

# Philosophy of History: Its Scope and Its Limits

Herbert Herring

From ancient times, since history has been understood in such a way that it concerns what happens through man's action in the world and to the world, man has reflected upon the deeper meaning of this process of events which, at first sight, appears to be rather disconnected. History was interpreted philosophically, whereby "philosophizing" means the critical and thoughtful questioning of one's own self and everything which one confronts in the world and as world. Such interpretations of history, its totality, which we wish to delimit as history of humanity, history in the strict sense as against the historical dealing with the processes and events in nature was in ancient times and in the Middle Ages mostly of fictional-mythological or eschatological-theological nature, thereby lacking a strict logical or scientific basis. Philosophy of history, as an inquiry into specific rules, the peculiar categories and—in a final speculative culmination—a quest after the original and ultimate aim and the absolute meaning of this process of events that we call history and by which we understand everything which happens in the world through human action—, philosophy of history in this particular sense is of comparatively recent origin; it is, in its systematic development, an achievement of the so-called "German Idealism", especially that of *Hegel*. The German Idealists understood philosophy of history as a search for a deeper, more regular and even unchangeable meaning of the events of the world and based on this, as the construction and manifestation of a well-established system of rules and laws which, having been regarded as firm as the laws of nature, should make it possible to understand the progress of history from its first sources up to its final aims. Thus history was to be understood as a fixed totality which can be synoptically grasped by the human mind.

This basic concept has, for example, been stressed with great pride by Eduard Gans, the first editor of Hegel's "*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*" (Lectures on the Philosophy of History) in the foreword to his edition:

"Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history by far excel the works of his predecessors. Above all, they are intimately connected with a logical system of thought which is displayed in its greatest detail. They claim to interpret the absolute meaning of history, in the same sense as there exists

an absolute meaning of nature, soul, right, art, etc. They are, therefore, concerned with a search for the essential meaning of the works of human beings."

In other words, such an absolute meaning of the world not only just exists, but it is also possible for man to discover and to understand this absolute meaning and to draw speculative conclusions from it. Hegel's philosophy of history is mainly a speculative attempt to prove a priori his basic idea, namely that reason governs the world, for the course of world's history.

The purpose of this lecture is to deal with the question, whether it is really possible to treat history in such a way and further, whether philosophy of history as such is possible at all and—if so—under what circumstances and in which way it appears possible for us.

Let us stay with Hegel a little longer while discussing this question. Hegel answers the initial question, namely the question after the absolute aim of the world, thus: The absolute aim of the world is the realization of the reason (*logos*) whose substance or essence is freedom. Freedom, however, is "self-contained existence" (*Bei-sich-selbst-Seyn*) of reason, its self-consciousness, the consciousness of its creative power or spontaneity. The absolute aim of the world is, therefore, the realization of freedom. World-History is the progress of reason in time, with a total awareness of its freedom:

"This result it is, at which the process of the World-History has been continually aiming, and to which the sacrifices that have ever and anon been laid on the vast altar of the earth, through the long lapse of ages, have been offered. This is the only aim which sees itself realized and fulfilled; the only pole of repose amid the ceaseless change of events and conditions, and the sole efficient principle that pervades them. This final aim is God's purpose with the world." (Introduction to the Philosophy of History.)

In other words, world-history is the world-court. A philosophy of history which is based upon such principles is ruled by the idea of the "*théodicée*", i.e. by the absolute justification of the universal reason for the obvious evils which are part of the world, each of which being,—with regard to the last and ultimate aim,—a rational and, therefore, a necessary part of the universal process.

No less speculative than Hegel's idealistic interpretation of history is the materialistic interpretation of Karl Marx and his orthodox successors. Like Hegel, Marx deduces the historical process from a few principles which are taken as absolute, the only but important difference being that for Hegel these basic principles are spiritual ones, whereas Marx defines them as economic and social principles. The exemplary description of the so-called economic or materialistic inter-

pretation of history is given by Marx in the foreword to his "*Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*" (Critique of Political Economy), 1859, wherein he writes:

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which legal and political super-structures are built up and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual process of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence which determines their consciousness."

