CHAPTER TWO

PHILOSOPHY AS THE SUPREME QUEST OF HUMAN BEING.

I

DIFFERENT WAYS OF LOOKING AT PHILOSOPHY. Philosophy has been construed in different ways. It has been regarded by some as a purely theoretical or intellectual enterprise. It is nothing but theoretical formulation with the help of axioms, method of deductibility etc. Our intellect proceeds by formulating and reformulating diverse theories with its rules of procedure. It can be pointed out here that there cannot be a strong line of demarcation between theoretical and practical. Purely theoretical is an empty word. It has got to be mixed up with practice. And anything cannot be said to be thoroughly practical as it is theory-oriented. Now, if philosophy is taken to be purely theoretical enquiry, then the theorisation can be done from two standpoints - formal or intellectual and non-formal, i.e., empirical, linguistic etc. In intellectual theorisation importance is given to deductive method. This does not mean that an intellectual theoriser does not depend upon empirical materials. With the materials taken from experience he proceeds deductively. In empirically governed theory one takes the help of deductive inductive method, one proceeds both ways - deductive and inductive.
Antitheoretical is an ambiguous term. It will be obviously wrong to suggest that those who think that philosophy is primarily practical (as opposed to theoretical) do not theorise or discard theory construction altogether. Non-theorised or theoryless practice is an impossibility - both theoretical and practical. To be theoretical one need not be necessarily pro-intellectual in the Platonic sense. One may be, in fact we ourselves are, theoretical in the sense that we believe that uninterpreted given or blind manifold is a theoretical fiction. There is nothing like pure given. Whatever we receive in and through sensibility is simultaneously interpreted or theorised by our mental activity in terms of some basic (but not innate) principles.

Intellectualism may be construed under two heads: ontological and epistemological. The intellectualist thinks only the object of intellection (in contrast to sensation and perception) is real and that whatever is given to sensibility is ipso facto unreal. Without being anti-intellectual we contest both these theses. First, we think that intellect is not the only source of knowledge and that reality cannot be defined exclusively either in terms of intellect or in terms of sensibility.

One might say our view resembles Kant's. But it differs from his in one very important respect. According to Kant the content of sensibility (i.e., what is natural) is only phenomenally (not really) real. In a sense we do not accept Kant's doctrine of
noumena or rather its sharp division from phenomena.

The question which is relevant in this connection is: wherein lies the difference between philosophy and other fields of enquiries? It can be answered by saying that the difference consists in the alleged all-comprehensiveness of its scope. Philosophy is said to be the all-comprehensive mode of thought. Other enterpriser, science, for example is interested in the minute details of the things it studies. The philosophical modes of understanding and explaining the problems of the world are not very precise and definite. For philosophy, unlike science, has no well-defined vocabulary of its own. From this it would be rash, or even incorrect, to conclude that because of its relatively imprecise and indefinite character philosophy is unrelated or of no consequence to science. While the scope of philosophy is all-comprehensive, that of science is well-defined (but not fixed for good). But this is not an interesting way of drawing the distinction between science and philosophy. The distinction between these two disciplines may be clearly indicated not in terms of their scope but in terms of their respective methods. There are some sorts of human experience which are not amenable to scientific method but that does not minimise their significance in human life. The experiences of mystery, wonder, reverence are although not amenable to methodological scrutiny of science, occupy a place of importance in our culture.

So far we have discussed it points out that nothing falls outside philosophy. It takes into account the whole world. But
the concept of the world which is the subject-matter of philosophy is not to be confused with the concept of earth or universe. The concept of earth is astronomical or astro-physical, that of universe is cosmological or physical and that of world is philosophical. One studies earth when he wants to know about physics or cosmology. But one studies the world with a view to coming nearer to reality, i.e., the concept of the world brings a closer association with reality.

Again, the same world can be the subject of discussion for anyone, a philosopher, a scientist, and so on. The difference, in this connection, lies not in the subject-matter, but in the standpoint which the different pursuers uphold.

There is an influential view right from the beginning of human civilisation to the modern age that philosophy is not only a purely theoretical inquiry but has a very important practical side as well. It is not just the intellectual formulation and reformulation of ideas, it has also practical bearing. It helps in organising all sorts of our experience - theoretical and practical. Moreover, contrary to popular belief, philosophy is not concerned only with transcendental consideration, empty speculation and unconcerned with the details of natural and social sciences. This view also stresses on the point that it is no accident that philosophy stands so close to morality and religion. Philosophy is essentially a reflective and critical enquiry. It criticises and reflects upon different modes of human thought and action. Human experience crystallises in different sorts of customs and conventions and is
embodied in culture and tradition. Influenced by customs and conventions, tradition and culture we live, move and have our being. So in a way one might say human life is shaped by human experience and thought, which at times collectively and pompously designated as objective spirit. Obviously this objective spirit is to a large extent practical. Our moral and political life are included within this sphere of what is called objective spirit.

The all-comprehensive scope of philosophy includes at least in principle not only the whole of the objective world also the same of the subjective world. One might say philosophy expresses (the whole of the being of) man and means (the whole of the being of) the world (wherein the human phenomena are objectively contained).

There are different views which are formulated and reformulated in philosophy. Philosophy therefore is for ever developing and changing. By philosophy we understand the content or subject matter of philosophy. Thus the content, consequently the concept of philosophy changes. It shall always probe into the nature of human being as regards their attitudes towards reality.

Philosophy may be viewed as a comprehension of different modes of experience, science, history, social etc. It has also been said that philosophy is the most general description of the world as a whole. There are some others who think that the whole world cannot be described and it can be either interpreted or explained...
It has also been held that philosophy embodies human attempt to know the whole of reality under the aspect of eternity.

Again, it can be pointed out that philosophy is thought to be the highest form of knowledge, the most fundamental and comprehensive of all the branches of study to which human beings could devote themselves. Philosophers are said to be concerned with "reality" as opposed to "mere appearance". They are supposed to take all knowledge for their province. This is because philosophy is the fundamental discipline which tries to discover the most important of truths. Its results might affect those of every other enquiry. The findings of all other sciences are to be regarded as provisional so that they can be modified and revised if necessary. And this task is performed by the philosophers. It is to them again that we must turn for possible answers to questions concerning the nature and origin of the universe as a whole, the existence of God and so on. Philosophers not only speak on these subjects, but claim to do it with peculiar certainty. For philosophy is a uniquely self-critical science, it is the only form of intellectual activity which leaves nothing unquestioned. It proceeds entirely without assumptions. The only propositions with which a metaphysician could properly be content are propositions whose truth could not be denied.

