless, believes that we can look for its existential significance, that is one is able to follow or to break moral rules but cannot afford to ignore it, since such rules are intended to preserve human community as well as the welfare of each member of society.

The Concept of Encompassing

In the above section, we have seen that though philosophy is related to both science and religion, it is to be distinguished from them. Philosophy for Jaspers takes an integral approach with an encompassing vision. This brings us to Jaspers’ concept of Encompassing. Science involves a

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p. 144
systematic study of an object or the physical world; it always strives for accuracy in all its predictions. Jaspers accuses science of failing to go beyond empirical reality to the non-objective elements of human existence. Philosophy, in contrast, is concerned with ‘transcending thinking’, which reflects on the non-empirical realities which is excluded by the scientific investigation. This is the reason why Jaspers makes a distinction between science and philosophy by proposing the idea of the Encompassing.

The concept of the Encompassing is the result of the development of Jaspers’ idea of the subject-object dichotomy. Jaspers points out that what we normally think or speak of, is always something other than ourselves, it is the object towards which, we as a subject, are oriented. If we turn ourselves into the object of our thinking, we ourselves become, as it were, the other, and yet at the same time we remain a thinking subject that thinks about itself but cannot aptly be considered as an object, because it determines the objectiveness of all objects. Jaspers calls this basic condition of our thinking as the subject-object dichotomy. He refers to his own philosophy as the philosophy of the Encompassing.

To understand the development of the Encompassing, Jaspers reminds us of the classical Greek philosophy which occupies itself with the questions such as; what is the ultimate or absolute being that holds the things of the world, whether in form of animate or inanimate, together or what lies at the base of everything? Though there are many answers to this question, none of them, according to Jaspers, can claim to be absolutely correct because they all apprehended being as something which confronts men as an object, which stand apart from me as I think.

29 Jaspers, Way to Wisdom, p. 29
31 Ibid, p. 28
Jaspers points out that our basic phenomenon consciousness is so self-evident that we hardly suspect the riddle of its presence and therefore we do not inquire into it. What is the basic condition that leads us to think of being as the subject-object dichotomy? He makes it clear that the thing that we think, or the thing of which we speak, is always something other than ourselves, it is the object of which we as subjects are conscious, it should be noted that the term “object” carries many meanings. It may be the reality of our sense perception, or the concept of ideal objects such as numbers or geometrical figures, or it may be a fantasy or even an impossible imagination.

For Jaspers, we are always confronted outwardly or inwardly by objects, which are the contents of our consciousness. Thus, we may say that there is no object without a subject and no subject without an object. He observes:

What is the meaning of this ever-present subject-object dichotomy? It only means that being as a whole neither subject nor object but must be the encompassing, which is manifested in this dichotomy.\(^{32}\)

The Encompassing, according to Jaspers can be classified into two main categories; the Encompassing, which we are, and the Encompassing as being itself. To the former category belong the three immanent modes; namely (1) existence (Dasein), (2) consciousness as such and (3) spirit. These dimensions of the encompassing are open to investigation and description. They are the immanent modes, so to speak. In addition, there is

\(^{32}\)Ibid, p. 29-30
another Encompassing of man, which transcends all the immanent modes; and that is called Existenz, which is the transcendent mode of the Encompassing.

Jaspers moves to the Encompassing as being itself, whose dimensions are (1) world and (2) transcendence. Both represent the transcendent mode of the Encompassing of objectivity. Thus, the concept of the Encompassing may be chalked out as follows:

1. The Encompassing that we are as follows:
   A. Immanent mode
      - Existence
      - Consciousness as such
      - Spirit
   B. Transcendent mode: Existenz

2. The Encompassing as Being itself
   A. Immanent mode: world
   B. Transcendent mode: Transcendent

The immanent mode of the Encompassing of objectivity always remains as a background of what we know, and by which we interact with objects. The transcendent mode of the Encompassing of objectivity would be seen as the limit or end of transcending thinking.

(1) As empirical existence (Dasein), we like other living beings, are bound to our corporeal existence by our vital functions. We live with our body in environment, into which we reach by means of tools, forms of social activity, language and our total conduct, thereby objectifying ourselves. The forms of our existential realizations become, when
objectified, objects of scientific research, as physiological functions, psychological experiences and sociological manners of condition. But what becomes the subject of research such as matter, life, soul or consciousness is no longer the encompassing of existence itself. In this sense, we are conceived of as a type of being among other types but not yet as authentic being (Existenz).

For as humans, we always find ourselves encompassed by a vital existential mind, and embedded in a general behaviour pattern, in which we exist as functioning parts of the body of human existence. Looking at the Encompassing from this perspective, we become the world for ourselves, we encounter ourselves as objects in the world, objects which possess material and temporal existence which appears in a living body, and observing subject with whom we objectively identify ourselves. Jaspers writes:

As soon as our empirical existence become an object for investigation, we become an observed into the being of the world which is that incomprehensible other, nature. In this fashion we are apprehended only as one sort of being among others, not yet a proper human.\(^{33}\)

The above statements show that as empirical existence, man exists like other empirical realities or perceptible beings in the world. Man not only embodies the subjective aspect but also is a part of the environment. The life we live in the world involves organizing things, constructing,

observing and being practical in the struggle to exist. In this context, man as empirical existence would refer to the psycho-physical individual, which becomes the object of research for the natural and social sciences. As an organic being, man has instincts, desires and interests which give rise to social, political, and economic activities, the objects we are concerned with as empirical existence and which concerns our normal worldly affairs. In other words, empirical existence characterizes the nature of our normal life in the world.