This is the proper meaning of the so-called sub-structure-super-structure theory (Unterbau-Überbau) which, in short, states the following: all cultural activities and results of an age are but the outcome of the prevailing economic conditions and powers; and this is meant in a rigid sense of cause and effect, similar to the irreversible laws of nature. Individuals as well as peoples are what and how they produce, they are determined by their means and forces of production.

This is the basic doctrine of the materialistic interpretation of history, and this doctrine has met with subtle criticism, thus as, for example, that of the famous sociologist Max Weber in his book "*Die Ethik des Protestantismus und der Geist des Kapitalismus*" (The Ethics of Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism), 1901. Opposing Marx's doctrine that all processes of the mind and all cultural activities are the necessary results of socio-economic conditions and events, Weber says that, on the contrary, it may well be claimed that processes in the mind could very often provoke a fundamental change in the economic and social structure of a people and that either components are for the most time so interwoven that it will prove itself extremely difficult, if not impossible, to call the one component the cause and the other the effect of a change,—provided that one does not wish to save an a priori system of ideas by means of such simplifications and manipulations.

A similar criticism comes from Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis: "The strength of Marxism", he says, "clearly lies not in its view of history or the prophecies of the future that are based on it, but in its sagacious indication of the decisive influence which the economic circumstances of men have upon their intellectual, ethical and artistic attitudes. A number of connections and implications

were thus uncovered, which had previously been almost totally overlooked. But it cannot be assumed that economic motives are the only ones that determine the behaviour of human beings in society. The undoubted fact that different individuals, races and nations behave differently under the same economic conditions is alone enough to show that economic motives are not the sole dominating factors. It is altogether incomprehensible how psychological factors can be overlooked where what is in question are the reactions of living human beings."

To change the prevailing modes and conditions of production and thereby of property completely by replacing the capitalistic system through the dictatorship of the proletarians, the havenots, thus striving powerfully towards the final goal of the history of mankind, namely the abandoning of the continuous process of class-struggle (which, according to Marx, has been hitherto the main force of all existing society) and the establishment of a classless, communist society of freedom and equality was the utopian aim of Karl Marx and I think Bertrand Russell is right in calling these ideas extremely speculative and the whole of the Marxist's philosophy of history neither a subtle nor a very fruitful doctrine of salvation. ("History of Western Philosophy", ch. 27).

We meet with the same dogmatic standpoint in Oswald Spengler's "*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*" (The Decline of the West), 1918—1922. Spengler also wants to show the philosophic principles by means of which history can be interpreted completely; not only past events but also events which,—according to the rulers of analogy,—may happen in the future. He wants to predict, to predetermine the process of European history in all its stages and determining ideas. In as much as Spengler claims to interpret the laws of history in their universal validity, he comes very close to Hegel, but both differ considerably in their method: whereas Hegel tries to deduce world-history from a few basic a priori principles, Spengler employs the inductive method of analogy, i.e. he tries to analyse the organic structure of the historical process by comparing present situations to analogous events in the past and by linking up per analogiam present situations to possible events in the future. "Cultures are organisms and world-history is their collective biography." (III, 6)

This method, however, would only be acceptable if it were true that—as Spengler says—the number of historical phenomena and modes of events were limited and that epoques, situations and personalities would show the same structure throughout the ages. But this basic principle of Spengler's so-called "Morphology of universal history" (a term obviously borrowed from biology) cannot be proved and for that reason his philosophy of history must also be rejected as based upon uncritical and speculative ideas which have no footing in reality.

Similar objections can be raised against Arnold J. Toynbee's understanding and philosophic interpretation of history, as revealed by the many volumes of his work "A Study of History", 1934 ff. At first he seems to back Spengler's position in saying that a comparison of the antique cultures with our present-day culture enables us to get an essential insight into our situation. Such a comparison becomes possible only on the basis of a clear-cut distinction between the fate and the character of cultures and Toynbee blames Spengler for not making this distinction. Whereas the characters of cultures, similar to the characters of individuals, are unique and incomparable, their fates are, similar to organic processes and the fates in human life, comparable with one another. Thus he says that there exists a fundamental similarity in the designs and patterns of the fates and the total number of their possible variations is likely to be very limited.