If philosophy or metaphysics has been depicted in this way, then there will be no room to question it. This attitude has been taken up by the scientist. Scientific knowledge is claimed
to be definite and certain because it is founded on experimental method and mathematical language. But this view of the scientist is uncritical, because scientific knowledge is accepted as certain and unquestionable. But the reflective philosopher with critical attitude never accepts any mode of knowledge scientific or not as definite and certain. Everything which comes out of serious thinking remains tentative and provisional and growing. Philosopher of science points out the growing character of science to the scientist. So there is always room for further modification and precisification.

II

TOWARDS THE PLATONIC WAY. This view of knowledge is obviously inconsistent with the Platonic view of knowledge, which regards knowledge as something definite and permanent. Knowledge, as distinguished from opinion is something essential and eternal, and therefore the question of its modification does not arise at all. This essentialist view of knowledge can hardly be reconciled with what we regard scientific knowledge. To avoid this difficulty the Platonist draws a sharp line of demarcation between knowledge and opinion, on the one hand, and the world of ideas and that of senses, on the other. This line of demarcation leaves many questions unanswered: How knowledge, if at all, influences opinion
and is influenced by it? If knowledge has nothing to do with opinion why opinion is found to have some common characteristics with knowledge?

Plato thinks that the philosopher's quest is for knowledge as distinguished from opinion or belief. His thought is clear and connected, where the thought of other men is confused and fragmentary. In his Republic he draws a contrast between two conditions of mind or capacities which are termed as 'knowledge' and 'belief'. The contrast is explained, firstly, as a contrast in clarity. Knowledge is a state in which everything is seen as it is and seen distinctly; on the other hand, belief is a state in which things are discerned dimly, seen as we see things in a dream. Secondly, believing as opposed to knowing is said to be like seeing objects indirectly, with the help of their shadows and reflections in water. The contrast here lies with seeing them face to face and in a clear light. Plato believes that one can get knowledge if he cuts him off from past habits and ways of thinking and is governed by strict intellectual discipline. This is, he maintains, the only way to pass from acceptance of things as they appear to be to apprehension of things as they truly are.

Here we find that the passage from appearance to reality is presented by Plato as if it were a transition from contemplating one class of entities to contemplating another and this impression is confirmed by his characterisation of belief and knowledge as "capacities". Every capacity, he says, is inter-related with its
own special object, that on which it is directed, with the effect that there can be no question of the same thing being believed and known. What we know must be true, but what we believe may be true or false. Knowledge and belief are separate faculties, just as sight and hearing are separate senses, and therefore, they must have different objects. With sight we see colours and shapes, e.g., and with hearing we hear sounds. In the same way, knowledge and belief must have different objects. The difficulty is that whereas sight and hearing are on a level and are closely related because both are ways of apprehending material objects, knowledge and belief are of different worth, and their objects, as given by Plato, are so different, there is a possibility of their being interpreted as completely unrelated.

At this stage one might raise the question: can we draw a sharp distinction between belief and true knowledge? Is the distinction tenable? If knowledge is said to be true in the actual sense of the term, then why, in fact, true knowledge is questioned and in principle questionable? This implies that what is accepted as true at a certain level can be modified and precisified at some other level. So the term 'true' cannot be taken in the real sense of it in connection with knowledge. Again, if 'true' is taken to mean definite and final, then it will block the growth of knowledge, for in that case knowledge will be static and fixed.

Moreover, if it is taken for granted that there is a difference between belief and knowledge, is it one of type or degree?
If we maintain that the distinction is the distinction of type, then this position cannot be defended without resorting to transcendentalism and apriorism. We are to say like the Platonist that true knowledge is neither based upon nor influenced by experience. By true knowledge what is meant is knowledge proper or, simply speaking, knowledge. It may be incidentally mentioned in this connection that one of the main inspiration of Platonic philosophy is moral life. Virtue, Plato insists, is based on knowledge - knowledge perged of sense-content. He is for pure moral action based on pure knowledge. This view of Plato finds its echo in Kantian rigorism. But Kant's love for science is missing in Plato. In scientific knowledge we are, to some extent, indebted to apriori ideas. The theoretical terms which occur implicitly or explicitly in every scientific statement are partly apriori and not completely derived from experience. So the distinction in kind cannot be maintained. The distinction is, therefore, the one of degree.

Myths and metaphysics embody imprecise and lower-grade knowledge which through criticism, involving precisification, experimental correction and mathematical formulation, may be upgraded to the level of, or used as help for obtaining, scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is more precise and exact though contrary to the claim of the uncritical admirer of science as the paradigm of knowledge, not final.
Common sense which may be treated as contemporary myths has also its say in making science possible through criticism. If it is critically properly organised, empirically corroborated and expressed in mathematical language, it can assume the dignity of scientific knowledge. Without criticism growth of knowledge, whatever might be its form, becomes impossible. The distinction often drawn between philosophical and scientific knowledge in terms of transcendentalism and apriorism is untenable. Even scientific statement, theoretical statements for example, are partly apriori and transcendental, a fact which accounts for metamorphoses and ultimate failure of verifitionism. Because these statements are not verifiable in experience. For theoretical terms which occur in scientific statements are always open textured and cannot be satisfactorily or exhaustively accounted for in terms of sense-experience. What is being suggested here is this: law statements or theoretical statements, which may be regarded as paradigmatically scientific, are neither completely based upon nor conclusively verifiable by experience.