(2) As consciousness as such, we realise the subject-object division and notice that whatever exists, must enter into our consciousness. Jaspers says, "Only what appear to our consciousness as experienceable as an object has being for us." For him, there are two kinds of consciousness; empirical and general. As empirical consciousness, we become possible objects of empirical investigation for ourselves. We also find ourselves divided into groups of races and particular individualities. But as consciousness in general, we participate in impersonal, indifferent, but universally valid truth. Jaspers points out that we are not simply a unit of consciousness with just the awareness of living existents but we traverse such level of subjective consciousness to the other aspect of consciousness which he calls consciousness as such, the level form which we can think about being not in a limited subjective context but in a more generally acceptable manner. In other words, whereas mere consciousness of existence we are a dull and undifferentiated part of our environment, as consciousness as such we achieve clarity of reflection, in which everything appears in the subject-object division. Only what enters this division becomes for us unequivocal, 

34 Ibid, p. 55
objective fixed being. Consciousness as such is the receiving apparatus, which provides human existence a possibility for becoming objective.

Jaspers clearly points out that consciousness as such cannot be an object. Everything that becomes an object for me breaks away from the Encompassing in confronting me while I break away from it as object. For the ‘I’ as consciousness the object is a determinate being. In this context, the encompassing remains obscure to my consciousness. In other words, every object, and every thought-content stands in a twofold dichotomy; first in reference to thinking subject, the consciousness, and secondly in reference to other objects since every determinate object is thought in reference to objects. Whatever is thought must break out of the Encompassing and it is particular to both the ‘I’ and other objects. Thus, in our thinking we gain only an intimation of the Encompassing.

(3) As spirit, we participate in the world of the spirit, which becomes for us the practical impulse of our empirical-temporal existence or of the theoretical directive of our research. In this manner, man embodies the potentiality, which strives to embrace his experience. For Jaspers spirit is the totality of intelligible thought, action and feeling - a totality that is not closed object for knowledge but remains idea. In other words, man, as spirit is temporal occurrence, in contrast to the timeless abstraction of consciousness as such.

Thus, spirit is bound to contents where it appears as the totality of comprehensible relationships. It is the will to become whole. It intends something temporal, occurring here and now and something manifests even though to reflection by knowing it. We look at ourselves as natural beings

35 Ibid, p. 63
from without, we make ourselves explicable objects of investigation. As spirit we are in conscious relation with everything that is understandable to us as we transform the world and ourselves into comprehensive totality. Jaspers writes:

But as spirit we are consciously related to everything, which is comprehensible to us, we transform the world and ourselves into the intelligible, which enclose totalities. As object in this mode of the encompassing we know ourselves from within as the one unique all embracing reality that is wholly spirit and only spirit.36

Spirit for Jaspers is therefore represented by the idea which gives meaning and order, thereby making intelligible the things we experience in the world as given, but the totality which spirit quests for is temporal because spirit implies continuous movement towards unity of form and content and reconstruction of all totalities in the movement. Hence, it involves the moment that does not occur just once for all. It is associated with that active aspect of our being which represented in such intelligible thought as family, religion, culture, institution, moral rules political organization etc. These ideas involve certain obligations or commitments conviction and legality. One can become aware of the objective pole of this level by reflection on the world of science, politics or art.

All three modes of the Encompassing; empirical existence, consciousness as such, and spirit, can become objects of research, but they

36 Ibid, p. 58
do so in different manners. Empirical existence becomes object of both the natural and social sciences, but especially data for social sciences; consciousness as such becomes the categories, logic, mathematics, and the methods of natural sciences; spirit becomes object for both natural and social sciences, but especially for the history of thought, art, poetry, or humanities as a whole.

In other words, these three modes are interconnected; consciousness as such, which involves awareness of universally valid truth, has a connection not only with empirical existence but also with spirit as the potentiality with which meaning and totality is achieved they are the manners in which we find ourselves participate in the world if we illuminate our being. Both consciousness as such and spirit are lucidly intertwined as they are constantly stirring for what is universal. But none of them is in itself independent of empirical existence because it is through these sense organisms that forms of reality are perceived and transformed into the idea, which makes our experience meaningful and universally valid.

Hence, the ways in which man participates in the world are possible under these three modes of the Encompassing; existence, consciousness as such, and spirit. Yet, all the possibilities of man are not exhausted by these three modes, which have to be transcendent. The mode, which we are, is not being itself.

The World and Transcendence

For Jaspers, world is an aspect of being that can be seen as the immanent appearance of being-itself, as a manner of the being that surrounds us and of which a very small aspect of our being i.e. the objective dimension would be a constitution. Now one may ask: what is the world?
it object or abstract? Jaspers points out that the world is not an object, we are always in the world, and we confront objects in it but never have the world itself as an object. That is to say, no matter how much effort we put on scientific and philosophical theories of the world, we cannot reach the whole picture of the world for whatever comes to our knowledge is a mere finite perception and perspective, which are but segments in the world itself. Is world everything then? If it is not, can we assert that there is something beyond it i.e. Transcendence?