By means of this comparative interpretation of history, Toynbee strives for a typology of basic human behaviour in the face of similar situations. From this point of view our dealing with the past enables us to understand the present time. In analysing the great cultures of the past, he tries to find out general principles of the historical process which could serve as an illustration and even a demonstration of the history of mankind in its periods of growth, highest perfection and decay. Approaching the history of mankind thus, we shall find that it turns out to be determined by the dialectic struggle between race and environment, mind and nature. Every culture is the mind's response to a challenge by natural conditions and thus challenge and response from the two basic poles of history.

Toynbee supports this theory by a large number of very plausible examples from the past. But although this theory may seem plausible at first sight, it may well be doubted whether we are permitted to draw general conclusions from particular historical facts, however convincing their evidence may be; it seems erroneous to conclude that things which have actually happened must necessarily have happened the way they have happened and that they could not have happened otherwise, perhaps in an entirely different way.

And here we have reached a point where it seems advisable to raise the question whether a philosophical interpretation of history is possible at all, i.e. to raise the question for the scope and limits of the philosophy of history.

In the beginning of our considerations we had characterised all philosophy of history hitherto known as an inquiry into the specific rules and categories, into the original and final goal, the absolute meaning of the historical process; and we shall now have to ask whether a philosophy of history of that type is in itself possible at all.

This fundamental question is the ontological backbone of Karl Jaspers' famous book "Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte" (On

the Origin and Final Aim of History), 1949. Even in the foreword Jaspers reveals quite clearly this sceptical estimation of the traditional philosophy of history when he says:

"The history of mankind has slipped to a great extent from man's memory. It is only by means of progressive investigations that it reveals itself to a certain extent. The depth of a long pre-history, containing the reasons for all later events, cannot be illuminated by dull lights. Concerning the historical period, the period of written testimony, these evidences are incidental and incomplete. The future is uncertain, an unlimited realm of possibilities.

Between pre-history, which is a hundred times longer, and the infinite future, there are the five thousand years of history known to us, a small distance when compared to the unconceivable duration of man's existence. This kind of history is open to the past and towards the future. None of these parts is bound up and they cannot be understood as a well-arranged, self-consistent portrait of a whole."

History is open to the past and towards the future, i.e. origin and ultimate aim of history cannot be interpreted by means of scientific experience or rational discourse; they can only be presupposed or predicted. But these presuppositions and predictions are far from being solid poles of a philosophy of history. Every attempt to draw conclusions from a presupposed origin or a fictitious anticipation of some final goal is necessarily doomed to fail, because history is not a closed system and thus there is no standpoint outside the realm of history since we ourselves are historical, we ourselves are part of the process which we are so eager to understand, to schematize and to interpret systematically as if it were a fixed system of rules and laws. Every attempt, therefore, to interpret history scientifically will prove itself at last to be unscientific or even nonsensical.

What, then, is philosophy of history? Does it have a genuine field of investigation? Jaspers answers this question at the end of his critical discourse as follows:

"The unity of history cannot be known by rational procedures. It is not knowable as the unity of the biological origin of man. Unity regarded as the unity of the surface of the earth and as enclosed by the common real time is only a superficial one. The unity of the all-embracing aim cannot be made visible. The idea of the world-order of law is directed towards the foundations of man's existence, not towards the reason of history as a whole and is in itself still questionable. The unity is not the progress towards an aim or progress of an infinite process of escalation. The unity does not consist in a

reason according to which everything happens or should happen. Nor is unity the structured organism of a totality of mankind. The totality of history is veritably present in a vision, neither as reality nor as reason.

Every line of development, every typical shape, all facts of unity are simplifications within the realm of history which prove themselves wrong when claiming to understand history in its totality."