This discussion points out that metaphysics or philosophy, science, common sense or myth are not altogether different types of knowledge. Actually, they are different grades of knowledge. Science, common sense or myth cannot be ignored or reduced to metaphysics or philosophy. But this is what is in effect claimed by the Platonist when he says that knowledge proper is alone which
satisfies the definition of knowledge, and that other candidates like belief or opinion do not satisfy the definition. They regard metaphysical or philosophical domain strictly transcendental and scientific knowledge which is bound to experience can never claim to have attained the level of knowledge proper. But our discussion shows that such anti-scientific view cannot be maintained. From another point of view it is claimed that metaphysics or philosophy cannot be reduced to science as claimed by the logical positivists or to common sense as declared by Moore, for instance. In this connection we can also point out that metaphysics or philosophy cannot also be reduced to ordinary language as claimed by Wittgenstein, Ryle and Austin. But none of these views regarding metaphysics appears to be tenable as we have tried to show elsewhere in this dissertation. As we see metaphysics it is the suggestive framework of science. Metaphysics can neither be dismissed as nonsense and inconsequential to science nor defended as a supreme form of knowledge of which science is a very much questionable and inferior analogy.

In considerable modification of the well-known view of Whitehead that Platonic philosophy has influenced European thought for the last two thousand years it may perhaps be said it has made its influence felt in a negative way. People have taken the example of Plato as something to be avoided rather than followed. It may not appear to be surprising that philosophers have put forward metaphysical theories which are, on the face of it, very different from the Platonic type of theory.
TOWARDS THE VEDANTIN WAY. What the philosopher is after? is a very difficult question to answer, for the philosophers themselves do not agree as to what they are after. There are of course those philosophers who believe in the existence of God and regard God as the aim of their ultimate quest. They think that God is not only a living unity but also the supreme unifying and explanatory principle of all that we actually experience and will possibly experience. But there are others who deny the existence of God and they regard the existence of self as supreme reality and faithfulness to it as supreme duty. By implication they contest the thesis that a Godless universe is ethically neutral. There are many other philosophers who do not find any inconsistency between the existence of God and of self, between self-realisation as duty (both practical and theoretical) and God-realisation as duty (both practical and theoretical). The Hegelians believe in the primacy of theoretical attitude, i.e., according to them, the value discourses and considerations, ethical, aesthetics etc., are all subordinate to the supreme metaphysical quest - the quest for the Absolute which is impersonal and not even the object of religious worship. In this respect the

1 Broadly speaking these views may be attributed to philosophers like Plato and Spinoza.
Hegelian position is comparable to the Vedantic position which also accords primacy to cognitive attitude - jñāna-mārga.

In what follows I will try to show that the Advaitin regards philosophy not merely as a theoretical and analytical discipline but which enables us to know reality as reality - to be a seer (dārsanikā) indeed. By jñāna he does not mean something intellectual and discursive. Jñāna of reality understood in depth, is jñāna is reality.

According to Advaitin reality is Brahman or the Absolute. Although for the purpose of exposition we will use terms Absolute and Brahman interchangeably, it is not to be understood that their meanings determined more or less by their systematic reference are not identical. This Absolute is nothing but the total consciousness. It is "the unity of pure presentative consciousness, and the world of plurality as it unfolds itself in the experience of finite individuals is the other of consciousness as reality and therefore the other of reality". * The Advaitin regards both finite experience and the object which it refers are appearances and cannot be identified with reality. Besides they are the modifications of one single principle known as Māyā which is not Brahman. Māyā is thus other than reality and is yet not absolute unreality or Ātya, nor again completely autonomous and self-existent presupposing as it does the absolute reality of Brahman as its

Sankara, to make the conception of Māyā more intelligible to ordinary experience, interprets it in the light of ordinary illusions that we have in everyday life. He takes the examples of rope appearing as a snake or the case of glittering shell appearing as silver. In all these cases of illusions there is a substratum on which something else is superimposed because we are ignorant of the substratum. This ignorance not only conceals the underlying substratum but also shows it differently, i.e., as something else. When we perceive the objects of the world, we follow the same law. We see various objects in the one Brahman for we are ignorant and we do not know that the real Brahman is concealed by the fact that we are ignorant of one reality and see it as many. When a magical show is staged showing one coin as many, we see it as many as we are ignorant of the real coin which is only one. The magician succeeds in displaying this show because of his magical power. If we apply this analogy in order to understand world-appearance, we see that appearance of all objects of the world is due to the magical power of Māyā in God and also due to our ignorance. Māyā and ignorance are not different as they appear to be. Their apparent difference is due to the difference in points of view. They are actually the two sides of the same fact. It can be said that māyā is of the same nature of ignorance. 

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is also to be pointed out that maya as a power of God cannot be distinguished from Him as it is not possible to demarcate the power of burning from fire.

Maya has cosmic aspect as well, causing the appearance of an objective world in time common to different individuals. Maya becomes avidya when in its individual aspect it helps the appearance of a finite individual over the background of a common world with all its various objects. To put it differently, "when pure consciousness or caitanya appears as Antahkarana-avacchinna caitanya or consciousness limited by an internal organ of experience we have what is called a Jiva or finite individual." In the same way, "when consciousness or chaitanya appears as Maya-avacchinna-caitanya or consciousness limited by the principle of Nescience or Maya we have what is called Jagat or a common world of objects." The Jiva or finite individual has knowledge of the world outside himself through antahkaranavrittis or particular acts knowing. The Advaitin is a realist so far as finite modes of empirical process of knowing are concerned. Knowing is not just the act of knowing. It has got objective reference. So the Advaitin maintains that empirical knowing as is experienced by the finite individual has an objective reference and is necessarily true so long it is not annulled by other experiences. All forms of objectivity and necessity as expressed in the assertions of

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3 Ibid., p. 103.  
4 Ibid., p. 103.  
5 Ibid., pp. 103 - 104.
Jivas are only relatively necessary, and therefore can be superseded by a higher form of objectivity and necessity. The objective mode of knowledge whatever might be its level is not or cannot be expressive or revelatory of the essence of the paramarthasat or ultimate reality. Reality itself does not admit of grades, nor does knowledge of reality exhibit any gradation. Graded or gradable knowledge, strictly speaking, according to the Advatin, is not knowledge in the truest sense of the term - the sense knowledge itself is reality (not of reality). By implication the Advatin rules out the very possibility of growth of knowledge. In this connection the well-known Vedantic gradation of knowledge - paramarthika and vyavaharika is to be understood only in the limited objective and empirical sense. From the supreme, as distinguished from the empirical point of view knowledge knows no gradation.