Jaspers believes that the world is not everything; we cannot deny the possibility of Transcendence, for to do so would imply that the world is everything. Thus, Jaspers asserts that the world points beyond itself, world and Transcendence are not identical. This is due to the fact that even the above three modes of the Encompassing are the ways in which we participate in the world; they do not exhaust the possibilities of man.

As far as the concept of the world is concerned, neither sciences nor philosophical theories can claim to have a complete grasp of its picture as a whole. Instead, they represent our finite perceptions and perspectives, which are but segments in ‘world-itself’. The world therefore is the Encompassing that we are not, although we participate in it. This is because the world is not everything; it needs to be transcended. We have to go beyond these three modes to Being-itself, which we encounter.

Thus, the world is to be seen as the immanent appearance of Being-itself, as a manner of the Being that surrounds us and of which a very small aspect of our being would be constitutive. For this reason, Jaspers

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37 See Jaspers, Way to Wisdom, Ibid, p. 76
introduces the idea of Transcendence; a realm of Being beyond the world in order to justify that the world is not everything.

Transcendence, according to Jaspers, has its root in religion as well as in philosophy. However related to each other they may be, both maintain their separate ways; religion looks for Transcendence in revealed faith while philosophy approaches Being in the self-disclosure of the Encompassing that are present in man. Many names have been given to Transcendence, including those of “Being”, “Reality”, “Deity”, and “God”. In regarding Transcendence as the compassing we call it “reality”; to the extent that there is that which is master over us and makes demands on us we call it “Deity”, and to extent that we make of it a personal encounter, we call it “God.”

Thus, Transcendence is not the world, but without the world there is no transcendence. The appearance of Transcendence stands at the boundary of two worlds from the point of view of which in relation to each other are being, and non-being. That is to say, for Transcendence, the world may appear as though it were empty, illusion, or non-being; the empirical world can become unreal over against the authentic reality of Transcendence.

From the worldly perspective, Transcendence is an illusion and looks as though it were non-being. The differences between the world and Transcendence is that whereas the latter cannot be subjected to any categories which determine being, and thereby being called non-being, the former is viewed in term of objectivity.

However, they complement each other, since man’s being in the world is nothing but an appearance of Being or Transcendence, which lies beyond the limits. The world is limited and not everything, yet it is the
frontier of Transcendence, enabling man to recognize where Transcendence is. The concept of Transcendence will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Existenz and Reason

The fact that we are empirical existence, consciousness as such and spirit and that we embrace ourselves in the world and transcendence become just empty if there is no return to the basis i.e. Existenz. By ‘Existenz’, Jaspers means the transcendental dimension of man. It is different from empirical existence, man is in the actuality is called existence, whereas the possible dimension of man is called Existenz.

For Jaspers, Existenz is the ground of all modes of the Encompassing, without which the other modes such as empirical existence consciousness as such and spirit cannot be understood. We are never Existenz in the mode of actuality but only in the mode of potentiality. As an Existenz, we never become objects to ourselves.

In contrast to other modes of the Encompassing, Existenz does not become appearance. Whatever appears, appear as actuality. Compared to all worldly beings, Existenz always remains unsettled, unfinished never advances to the side of object. It is the innermost core of man, which does not yield itself to scientific investigation. While the other modes of Encompassing; empirical existence, consciousness as such and spirit become scientifically investigable, Existenz refuses to advance to the side of the object. It is not possible to make any positive assertions about Existenz because it has infinite possibilities. But we can say what Existenz is not. Jaspers observes:

38 See Jaspers, Reason and Existenz, pp. 59-60
While mere empirical existence, consciousness as such and spirit all appear in the world and become scientifically investigable realities; Existenz is the object of no science. In spite of which, we find here the very axis about which everything in the world turns if it is to have any genuine meaning for us.39

Now, one may ask: how are all the different modes of the Encompassing related? Jaspers makes it clear that they are related through reason. That is to say, reason is the bond between the various modes of the encompassing. It should be noted here that Jaspers uses the term ‘reason’ in a very wide sense, it is a unifying bond and different from intellect. “It is not a mode through which the encompassing appears, but rather the bond which unites all modes of the encompassing; it is called reason”40 The intellect refers to our mental ability to perceive, learn and know the object of the world, it is a power of mind by which we are able to understand and differentiate our objects of knowledge.

Reason, on the other hand, always tries to seek clarity, relation and unity among all things. It is a power that controls and directs our thinking, it refers to something in us, which leads us and by which we can penetrate and analyze whatever becomes the object of our thought. Because of reason, one would never be satisfied in the quest for truth. It never claims any of its position as final. It questions everything, does not ignore anything but seeks.

For this reason, Jaspers emphasizes that reason is a power, which controls and direct our thinking. It refers to something in us, which leads us,
and by which we penetrate and analyze whatever becomes the object of our thought. Although reason is always allied or connected with the intellect, it does not succumb to the restriction of the intellect. He maintains that reason is never satisfied with its quest for truth. It can justify or raise objections to its own positions. It does not ignore anything, but seeks to grasp and make clear everything in all its ramifications. Reason is connected with the modes of the Encompassing in the sense and relates them with each other without getting trapped in any of the modes.

It may be concluded that the concept of Encompassing brings our attention to the fact that we always live and think within a horizon. The Encompassing is not identical with any one horizon, within which each horizon is enclosed. It is the absolute Encompassing (God), which cannot any longer itself be regarded as horizon. The notion of the Encompassing reveals Jaspers’ integrative approach and comprehensive vision.

