Although Śaṅkara challenges to answer all logical objections against the Advaita Philosophy, yet he is seen a number of times escaping to his eternal protection of scriptures, leaving aside all considerations for logic. He has explained certain difficulties by bringing in the practical and the ultimate points of view. No doubt that Śaṅkara has put all his efforts in reconciling all differences into the Ultimate one. But still there are certain Śūtras which clearly contemplate the distinction. This is only a clue which has made later commentators of the other Schools of Vedānta attack Śaṅkara. Sometimes a very unpleasant language is also employed by them. All these critics may be silenced with the following very useful observation of Dr. S.K. Belvalkar, "The Advaita system on the other hand, takes its ultimate stand on Shruti, and can afford to ignore even the most universal laws of Reason, to say nothing of its final appeal to the

1. "We now begin the second chapter, the purpose of which is to refute all objections which the opponent may raise against the doctrine of Advaita, basing his stand on Smṛtis and reasoning...."-Vide Śāriraka Bhaṣya on 2/1/1

2. For example, 1/1/16, 1/3/18, 1/1/17 and 1/2/11.

3. For example, the opening lines of Śrībhaṣya on 2/1/20 and also Vallabha, who is comparatively most unrestrained on 2/1/20.
In fact, Shaṁkara was concerned only with the philosophical coherent system of the Upanisads that Brahman was the sole Ultimate Reality. He was not attempting a philosophy in the modern sense of the term. That is why he is nowhere seen proving the world to be mere Māyā. He accepts it as an indisputable fact. In the words of Dr. Thibaut, "Shaṁkara does not on the whole impress one as an author particularly anxious to strengthen his own case by appeals to ancient authorities, a peculiarity of his which later writers of hostile tendencies have not failed to remark and criticise". All this does not mean that he was not aware of the hard fact that what was true must not contradict experience. He got over this difficulty easily by attributing ultimate validity to scriptures. Moreover, his Māyā theory has got a logical and rational basis too. If we accept that the Self is the ultimate Reality, then it follows that non-self is all Māyā or mere illusion.

Why Shaṁkara attached secondary importance to the so-called reason and logic may be justified thus: Man is a tiniest atom when compared to the universe. As such, it is

2. In his Introduction to the translation of Shārīraka Bāṣya, Page XX.
certainly beyond man's comprehension because the intellect that would go to understand it, is vacillating and finite. Human reason has limitations of its own. "There are regions which are inaccessible to human reason, but which faith can penetrate and realise. Although man's reason is admittedly weak, his faith is immense, is infinite. With that faith he can aspire to transcend the bonds of the flesh and be the Divinity itself. There is valid testimony to the reality of this experience, which is not beyond anybody's reach — given sustained patience and an earnestness of endeavour". It is with this liberal outlook of Dr. S.K. Belvalkar that I have evaluated Shaṅkara's refutations of the non-monistic schools of Indian Philosophy. It is Shaṅkara's unshaking faith in the authority of the Vedas coupled with his gigantic brain and penetrating intellect that he is accorded here and abroad a very high status among the philosophers of India.

It were the Buddhists who generated in Shaṅkara susceptible outlook towards the established standards of society. His refutations bear a stamp that he was very clear in his mind that any new philosophical system must have a strong logical hold. Therefore, we find Shaṅkara throughout convincing and his criticisms are quite adequate. His arguments are always subtle and based on minute observations; but they have a touch of the illusory character

1. "The Brahma-Sūtras of Pāḍrāyaṇa" by Dr. S.K. Belvalkar While giving his Notes on 2/1/27.
of the world as well. Dr. Thibaut has very aptly remarked about the system of Advaita, "It is not only more pliable, more capable of amalgamating heterogeneous material than other systems, but its fundamental doctrines are manifestly in greater harmony with the essential teaching of the Upanisads than those of other Vedantic systems".

"Metaphysics", observes Mr. A.E. Taylor "sets itself more systematically than any other Science to ask what after all is meant being real". If we judge Shaṅkara as a metaphysician from this standard, his refutations of the rival schools of Indian Philosophy accord him a very high status among the greatest metaphysicians. While criticising an opponent, he employs all possible resources of the arts of the controversy and discusses a problem from a number of angles till the opponent is silenced. The refutations prove that his system can stand and meet the test and challenge of most severe logic. This was the reason why Romain Rolland was tempted to remark, "The only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people is the rationalistic religion of Advaita". Dr. Thibaut's appreciation goes a step further when he observes, "the doctrine advocated by Shaṅkara is, from a purely philosophical point of view and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which

1. In His Introduction to the translation of Śhārīraka Bhāṣya PageCXXIV.
has risen of Indian soil; neither those forms of the Vedānta which diverge from the view represented by Śaṅkara nor any of the non-Vedāntic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedānta in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation.¹

Ignoring a very few and minor account available in Sanskrit works pertaining to Śaṅkara’s life-story there is no record which may depict Śaṅkara’s direct discussion in person with any of his opponents. Consequently, the scattered refutations of the non-monicist Schools of Indian Philosophy by Śaṅkara, presuppose an imaginary disputant to whom the whole discussion is addressed. It may be observed in the light of what has been discussed in preceding chapters that Śaṅkara has to be appreciated for presenting a true account of the opponent’s thesis. Sometimes he uses the terminology of the rival School with an easy familiarity.

Śaṅkara’s greatness or the importance of his philosophy can best be judged by evaluating how much influence did he exercise over the subsequent Schools of different philosophies. There is no denying the fact that his influence was immensely great. Almost all the branches of Indian Philosophy which developed later than him, bear a stamp of his undelible impression.

¹. In his Introduction to the translation of Śārīraka Bhāṣya Page XIV.
The refutation of the Cārvākas, the materialists, is not deemed necessary by the author of the Brahma-Śūtras, much less by Śaṅkara. We find no section specifically directed against the Laukāyatākas. But Śaṅkara has attacked them in a very few places. Their argumentation is so shallow, ignorant and unscholarly that I have avoided to collect all the information regarding the refutation of the Cārvākas, either by Śaṅkara or by Advaitins of later times, and to devote a separate chapter for them.

1. Cf. Śaṅkara Bhāṣya on 1/1/1, 2/1/18 and 2/2/2.