Corresponding to grades of knowledge we have to admit ontological gradation of knowledge. The Advatin does not deny the existence of the empirical world, but consistent with his transcendentalism and mysticism, he gives a new interpretation of the empirical, assigning a secondary and subordinate position to it. It is not possible for us to avoid the lower view of Brahman covered by ignorance. To apprehend the true nature of reality one must realise his life in the world as illusory. Otherwise the Absolute and God will be taken as one and the same. In fact God is that who has created this world where we have embodied existence.
"As long as we believe in the world in which we live and move and have our being, and which is not self-subsistent or self-caused, we cannot help believing in some supreme being, who has brought the world (along with ourselves) into existence and sustains it in perfect order. This supreme being is God, the absolute for our common understanding. But of course this is not the true view of reality or Brahman, which is absolutely alone and without a second, and consists of pure consciousness. This is unmistakably declared in the Upanisads which describe Brahman as Truth, Knowledge and Infinite (satyam, jnanam, anantam) and quite alone without a second (ekamevadwitiyam).

The Advatin distinguishes between two different points of view – the ordinary or empirical (vyavahārika) and the transcendent or real (pāramārthika). The first one is practical point of view which we hold when we think the world as real and God as the creator, sustainer and destroyer. God thus appears to have many attributes and is known as Saguna Brahman or Īśvara. At this stage the self also becomes embodied acting as a finite ego. Coming to the pāramārthika level, God ceases to be Saguna and becomes one and indeterminate resulting in Nirguna bereft of all the qualities. The world is now understood as unreal and body as appearance. The soul and God are same.

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7 Ibid., p. 3.
The world appears as real only because of ignorance (avidyā). In order to grasp the real nature of the world this ignorance is to be removed. The study of Vedanta will lead us to this realisation. One must be prepared to study Vedanta with his senses controlled and a sincere desire for liberation. With constant reasoning and meditation and a right teacher one must continue his study of Vedanta. Knowing his student's fitness the teacher would let him know "Thou art Brahman". The student would continue in his path unless he clearly understands "I am Brahman", i.e., I am one with Brahman. With this wisdom he will be a liberated soul. He is in the world but not of the world, i.e., though he persists in the body but he knows the body as well as the world as unreal. He is one with God who is bliss (ānanda).

Liberation is not something new. It is always there without the consciousness of it. It is freedom from bondage i.e., it points out bondage as bondage. To put it in other words, bondage is due to an illusion, liberation is only the removal of this illusion. Liberation is the conscious "act" of cancelling the cancelled, and, thus getting the got. "There is no difference indeed between the Supreme Soul and individual soul except in their qualifying attributes. Leave the attributes aside and they will be quite identical as sea-water and the sea."8 "With the total annihilation of the sense of duality when one attains full know-

ledge of Brahman, Maya and this world of illusion will be found to be one with the Supreme. When by following the instructions of the Vedanta i.e., "Tat Tvam Asi" or "Thou Art That", identity is established between this body and the universe, between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul; then and then only Maya and this world of plurality will be realised to be identical with the Brahman. 9

Sankara while describing the qualifications of the student of Vedanta makes it quite clear that the main qualification is his sincere desire for liberation. The study of Vedanta will show us the way to liberation. It can be achieved only through a rigorous intuitive knowledge, involving certain stages sravana (study), Manana (reflection) and nididhyasana (concentrated meditation), of the self as identical with Brahman. Thus it seems that the Vedantin view of philosophy as a supreme quest of human being displays a strong practical bias founded upon a rigorous theory of world and knowledge.

The critic might say if Brahman be the only reality and all distinctions false, the distinction between right and wrong also would be false. The consequences which will follow from this will be dangerous for society. This criticism is due to the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental standpoint. From the lower standpoint, the distinction between right and wrong is quite correct. But one who has attained perfect knowledge

9 Ibid., p. 145.
and liberation in life (jivanmukta) will think of these moral distinctions as being relative to the lower standpoint, and, therefore, not absolutely valid. But at the same time he would not perform a bad action in so far as the motive of every bad action has its foundation on the ignorant identification of the self with the body. This will obviously lead to the lack of sense of unity between the self and Brahman.

A critic who belongs to pragmatic school might object by pointing out that Sankara deals with visionary speculation which deprives life of all zest and causes failure in the struggle for existence. The answer can be given as follows. If a man likes to live the animal life without reflective thinking, i.e., if practical utility is the highest value, he need not step beyond the world of practical reality. But if he uses his reason and reflects on the nature and meaning of this world, he will be definitely led by logical necessity to realise the contradictory and unreal nature of it and search for its real ground. Reason demands, moreover, that he should reshape and rearrange his life on a rational basis in the light of what it discovers to be the highest reality. It is true that it deprives life of its zest in the sense that it pacifies and tranquillises passions and impulses but step by step it replaces these blind impulses by conscious rational thinking which can give life something higher and more permanent in nature.
Coming to the point of survival in the struggle for existence it is to be remembered that what constitutes fitness for survival in the plant world is different in the animal world, and still more different in the human world. Social qualities, e.g., love, unity, self-sacrifice etc., have superior survival value than egoism, jealousy and selfishness. And no view of the world and life can provide with a better foundation for such superior qualities than the one which inspires man with the belief in the unity of all men, all creation and all existence. The Advaitins advocate the same view. It is not right to suspect it of baneful effect on practical life. On the contrary, the Advaitins speak of moral and spiritual discipline which aims at the actual realization, in immediate experience, of the unity which reasoning convinces us to be real by its logic, but which our present actual experience of difference and multiplicity tries to set aside.

Advaitism and Kantianism have a close similarity as both of them hold that the world is nothing real but only an appearance. Kant maintains that the world of experience which we believe to be real and objective and is the field of scientific study is just an appearance. "The being of reality is not apprehended by us; what we grasp is an appearance thereof." Kant, moreover, says that self-consciousness or the transcendental unity of apperception is

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fundamental to the world of knowledge. This is accepted by the Advaitins because for them also the self occupies the central position in reality and experience. "Both of them look upon the world of experience as phenomenal and trace the root of this limitation to the structure of the human mind." 11

But there is a remarkable difference between the two. According to Kant, the unity of self-consciousness which is operating behind all experience has no metaphysical significance. Although it is the pre-condition of all possible experience yet it is just logical and formal. He did not speak in favour of any real self which will help to arrange, combine and relate the bits of experience. Whether there is any such self or not, is not for us to know because we are not fitted for the intuitional knowledge of that self. And intuition is the only way by which we can have any idea of this self. So we do not and cannot know this self if there be any. But the Advaitin conception of the unitary self on which everything concerning thought and experience is dependent is quite different. The Advaitin believes the self purged of all accidents and qualities, i.e., in its true form, is not only knowledge as such but also reality as such, reality and knowledge being identical from top to bottom.