**Buddha’s concept of Dhamma**

So far Jaspers’ concept of philosophy has been discussed in a great detail. Now let us come to the Buddhist philosophy or Buddhism, which is also widely known as *Buddha’s Dhamma* (Skt. *Dharma*), because the main philosophical ideas of the Buddhists are based on the teaching of Buddha. The significance of the Buddhist philosophy can be reflected on the fact that it never makes a distinction between philosophy and religion, between free reason and religious authority. Hence, such a question as whether Buddhism is philosophy or religion does not really matter so far as the main principle is concerned; philosophy itself is a religious activity. For

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the Buddhists, philosophy is aimed at awakening each individual to be aware of the conditions of existence so that he or she by realizing those conditions can put them into practice in order to overcome suffering, and thus there is no clear-cut distinction between philosophy and religion.

The Buddhists, therefore, regard philosophy as not just a way of thought, but a practical necessity, a way of life, which can be cultivated so that man will be able to understand the basic facts of life and live his life accordingly. The aim of philosophy is not merely the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity, but mainly an enlightened life endowed with farsightedness, foresight and insight.

The Buddhists, therefore, regard the theoretical treatment of metaphysical questions as harmful (asat-ditthi). This is evident from the fact that Buddha declined to explain such speculative propositions as ‘the world is eternal’, ‘the world is not eternal’, ‘the world is finite’ and ‘the world is infinite’ etc. For him such metaphysical speculations result in quarrels and controversies, which lead us to regard our own position as the only true one. Moreover, they do not advance us along the road to the end of suffering, Nibbāna.

To grasp the essence of philosophy, one needs to ‘see’ it through wisdom, not mere belief. Buddhadhamma is therefore qualified as the truth that ‘one must come and see himself’ (ehi-passika). For this reason, Buddha, when asked by the Kālāmas on how to justify what is truth and

42 The questions that Buddha inclines to answer are; (1) is the world eternal, (2) is it not eternal, (3) is the world finite, (4) is it infinite, (5) is the soul the same as body, (6) is the soul one thing and body another thing, (7) does Tathagata exist after death, (8) does he not exist after death, (9) does he both exist and not exist after death, (10) does he both not exist and not not-exist. M, (Cula-malunkaya-Sutta) 63.
what falsehood is, had said that one should not be led by mere reports, tradition, hearsay, speculative opinions etc. as Buddha says:

> When you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome (*akusala*), wrong and bad, then you should give them up... And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome (*kusala*) and good, and then you accept them and follow them”.

For the Buddhists, philosophical truth would be meaningful and relevant only if it is capable of transforming and leading man to liberation, to the end of suffering. For this reason, Buddha rejects all shades of idea that are not conducive to salvation. He asserts that man can work out his own emancipation, for man has the potentiality to liberate himself from all shackles through his own effort and wisdom, without submitting himself to the grace of God or any external power. Thus, Buddha asks men and women to train, educate and develop themselves in such a way that they can help themselves as well as others.

According to Buddhism, it is with proper training and education that one shall be one’s own refuge or support. Even before his death, Buddha advised a group of his followers to make island (*dīpa*) or support for themselves by living in *Dhamma*. “Therefore, *Ananda*, dwell making yourselves your island, making yourself, not anyone else, your refuge” (*Attadīpā vihāratha, attasaranā, anaññasaranā*). He emphasizes that for

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43 Kesaputiya Sutta, A.I. 188
44 Dhp. XII, 160 (Attā hi attano nātho)
45 D. II, pp. 61-62
philosophical or spiritual development, one must work out himself because it is the task that one cannot take a helping hand from the other person directly. For what other can do, if at all, is only to give advice. Thus, Buddha says: “You should do your work, for the Tathagatas only show the way.”  

Buddha compares those who engage themselves in the metaphysical thinking with a man who had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison rejected the medical aid, saying that “I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt the name of the man who shot me, until I have learnt whether the man who shot me was a Kṣatriya, Brāhmin, Vaiśya or Śūdra, or whether the man was tall, short, or of medium stature.” That man according to Buddha would die without ever having learnt this.

In exactly the same way, anyone who says, “I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed one, until the Blessed One shall explain to me either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal” etc. That man also would die before the Blessed One had ever explained this to him. Whether he knows that the world is eternal or that the world is not does not matter, because there still remain birth, old age, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair. As the Buddha says:

Therefore, Malunkyaputta, bear in mind as to what I have explained and what I have not explained. What are the things that I have not explained? Whether the world is eternal or not etc., I have not explained. Why Malunkyaputta have I not explained them? Because they are not useful, they are

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46 Dhp. XX 4, The term “Tathagata” is used by Buddha referring to himself and Buddhas in general.

47 Buddha regards the caste system as mere social phenomena. He emphasizes that all are equal in terms of their potencies to achieve Nibbāna.
not necessarily connected with the spiritual life, are not conducive to aversion, detachment, cessation, tranquility, deep penetration full realization, Nibbāṇa. Then, what, Malunkyaputta, have I explained? I have explained dukkha, the arising of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha, and the way leading to the cessation of dukkha. Why Malunkyaputta have I explained them? Because they are useful and necessarily connected with spiritual life, are conducive to aversion, deep penetration, and full realization, Nibbāṇa.\(^{48}\)

This is where the Buddhist philosophy differs from the speculative philosophical systems, which are not concerned with the practical day-to-day life of human existence. Philosophy according to the Buddhist does not seek mere adamance for a person who needs another item of possession to extend his ego. It is purely the Dhamma that guides an individual who is bent on attaining reality and on escaping the cycle of existence.

However, the Buddha pointed out that his Dhamma or teaching is only a symbol or cipher, to use Jaspers’ terminology, that points to the truth, once truth is realised the means or Dhamma can be dispensed with. It is like a raft constructed to cross a stream of river. When the stream is crossed, there is no need to take the raft along on the land. As Buddha says:

I have taught a doctrine similar the raft; it is for crossing over, and not for carrying. You, monks, who understand that the teaching is similar to a raft, should give up even good things (dhamma), how much more then should you give up evil things (adhamma).\(^{49}\)

\(^{48}\) M. 63
\(^{49}\) M. l. 134-135
For this reason, the general characteristics of the Buddhist philosophy may be summarized as follows:

1. It explains the principle of the middle way of expressing the truth, which is called "Majjhena Dhamma" as it is against the extreme views of the Upaniṣads' externalism and the Cārvaka’s nihilism or materialism and explains the truth as a natural process. This principle is generally known as the law of Dependent origination (Paticcasamuppāda). It does support efforts to reach the truth (Saccadhamma) by way of a mere argument on theories of philosophical speculation.

2. It explains the Noble Eightfold Path in such a way that it can lead to the end of suffering. It is called 'the middle' because it is against the two extreme views of hedonism (Kāmasukkhallikāyuyoga) and of asceticism (attaśīlāmānaya). It tells us how we should authentically live our day-to-day lives. It should be noted here that while the principle of the middle way shows the truth as natural law or reality as such (Saccadhamma), the noble eightfold path points out the truth as an applicable method (Cariyadhamma) which can be brought into practice in order to overcome suffering.

Since the Buddhist philosophy, as we have seen, is not in an agreement with the Upaniṣads' idealism and the Cārvaka’s materialism, it is necessary to highlight some main ideas of both philosophies in order to understand development of the Buddhist philosophy.

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The Vedas and Upaniṣads

Both Vedas and Upaniṣads are regarded to be the sources of every system of Indian philosophy and thereby having an impact on all Indian thought in both ways, positive and negative. Positively, because both have been praised and accepted as the real and ultimate source of knowledge (Śruti) by almost all schools of philosophy like Nyāya Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta etc. Negatively, because both Vedas and Upaniṣads have been rejected by some schools like Buddhism, Jainism and materialism of Cārvaka. The systems, which believe in the authority of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, are known as “Asatika”, whereas those, which do not accept the authority of both systems, are called “Nāsatika.”

The Vedas are probably the oldest scriptures in the recorded history of man. Literally, the word ‘Veda’ means ‘knowledge’. It is derived from the root ‘Vid’, to know. The term ‘Veda’ is used into two ways, either as the collective destination of the entire oldest sacred literature of India or as the specific name of single books belonging to literature. Originally, the Vedas are three in number (trayī vedas), which always refer to the Rg, the Śāma, the Yajur. But by the addition of the Atharva Veda they become four in numbers. Each of these may be regarded as consisting of four parts, the first three parts relating to rituals and sanctification and the last one to knowledge and philosophy. These four parts of each Veda, which were known as the Vedic literature, are as follows; (1) the Sanhitā (2) the Brāhmaṇas (3) the Āranyakas and (4) the Upaniṣads.

The Sanhitās, the collection of the Mantras, are chants in praise of various gods such as Air (Vāyu) fire (Agni) rain (Parjanya) thunder (Indra) sun (Mitra). The hymns are sung in order to please the gods and thereby
receive from them the blessings of worldly goods such as health, wealth, power and fame.

The Brāhmaṇaś are manuals for performing various kinds of ritual and the ceremonies as well as guides for the conduct of everyday life. The Brāhmaṇaś, unlike the Mantras, are written in prose, they are the elaboration of the complicated rituals of the Vedas. Their name ‘Brāhmaṇa’ is deviled form the word ‘Brahman’ means a prayer. They describe the procedures of performing different rituals for pleasing different gods as well as the kind of sacrifices to be offered to them. They also lay down the rules of conduct and duties of man towards each other. Sacrifice or yajña was prescribed for man to perform not only for the benefit of each performer but also for all human beings and every creature in this universe.

The Āraṇyakaś or the forest treatises deal with rites and ceremonies. They are the appendages of the Brāhmaṇaś mainly because they were composed in the calmness of the forests. The Āraṇyakaś work in the transition form the ritualistic to the philosophic thought. But unlike the Brāhmaṇaś, they go beyond rites and ceremonies to remind man that true and liberating wisdom does not consist in the mere performance of rite and ceremonies and that the ultimate reality is realized through the spiritual insight. It is the Āraṇyakaś that pave the way or the Upaniṣads, revive the germs of philosophic speculation in the Vedas and develop them in a manner, which makes the Upaniṣads as the sources of all Indian thoughts.51

The Upaniṣads, on the other hand, are the concluding parts of the Vedas and are the culmination of the Vedic knowledge and wisdom, thereby being generally know as ‘Vedānta’ or the end of the Veda and the essence

of the Veda. The literal meaning of Upanisad is ‘sitting close to the teacher and listening to his teaching’ and ‘that which destroys ignorance and illusion and then brings man the knowledge of the ultimate reality, namely, Brahman and ātman.’ The principle Upaniṣads are ten in number, namely, Īṣa, Kena, Katha, Praśna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Brhadāranyaka.