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Ibid., p. 521.
Sankara as well as Kant would take "internal ideas" as distinguished from ideas (of reason) and external objects as equally phenomenal in character. They do not find any point to regard "internal ideas" as more fundamental than "external objects". Sankara's position can be conceived as totally idealistic because he maintains that all things for their very existence must depend on knowing for they are essentially inseparable from knowing.

Sankara holds that Brahman is the only reality and the world which we believe to be objective and real is only an appearance. In this respect we observe a close similarity between Advaita Vedanta and Bradleyan philosophy. Bradley makes a rigid distinction between reality and appearance. He maintains that the categories of thought give rise to mere appearance and the reality is free from all contradictions. The Advaitin will not speak in favour of the notion of Bradleyan absolute reality. Because Bradleyan absolute is a totality in which all appearances do have their places with required transformation. The absolute comprehends in itself all appearances with proper modifications and change and adjustment where contradictory elements are eliminated. The Advaitin will point out that the appearances do "depend" on the reality of the absolute but the fact is not other way round, i.e., the opposite is not true. In actuality, the Advaitin's absolute is totally unrelated to all appearances, the appearances are negated in the absolute of Advaita Vedanta. It
is to be noted in this connection that while Bradley speaks of
degrees of truth and reality, Sankara clearly states that reality
and its knowledge admit of no degree at all. The question of
degree arises only in the case of unreality or that of ignorance.

IV

FROM SANKARA TO HEGEL: A CRITICAL SURVEY. In this
connection it would be instructive to compare the Advaitin notion
of the Brahman with the Hegelian one. Sankara and Hegel would
agree in their view of the absolute as spiritual in essence. They
also maintain that perception and thinking in the ordinary sense
are not able to grasp absolute reality in its true nature. Because
both of them regard the absolute as the supreme reality and which
is spiritual in essence. According to them the absolute is only
reality and there is not anything other than it. Whatever is, is
reality.

But they will differ regarding their conceptions of the
absolute. The Advaitin holds that Brahman is completely unrelated
to any objectivity, it is pure knowledge and existence. The
absolute in Hegel's philosophy is not pure because both subject
and object are included within it as its parts. Nature in a
spiritualised form also has its place in the life of the absolute.
The distinctive character of the Hegelian absolute is that it is dynamic. But the Advaitin absolute cannot fairly be characterised as dynamic. Further, while of the Hegelian absolute objectivity can be logically predicated, the Advaitin stoutly affirms the purely subjective character of the Brahman.

Hegel maintains that higher faculty of reason as distinguished from ordinary and discursive is what we require to comprehend the absolute. Reason moves dialectically: starting from less comprehensive idea the dialectical process of reason negating its opposition moves forward to higher synthesis, and culminates in the absolute. Sankara agrees with Hegel's view that ordinary thinking is incapable of grasping the true nature of Brahman, and Brahman can be realised only by a direct intuition and not in any other way, dialectic or not.

Though Advaitism bears resemblance with other idealistic systems of philosophy, yet this school of thought cannot be said to be philosophy in the ordinary sense of the term. Perhaps, it was not originally designed to be so. Sankara did not think that the right way of knowing ultimate reality consists in philosophising or, to put it differently, in rational logical thinking. He emphasises the importance of some kind of direct intuition together with scriptural revelation without which one does not truly know what reality is like. We are, therefore, not surprised when some
distinguished philosophers observe that Advaitism is primarily a way of spiritual life or self-realisation and not a system of rational thought. In spite of its spiritual overtone one cannot miss the acute logical and argumentative style of the Advaita view. Although Vedanta theory is ordinarily described to be idealistic, it does not appear to be entirely correct, for Vedanta will readily concede that there is an extra-mental reality. But the sense in which he may be characterised as idealist is this: the extra-mental world is itself (a form of) consciousness.

The Advaitins are very clear in their view of the relation between the individual self and the absolute. The relation is that of identity. This shows the spiritual nature of the absolute in which all of us have our basis. This is definitely an important philosophical contribution on their part. This ultimate reality can be said to be the ultimate ideal of human beings. They might be inspired by this ideal which will govern their life which is full of limitations and drawbacks. If the time comes when all these limitations and drawbacks are cleared away, one can be one with the absolute, the ultimate ideal.

We can point out, however, that most of our troubles have their roots in our interests of the world. Our bondage is due to them. We can get freedom from bondage if and only if we do develop interests for knowledge, truth, beauty and so on. This means
our interests should not be concentrated on worldly matters. We should think something other than matter-of-fact worldly-affairs. If Advaitism is capable of pointing out the falsity (mithyatva) of the world which in turn might be able to make us detached from the worldly-matters to some extent, then its contribution to the progress of culture and philosophy cannot be denied. It is definitely leading us to the path of peace and freedom.

The upshot of our discussion centres round the fact that according to Advaitin, Brahman is the only reality. The world is said to "originate" from this reality, rest in it and return into it when dissolved. The reality of the many particular objects perceived in the universe is denied and their unity in the one reality is asserted repeatedly. The soul or God is the reality. When one has a direct and permanent realisation of the truth or reality, then he lives in the world though he does not belong to it, i.e., he is not of the world. He becomes identical with one reality which is infinite consciousness and bliss.

It is to be admitted that the Advaitin philosophised within the limitation of a religious tradition. Religion plays an important role in human lives and many a philosophers are religious-minded and we cannot detect any absurdity if they like to develop their philosophical thought in the light of religious notion. Sankara is not to be discredited for the fact that he philosophised with a mystical outlook. On the contrary, it is a
great success for a philosopher if he can combine his philosophical bent with religious notion which is, in fact, done by the Advaitins.