These Upaniṣads belong to what Jaspers calls the Axial Era of the world, 800 to 300 B.C., when men for the first time simultaneously and independently in Greece, China, and India questioned the traditional pattern of life. The Upaniṣads are not the work of a single thinker but the accumulation of the ideas of different thinkers over long period of time. They were almost concerned with the problems of existence such as what is the world rooted in? What is the relation of the Absolute one to the world of relative one? Who am I “Ko’ ham”? How the universal self (Brahman) become identical with the individual (ātman)? Thus, the main concern of the Upaniṣads is to find out what the ultimate reality is. They proclaim the underlying the world of change there is unchangeable reality, which is identical with that which underlies the essence in man and is called Brahman.

The Concept of Brāhmaṇ and Ātman

The primary concern of the Vedic thinkers was actually with the world, since the Vedic man was most concerned with the environments surrounding him. According to the Vedic thinkers, the world is Brahman or universe cosmos, and every existence in this universe is a part of Brahman. No separate existence is possible without Brahman at all. The Vedic thinkers are seen struggling to understand the nature of this world. The first
question that has struck in their mind is; from which does this universe come out? (Kuto ajātā iyam visṛṭi).

As a result, some questions arise; who created this world? What are the constituent elements out of which this world was created, and how it was created? In other words, what is the first cause of the universe from which everything comes and to which everything returns? Even though they have mentioned various deities, they firmly believe that there is only one reality, but it was given different names by wise people. He thinks that every creature has its own existence but sometimes it depends on the existence of Brahman (Tatsatve satvam).

So if there is existence of ‘Brahmanda’; the universal existence (cosmos) then there is an existence of ‘Pīnd’; a particular existence. Moreover, the Vedic thinkers expressed the wonder about himself ‘what thing 1 truly am 1 know not clearly; mysterious uttered in my mind 1 wonder’. The conception of Brahman and Ātman that has enjoyed the great attention in the Upaniṣads particularly in the Vedanta philosophy was hardly mentioned in the Vedas. The list of gods that the Vedic thinkers believed to be the greatest of all are as follows; Prajāpati, Hiranyagarbha, Viśvakarmā and Virāj Purus. In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, the conception of Brāhman acquires a great significance as the supreme principle, which is a moving force behind the gods.

According to Dasgupta, the word “Brahman” conveys a number of meanings namely (a) food, food offering, (b) the chant of the sama-singer,

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53 Ekaift sat viprā bahuddā vadanti
54 See Barua, Ibid, p. 32
Accordingly, Brahman has been promoted to the highest being in the universe, and identified with the previous gods. Apart from the word ‘ātman’, the other words such as ‘nānas’ and ‘asu’ are also used by the Vedic thinkers to denote soul or self which is described as being able to separate from the body and could exit even after death. Generally, ‘ātman’ and ‘āsu’ is used to mean ‘vital breath’ (Prāṇa) whereas Manas is regarded as the seat of thought and emotion. In the Rg-Veda, the sun was conceived as the soul (Puruṣa) of universe and as the principle of all that is and of all that is to be. The sun was the lord of immortality.

The Vedic thinkers further believed that there was the powerful being whose body is luminous and from which all beings like the sun, the moon, the planets and man come into existence. This luminous being is known as the supreme or superman (Virāj Puruṣa). He is regarded as the cosmic consciousness and the father of all beings. As B. Barua observes:

Thus, it is from Puruṣa that the sun, the moon, the earth, water fire, air, the min-air, the sky, the regions, the seasons, the creatures of the air, all animals, all classes of men, and all human institutional had originated.56

From the statements mentioned above it follows that from the very beginning of creation man is considered a part of the whole. That is to say, man is only one part of the Superman whose existence encompasses all

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55 See Dasgupta, Ibid. p. 20
56 See Barua, Ibid, p. 32
beings in the entire universe. It is interesting to note here that though the sacrifice was said to be performed first by gods and later becomes the subject to be demonstrated by men in order to bring happiness to the performers in particular and to society as a whole, the objects of a sacrifice were fulfilled not by the grace of the gods but by a natural result of the sacrifice. The sacrifice is not offered to gods with a view to propitiate them or to obtain from them welfare on earth or bliss in Heaven since the fruition of object was directly produced by the sacrifice itself.

There might be certain gods believed to be invoked and received the offerings in each sacrifice, yet the gods themselves were only instruments in bringing about the sacrifice or in completing the course of mystical ceremonies composing it. Sacrifice is regarded as possessing a mystical potency superior even to the gods, and is also called action or duty \((karma \text{ or } kṛtyā)\), which is, if properly performed, destined to produce its own effect. This kind of order or law is known as \(Ṛta\).

The idea permeating the \(Ṛg-Veda\) is that nature in all its diversity and multiplicity is not a choice but is governed by a basic cosmic law \(Ṛta\). Let us try to know what is \(Ṛta\)? Literally meaning ‘course of things’, \(Ṛta\) represents the law, unity or rightness underlying the orderliness we observe in the world.\(^{57}\) It is the creative principle from which eternal order, harmony and the truth were born. Apart from being a cosmic law, \(Ṛta\) can also be understood in a moral sense. It can be seen as an order of truth and right. This order becomes sacrifice or \(yajña\), which is required for the worship of gods in order to request them to maintain the cosmic order. Sacrifice and \(Ṛta\) are believed to have brought about the ideal order of society in the human world. And sin \((pāpa)\) is believed to be the result of the violation of

\(^{57}\) Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 78
the *Rta*. It is believed that the god named *Varuna* is the upholder of this principle.

Looking from a moral point of view, ‘*Rta*’ is the anticipation of the doctrine of Karma. Also, Sacrifice (*yajña*) is regarded as almost the only kind of duty or Karma. The conception of *Rta*, thus, provides us the original idea of causality, which represents both the physical and moral principle, and here we find the first germs of the law of *Karma*, which becomes prominent in the *Upaniṣads* as well as in Buddhism.

It can be concluded that in the *Vedas* *Brahman* is considered to be the supreme man who create the universe whereas *ātman* is used to denote only ‘vital breath’ or *Prāṇa* in man. But in the *Brāhmanas* and *Āraṇyakas* the word “*ātman*” is used to denote the supreme essence in man and the entire universe. It becomes the great *ātman* (*Mahā Prāṇa*) in the *Upaniṣads*. As such, we find the simple faith and devotion of the Vedic hymns on the one hand being supplemented by the growth of the complex system of sacrificial rites, and on the other hand bending their course toward a monotheistic or philosophical knowledge of the ultimate reality of the universe.

**Ultimate Reality: Brahman and Ātman**

For the *Upaniṣads*, the supreme or absolute reality is called ‘*Brahman*’ which is sometimes also named ‘*Sat*’, or *Being as it* is regarded as the source of all existence i.e. Being of beings. It is derived from the root “birth,” meaning to grow, to burst forth. In *Ṛg Veda* *Brahman* is used in the sense of sacred knowledge or utterance, a hymn or incantation, the concrete impression of spiritual wisdom. In the *Brāhmaṇa*, the word ‘*Brahman*’
denoted the ritual and is regarded as omnipotent as a person who knows *Brahman* and controls the entire universe.

The word ‘*Brahman*’ later on is regarded as the first the ultimate cause of all beings. The nature of *Brahman* is eternally free. He is free from all fear, doubt, delusion, ignorance, hunger, thirst, sorrow, pain, decay, and death. *Brahman* is pure knowledge, pure bliss, and pure immortality. The essence of *Brahman* is one. Therefore, the diversity of things finds its best explanation in the unity of cause. *Brahman* is immanent, for he is in all things as all things are in him. In this dimension *Brahman* is known as *ātman*. *Brahman* is transcendent; he is above all duality, all plurality, all increase and decrease. Lastly, *Brahman* is a pure activity of thought unseen but seeing, unknown but knowing.

At this point, it must be noted that in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Brahman* is called ‘*Sat*’ or Being from which all beings are being produced.\(^{58}\) The reason to support this fact is that nothing is possible without a cause; there must be a cause whereby something is derived. Does something come from nothing? That is not possible according to this theory. Therefore, there must be something existing as a first cause and that is called *Sat* (Being) or *Brahman*, which is the ultimate reality.

In *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, Yājñavalkya states that *Brahman* is indescribable, inexpressible but apprehensible. He can be described only as ‘neither this nor that (*neti, neti*).\(^{59}\) The implication is that the infinite *Brahman* is beyond the comprehension of a finite mind. It is therefore, only an infinite mind, a mind without any idea of the many or plurality that can

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58 Chand., VI. 10 ff.
59 Brh., 7. 23.
indeed comprehend the infinite. There is only one way of apprehending the eternal Being that can never be proved or measured, namely, to know that it is pure beyond space and time. If we cannot describe him in words then do we need to know him?

The \textit{Upaniṣadic} thinkers believed that we need to know Brahman, because without knowing Him we really know nothing. But if we know Brahman we know everything because He is the most perfect mode of Being which the mind may copy in order to complete our knowledge, to perfect our conduct, to confirm our face, to stimulate our charitable feeling, to increase our joy, and to save us from death.

The biological aspect of human existence is referred to as ‘\textit{Jīva}’ in the \textit{Upaniṣads}. It is literally means ‘that which breathes’ deriving from ‘\textit{Jīva} to breath’. \textit{Jīva} or life is the essential form of the soul and is jointed to the body. That is to say, life is by its nature something totally different and separable from the body (\textit{Sarīra}). And it should be noted that the word ‘\textit{Jīva}’ has the same meaning of the term \textit{āman}, which also literally means ‘to breath’. It is called \textit{Puruṣa} in the sense of ‘\textit{purī-śaya}’ or that which dwells in the citadel of the heart. The \textit{Jīva} as individual existence can be seen in different dimensions. They may be stated in the following order:\footnote{See Radhakrishnan. \textit{Ibid}, p. 323} \footnote{See Barua, \textit{Ibid}. p. 45-46, See also Taitt \text{\i} Up, II. 7}

(1) As embryonic existence, man is \textit{annamaya}. He is in the process of formation, that is to say, a seed or sperm, composed of food or five elements, produced from the essence of food digested by the father, communicated by the mother and established in the womb. In this respect,
man is in the same predicament with the rest of material nature since all living beings depend on food.

(2) As physiological existence, man is prāṇamaya. He was born out of parents brought forth by the mother, a living body, that is to say, a body imbued with life, composed of food or elements, nourished by food, reduced death to tan anatomical man, a corpse dissolved hereafter into the elements or return to the physical world.