The Advaitins take philosophy as the mean of salvation from human bondage. Hegel thinks philosophy as human end beyond all values - ethical, religious, social etc. In spite of its other worldly character the Vedanta system of thought has proved very influential. Perhaps in spite of its alleged practical implausibility it answered some deeper needs of the Indian mind down the centuries. However remote the Vedanta system of thought might appear from the ordinary practical life, it has left its unmistakable trace on the day to day life of our common man. This may be due to its theoretical eagerness to understand and harmonise all facets of our experience, theoretical and practical.

A similar and comparable comprehensiveness is found also in the philosophy of Hegel. In spite of its transcendental accent Hegelian absolutism always tried to strike a bargain with sciences, natural and social. But perhaps without being unfair to Hegel and the Vedantin it may be said that they always subordinated the empirical to the transcendental, the "non-essential" to the "essential" and tried to explain the former in terms of the latter.

Hegel maintains that reality is a rational system of objects which is the expression of a universal spirit. Anything
significant is nothing but the result which is the process at the same time. The only way of describing it philosophically is to show the process and result together. For philosophy is conceived as a process which culminates in result. "Hegel assumes that the universe is a single unity of coherent elements and that the function of philosophy, as opposed to any special and limited inquiry, is to make good that assumption by exhibiting this system in its coherence as process and result." Hegel thinks that reality is the self-expression of spirit. The general subject of discussion is the concept of life, which Hegel takes up at three different levels. In the first level, he appears to analyse the common sense notion of an individual human being living in distinction from other similar human beings. In the second level, Hegel considers the idea of nature. Nature is believed to unite oneness and diversity. It is to be regarded as a single system differentiating itself as a multiplicity of individuals. Hegel tries to suggest that the unity and diversity are not really shown to be there, but are imposed by reflection from the outside. As this state of affairs leads to dissatisfaction, he maintains, this naturally gives place to a third level, i.e., a third way of taking the concept of infinite life, namely as God. God manifests himself through the universe. In fact God creates this universe. This creation is not something whimsical and arbitrary on God's part, but it is eternal, free and

necessary where God knows himself and like all other reals, is a result containing its own process. "But we are told further that the reason why the universal thus determines itself, why the infinite becomes finite, or why God creates a world (the three questions are equated) is simply that 'God as an abstraction is not the true God'. In other words, the abstract categories of the Logic have sense only as applied to the concrete detail of nature and mind, in which detail there must be much that is, rationally speaking, arbitrary, and whose postulation can accordingly be said to be, in a mythic sense, 'free'." 13

From this it is clear that man constitutes an element in God's creative self-consciousness. As a creator God is distinct from man but as self-creating God is man.

The object of philosophy is explicit rational thinking, so what for religion is God is called by Hegel absolute spirit, because he regards the universe as essentially spiritual and not material. He accepts the title of idealist. He often expresses his idealism by saying that one must conceive the universe in its ultimate reality not merely as substance but also and further as subject. It is the universe or absolute spirit as subject which differentiates its identical self in and as minds of men. But the question of individuation - how unity becomes multiplicity - remains. Every absolutist has to answer this

question. For empirically he cannot deny the world of multiplicity, and at the same time he cannot admit that multiplicity is as intelligible and free from contradiction as unity of reality itself is. Hegel says that all experience presupposes the unity by which the distinction between subject and object is maintained. The unity is "original" in the sense that without it there could be no thought because no being, and no being because no thought. Thought and being are opposites, but just because of this they are a unity.

The unity of thought and being is nothing static. For absolute spirit, which it defines, is a timeless self-conscious and free activity. "It is further characteristic of Hegel's notion of Spirit that it is impossible to separate the activity or process of subduing the various forms of other-being, from the self-consciousness which results from this process. The self-consciousness of Spirit is a result of the subjugation of otherness in the sense of having the latter as a necessary condition: it is not a result in the sense that it exists after this subjugation."¹⁴

Hegel tries to show that experience is itself its own critic and moves on from one partial view to its opposite and thereafter to a higher inclusive view in which both the partial

view and its contradictory are reconciled in a coherent, harmonious whole. He points out that in so far as nothing could fall outside experience, experience is from the beginning the potentiality and of whatever it displays in future. Just as the seed is the promise of the tree with flowers and fruits so also experience is from the very start what it will be in the subsequent development. Thus it is clear that the progress of experience is regulated by the whole which the experience potentially is from the beginning. Because of this, experience when it reveals itself in the consciousness of finite spirit is never complete, stable, rigid or fixed. Thus human experience moves on in a dialectical fashion from one partial view (thesis) to its contradictory (antithesis) and then to a higher standpoint as the synthesis of these two partial standpoints. Since the synthesis, so arrived at, itself falls short of the whole, it itself becomes the thesis at a higher level, moves over to its opposite requiring a synthesis again of the opposed points of view at a higher level. In this way, experience moves on from a less adequate point of view to a more adequate standpoint through the triple moments of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, till an absolutely coherent unity is reached. "Dialectic is therefore nothing but the reflective retreat of our thinking, its continuous self-comment upon its prior performances, the full sense and motive of which can be plain only when the retreat has been completed (as Hegel thinks it can be). Until this has been done, the sense and motivation of the dialectic in a sense goes on "behind its back" it can be
plain only to some super-dialectician who has already been through the whole argument. 15

A careful study of the Hegelian philosophy would show that the two streams of thought – Empiricism and Rationalism – which were first reconciled by Kant, were developed to their logical conclusion by Hegel. After Hegel, it is difficult to proceed any further in the same line of thought. The empiricism of Locke, Berkeley and Hume led to subjective idealism and solipsism. But Hegel's idealism is what is known as objective idealism, in as much as it claims, on the one hand, that knowledge has an objective as well as a subjective side, and on the other that knowledge of the object does not depend upon the perception of the individual mind. Thus Hegel overcomes the difficulties of subjective idealism and solipsism. Moreover, for Hegel, the world of experience is not an amalgam of separately existing realities, as Leibnitz thought, or a collection of things-in-themselves, as Kant thought, but a single substantial unity in which reality and appearance are merged into an organic whole. Hegel's objective idealism is thus the most concrete form of monism as against the abstract monism of Spinoza and is the most comprehensive scheme of the universe that any philosopher has so far formulated.