(3) As psychological existence, man is manomaya. He is a conscious individual, who can perceive through the senses, who dreams, imagines, thinks, feels, wills, and who perceived duality and plurality, among things perceptual.

(4) As metaphysical existence, man is vijñānamaya, a thought-free but conscious being who is beginning to sleep and sleeping a sound sleep, who is endowed with nothing but the inherent conscious sentient principle or soul, a thinker who realizes the unity of cause in the varieties of appearance.

(5) As spiritual existence, man is ānandamaya, he enjoys the bliss of sound sleep, uncrossed by dreams, untouched by cars, a blissful soul united with the divine.

These dimensions of existence are called ‘the five sheaths (pañca kosas). On the basis of these dimensions, human existence may be summed up into three modes; the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual. Looking from this point of view, it can be said that the Upaniṣadic thought is somewhat similar to the modern sciences such as physics and chemistry, anatomy and psychology. They treat man as an object of inquiry and show that man is a link in the chain of living beings one among many. But the point of departure is that whereas the modern sciences try to study the external aspects of man the Upaniṣads see behind the empirical surface of
man true innermost being or ātman. In this sense, scientific inquiry is partial because without one, the innermost being, the other i.e. outer being is not possible.

It may be concluded that with regard to an analysis of existence the Upaniṣad thinkers believe that in the last analysis there is a vital entity, which is called ātman. This atman is identical with Brāhmaṇ, the Ultimate Reality. The identity of ātman with Brahman is briefly expressed by the famous saying ‘That art thou’ (Tat tvam asī). Thus, to know ātman is to realize Brahman. Some may ask: why do we not know the Brahman if he resides in our existence? The Upaniṣadic thinkers stated that it is because of ignorance (Avidyā) that conceals the identity of ātman and Brahman from us. This identity would be clearly seen only when Avidyā is removed by the knowledge (Vidyā).

For this reason, the theory propounded by the Upaniṣads is known as essentialism or externalism (Śāsvatavāda) because it regards Brāhmaṇ or Ātman as the essence of human existence, which is permanent and eternal. Those who uphold this theory may indulge in the ascetic practices like fasting and abstinence in order to obtain the ultimate reality i.e. Brahman. This view is considered to be extreme (anta) according to early Buddhism.

The Cārvākas' materialism

According to this theory, there is no soul or ātman within or without human existence; they are divided into two schools, Dhṛṣṭa and Suśīṣṭa. The former hold that human existence, if analysed, is any a combination of

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62 Chand. Up., I. 4.10
63 See Dasgupta, Ibid. p. 78
four material extolments namely, earth, fire, air, and water. There is no self or *ātman* apart from the body. In other word, the body itself is regarded as self or *ātman*, whereas the latter believes that there is soul or self apart from the body, but it is annihilated with the destruction of the body.

However, both agree that human existence is nothing but the result of the composition of matters. Nothing continues to exist after death, rebirth is not possible, and it is foolish to think that the soul or self is going to reap the rewards of its acts in the afterlife. It is an error of judgment that leads to the assumption of another world. The position of materialism is clearly asserted by the materialists like Ajita Kesakambali who said:

There is neither fruit nor result of good or bad deed.  
For human existence is built up of the four elements.  
When man dies the earthly in him returns and replaces to the earth, the fluid to the water, the heat to fire, and the wind to air. Fools and wise alike on the dissolution of the body are cut off, annihilated and after death they are not.64

Moreover, the *Cārvākas* do not believe in other sources of knowledge but the direct perception. What is arrived at by the means of direct perceptions valid, and what is not perceivable is invalid. Inference is only a subjective association, which may be justified, if at all, by accident. While the *Upaniṣads* prescribe resignation of life and adopt the negative method of fasting and penance, the materialist *Cārvākas* proclaim the doctrine of hedonism, i.e. eat drink and be merry, for death come to all, closing our lives. As it is said:

64 Chattopadhyaya, Indian Philosophy, (Delhi: People Publishing House, 1995) p. 194
While life is yours, live joyously; None can escape Death’s searching eye; When once this frame of ours they bum, How shall it ever again return?65

Hence, it can be concluded that for the Cārvākas nothing lasts for long, human existence is mixed with suffering, but one should not throw away the pleasure of life. The wise man will not throw away unpeeled rice, which encloses excellent grain simply because it is covered with the husk. Likewise, it is not proper for us to reject the sensual pleasures just because they are mixed with some kind of pain. Instead, we should exercise our freedom to choose and enjoy the pleasure and leave aside the pain.

The theory upheld by the Cārvākas is known as nihilism or annihilationism (Ucchedavāda) because it denies the existence of the soul or ātman. The so-called self or ātman is nothing but the combination of material elements, which cease to exist after death.

Thus, it is clear that the above-mentioned systems; the Upaniṣads’ idealism and the Cārvākas’ materialism represent extreme views not only in terms of ontological perspective but in terms of ethics as well. The former engages in asceticism, whereas the latter indulges in hedonism. Having regarded these two theories as extreme and wrong, Buddha takes a balancing position by introducing the alternative path generally known as the principle of Dependent Origination (Paṭicca-samuppāda), the detail of which will be discussed in the third chapter.

65 Sarvadarsanasarthgraha, as quoted by Radhakrishnan, Ibid. p. 281