15 Ibid., p. 323.
There are very good reasons, however, why Hegelianism is not universally accepted in contemporary philosophy. It is thought in some quarters that there is something dead and static about the Hegelian absolute. It is argued that however much Hegel might have said of history and progress, the real nature of the absolute cannot change, since any change would make the absolute something different from its absoluteness. Hence Hegel's absolute is the block universe. And if the absolute be the ultimate reality, the individual mind is incapable of knowing it. Hegelianism minimises the differences between things and belittles individuality and freedom.

From another standpoint it can be said that Hegelian philosophy is not totally block but still remains partially block. There is some activity involved because the process which is followed to reach the absolute involves activity. But once the absolute is reached, there is no activity.

Hegelian philosophy as often been denounced on the ground that it rests on mysticism and that it is not clearly formulated, resulting in vagueness and obscurity. But these charges have not been accepted by the Hegelians on the ground that they rest on certain pro-empiricist presumption. Hegel differs from the pro-empiricist philosophers in taking mysticism seriously. One should bear in mind in this connection mysticism is not obscurantism. It is expressive of non-sensuous
depth of experience. The very fact that there is such a thing as religious language seems to be very important to him and he builds much of his philosophy on and around this idea. One might argue that Hegel's language is metaphysical and not religious in any derogatory sense. If the ultimate principle of reality is taken to be transcendental and spiritual it is of little consequence to maintain a sharp difference between metaphysical language and religious language. As for the other change, it is true that Hegel is not always clear and easily understandable, because he often puts metaphysical insights in highly abstract terms. As a result of this his intended thought is more disguised than expressed.

Like other transcendental metaphysician Hegel's main headache was to combine the unity of the transcendental spirit with the diversity of empirical findings without denying the importance of the latter. To defend the doctrine of unity in multiplicity what in effect Hegel argues for is that the empirical world is mind-like or spiritual in structure. Often he puts the thing in a slightly different way: the structural or categorical features of the world or being and those of knowing (mind) are identical at bottom. "At bottom" begs elucidation. Apparently, the features of the world are more easily categorisable. The peculiarities of the mental world know no limit. The problem of apparent non-correspondence or irreconcilability between the world
without and the world within is sought to be answered by "at bottom".

It is on the defensibility or otherwise of the doctrine of unity in multiplicity - unity at bottom and multiplicity at surface - the tenability of Hegel's general thesis that the world is absolutely rational or intelligible in its entirety as well as complexity ultimately hinges. In his ruthless attempt to defend the ultimate rationality of the world as a whole and every bit of it Hegel either belittles the importance or denies outrightly the very existence of whatever empirical element proves non-conformable to the general categorical structure of knowing mind. Deliberate indifference to whatever is irrational converts Hegel's rationalistic system into a closed scarcely uncritical system of metaphysics concerned with science and contingency.

Hegelian system may be viewed both statically and dynamically. We have seen his recognition of multiplicity is only apparent. Similarly uncritical is his attitude to what he proclaims really dynamic and historical in his system. Underlying everything changing or historical Hegel finds out rather imagines that there is some definite abiding pattern or laws. It is on this score Hegel's system of philosophy of history has been bitterly criticised and irreparably damaged by Karl Popper and Isiah Berlin. Here again to vindicate the uniformity or unity of historical laws underlying historical diversity including irrar-
tional or accidental events, Hegel denies or distorts the true identity of the latter particularly of those events which refuse to conform the fixed Hegelian patterns or laws of history. The so-called law-abiding character of historical events has been designated as historicism by Popper, and he has persuasively exposed its poverty or contentlessness. Whenever the content of history proves non-Hegelian in character Hegel outrightly denies their existence and thereby impoverishes the course (and also the theory of) history.

From the above two points the lesson we draw is simple. The world we know is much more complex than what we can possibly know with the help of our available conceptual apparatus. It may be further added that the available apparatus of our knowing is not fixed for good. In order to prove on the one hand, (a) the adequacy of our conceptual apparatus of knowing, i.e., categories, and, on the other, (b) the neat rationality of every possible object of knowledge Hegel is uncritically keen to defend what is known as his thesis of identity — identity of world known and knowable and that of knowing mind.

Deliberately refusing to take cognisance of the functioning of the finite knowing mind and relying too much on the analogy of infinite mind Hegel fails to arrive at a realistic or a human theory of knowledge and reality. In order to be fair to a metaphysic of divine mind — a mind which is itself the exclusive author of the world it knows — Hegel ignores the processes and products of ordinary human mind. The true man of flesh
and blood - the fallible man, the man of science and common sense - is missing in Hegel's uncritical and closed system of philosophy.

There are two ways of explaining a phenomenon or an event or a problem - one in terms of actual and other in terms of the ideal. The positivist is known for his inclination to explain the actual by relating it to other actuals. But ordinarily speaking actual because of its immediacy poses no problem. The positivist view of explanation does not give us any satisfactory account of what we call problem - why an actual phenomenon in spite of its immediacy raises problem. If the ideal or theory in relation to or in terms of which an actual becomes intelligible is not readily available to us then the actual assumes a problematic character. If this anti-positivist view of problem, i.e., why a problem occurs at all, is correct, and we think it is then it provides also the clue to the correct theory of explanation. The correct theory of explanation negatively finds out conceptual incoherence involved in the attempt to explain actual by actual and positively affirms the necessity of explaining the actual by ideal which transcends the former.

But at this stage we should guard against another possible mistake - a reductio ad absurdum. The metaphysical idealist tries to explain every problem genuine or pseudo in terms
of ideal without caring to see whether it is relatable to or
testable by some actual. What is still worse is this: when
some sense-given actual is not found to be connectable or explainable
by some acceptable ideal — explanation acceptable on the
ground of intuition, — the idealist, transcendentalist denies
the very existence of the actual or characterises it as illusion,
and sticks fast dogmatically to the ideal whose credibility is
purely intuitive and untestable.

To avoid this reductive fallacy from the idealist end
what we suggest is this. Although we will try to explain the
actual in terms of the ideal but at the same time if the latter
is found to be absolutely unrelatable to and therefore uncri-
cisable (criticisability is a weaker form of testability) by the
actual then we do not dogmatically uphold in absence of corrobo-
rating (not verifying) finding. This by implication means there
is no one ideal or a set of ideals which is ultimate and irre-
placable.

The philosophy of unique or irreplaceable categories
does not correspond to what we learn from the history of thought
in general and that of scientific thought in particular. It has
been repeatedly observed that the changing career of the laws of
science cannot be satisfactorily accounted for in terms of a fixed
set of categories. The argument that the "laws of actuals", i.e.,
scientific laws and the "laws of ideals or possibles", i.e.,
philosophical categories, are quite independent of one another as some classical rationalists maintain is indefensible. It would be an incorrect characterisation of the laws of science that they are concerned exclusively with the actuals and have nothing to do with possibles (the domain of philosophy). The domains of science and philosophy, actuals and possibles overlap and interpenetrate. Consequently, diversity of scientific laws is not compatible with the unity (i.e., uniqueness) of philosophical categories. We describe the world of actuals (and, according to us also of possibles) in terms of certain laws or theories which are always hypothetical or tentative, and not categorical. Categorical or philosophical description of the world should not be taken in their face-value. Rightly understood, understood from scientific point of view categorical (descriptive) framework of the world is at best speculative, of course in the good sense, for it may influence scientific enquiry without definite domains. Philosophical categories are either unchangeable, dogmatic, and, therefore, useless from the scientific point of view or tentative or flexible and ready to come in terms with scientific laws.

Scientific point of view is not at all inconsistent with what we call the anthropological or human point of view. Man being what he is cannot truly and infallibly describe the world as a whole under the aspect of eternity. One should not exaggerate the distinction which is there between natural
sciences on the one hand, social and human sciences on the other. Natural phenomena characterisable by some causal or law like regularity, are admittedly different from human phenomena which are known for their relatively free "origination" and the resulting diversity. Some anti-naturalists in their zeal to defend the autonomy of human sciences ignore the human (unity or apperceptive unity, according to Kant). All human activities, scientific or otherwise, betray some fundamental principle or principles, briefly speaking, that principle is a principle of unity or synthesis lending intelligibility and meaningfulness to human pursuits, scientific, cultural, technological etc. Even analysis and diversity assume significance in the light of said principle of (or principles) unity or synthesis. Critical reflection and experience necessitate and bring about change even in these fundamental principles. So these principles, though fundamental, could not be regarded as basic in the traditional philosophical sense.

It is in terms of these principles, and at different levels of generality we organise, interpret and describe the world of experience. Description of reality is essentially inexhaustible. It is in principle impossible that we should reach the end of it and complete our description. This is true, not only because we cannot set limits to reality or give a possible sense to the words "I have identified all the things that they are", but, more strongly, because we cannot even give
sense to the words, "I have identified all the things that there are in this room". The inexhaustibility lies in the nature of description and identification, however restricted they may be.

We can try our best to be acquainted with reality or world as a whole, but we will never succeed in knowing thus. This can be said to be the limitations of speculative philosophy. The value of speculative philosophy is not in the results but in effects it has in the person speculating. If speculation enables us to map the world of our actual as well as our possible experience, of course subject to correction and criticism and does not land us in absurdity we may regard speculation scientifically influential and interesting. The anti-thesis between observation and speculation rests on a outdated positivist misconception; namely, science is based upon and exclusively concerned with observational materials and it has nothing to do with speculation which is the concern and sphere of the philosophers. The positivist developed an unfounded optimism and confidence in man regarding his ability and achievement. He could do it only by uncritically persuading man to believe that he could be a good scientist relying only on his actual (observational) experience and ignoring altogether the domain of possible experience. Rightly understood there is no purely observational knowledge or observational language. Not withstanding the pro-
nouncements of the positivists, the scientist cannot but concern himself with what is possible. Even actual experience, for its intelligibility and meaningfulness depends upon "corresponding" possible experience. Notwithstanding the confidence and optimism of the positivist, the scientist cannot completely rise above human fallibility. True, we agree with a positivist, science embodies the best form of human knowledge. Unless we take knowledge in the substantive sense as the Vedāntin, for example, does, we cannot be blind to the limitations of scientific knowledge which is falsifiable and which in turn is related to human fallibility. Human knowledge, be it scientific or not, bears the imprint of human limitations.

Knowledge can be interpreted in two different ways: the human point of view or the imperfect point of view and the divine point of view. From the divine standpoint philosophy is the embodiment of highest knowledge, highest in the sense of being ultimate and final. Kant makes knowledge human for he claims that knowledge to be knowledge in the proper sense of the term must be a composite product of forms of sensibility and the categories of human understanding. Thus he makes reason autonomous. Although knowledge is claimed by Kant to be a joint product of sensibility and understanding it is to be clearly understood that the contribution of sensibility is blind, conformist and uncritical. True that Kant recognises sensibi-
lity as a condition of making knowledge possible but it seems to be an innocuous one for it can only contribute but cannot modify, correct or criticise what understanding constitutes (i.e., Nature). Almost unilateral applicability of categories formed sensibility or schema makes knowledge gives the impression that the knowledge-making apparatus, broadly speaking, reason is structurally autonomous, depending only functionally upon sensibility. Because he thinks that knowledge which is arrived at by the exercise of theoretical reason cannot be falsified. It is most exact and precise, or to use Kant's own language necessarily valid. It is to be pointed out that Kant seems not to be sufficiently aware of the fact that reason is human and therefore fallible. So the knowledge which we have by the exercise of human reason is with human limitations. This is true not only in the case of theoretical reason but in so far Kant is concerned also in that of practical reason. Both natural laws and moral law(s) are, according to him, synthetic apriori and necessarily valid. The claim of necessary validity is too tall to be sustained by actual human performance or history of human thought, theoretical as well as practical. We agree that knowledge is partly empirical and partly apriori, but we emphatically deny that it is necessarily valid. Sense-experience has of course a critical role in shaping human knowledge. Had knowledge been divine as it is often construed by some uncritical or pre-
critical thinkers the question of its being criticised, corrected or precisified would not have arisen at all. But our common experience tells a different story. The moral of the story is: human knowledge even in its best form, i.e., science, is not perfect or complete. The scientist or for that reason any rational is not after the quest for certainty or necessarily valid knowledge. The defining characteristic of the paradigm knowledge is growth. The knowledge which does not grow is either mathematical or divine or both as Spinoza would have said. Human knowledge as we understand it is fallible and growing in nature.