In our criticism of the philosophy of history we need not, certainly, go so far as J. Burckhardt, one of its rigorous opponents, who calls all philosophy of history a centaur, a contradiction in terms, for history, i.e. coordination, is not philosophy and philosophy, i.e. subordination, is not history. ("Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen", S. 8) But we should be very cautious when trying to deduce the course of history from a divine plan or some regulating ideas, since—as Kant had already seen—"It is strange and apparently silly to wish to write a history in accordance with an idea of how the course of the world must be if it is to lead to certain rational ends. It seems that with such an idea only a romance could be written." ("Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht"/Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View, 1784, 9th thesis.) And in the initial sentences to his "Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte", 1786 (Conjectural Beginning of Human History) he writes:

"It is surely permissible to insert here and there conjectures into the progression of an historical account, in order to fill gaps in the record.....But to *originate* an historical account from conjectures alone would seem to be not much better than to draft a novel. Indeed, this could not be called a conjectural history but rather a mere piece of fiction."

What, then, is the proper and legitimate task of a philosophical investigation of history if it is not—to use a well-known phrase of Theodor Lessing—to devolve on an adventurous "logificatio post festum"? In the following second part of our considerations I shall try to put forward a list of those problems and questions which, in my opinion, must necessarily be taken into account in order to constitute a critical philosophical inquiry into history.

What I want to call a critical ontology of history has to be carried out in an analytical way. Instead of "a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed towards an ultimate meaning" (K. Löwith in his book "Meaning in History", 1957), instead of such a view of history which comes, indeed, very close to fiction and prophecy, we should restrict ourselves to works of a careful

analysis of those terms and principles which may serve to determine certain events and successions of events as being historical and thus being clearly distinguished from every other way of being. (By the way, the American scholar Arthur C. Danto has dealt with this problem in his very important study "Analytical Philosophy of History", 1965, which I happened to access only after I had finished this manuscript.) Thus our main task should be to point out the specific categories of the historical, to analyse them with scrutiny and to define them with regard to their realm of application, and in doing so we should try to demonstrate how only from this standpoint a fundamental ontological understanding of the historical becomes possible, an understanding of the peculiarity and uniqueness of being historically. Only under these aspects we can hope to succeed in understanding particular historical events in their essential structure.

Following this line of questioning we would, for instance, have to investigate such typical human manifestations which show man, on the one hand, as belonging to the realm of nature with its determining principles of causality, but on the other hand in his transcending this realm into the realm of freedom or selfdetermination. But since this transcendence of the realm of nature takes place only through the process of reflection, the question arises as to when, how and how far something is transformed from a mere happening into an historical event. To give an example, not every walk at the beach of Rimini followed by a crossing of the river Rubico can be regarded an historical event; but Caesar's crossing of that river in the year 49 B. C. was, no doubt, an historical event. So we would have to look for the circumstances, empirical and logical, which make an occasional happening an historical event.

In order to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions (which I am not bold enough to give in the course of this lecture, since, at present, I am only interested in raising questions, not answering them), one would have to analyze the following terms with great care:

- Historicity*, by which I understand the factual possibility to become an historical event;
- The Historical*, by which I understand the historical event as such, the possibility of becoming an historical event in its actualisation in time;
- History*, as the sum total of all actual and possible historical events.

Keeping these distinctions in mind, we have to determine what makes just any natural event or any human action historical or have history, and whether it can also be history as such, regarded in its objective process. Further one would have to ask for the meaning of temporality and historicity in their distinction from each other and in their relation to one another; and it would thus turn out that whereas

every historical event must happen in some scheme of time or other not every event happening in time can be called an historical one. It could then be called an historical event if, and only if, some distinct interest of the investigator is involved.

We must further ask for the proper meaning of the terms "rule", "law", "principle" in nature and history and thus in the sciences and in the arts. Again we have to question for inner and outer determination. autonomy and heteronomy, contingency and necessity, the relating and non-relating of action, teleology in nature and in history and, last not least, the dependence of human thoughts, volitions and actions on a given organo-psychic disposition. (There is, notably, something in Nietzsche's saying that some philosophic systems have their origin merely in a disturbed digestion.)

In all the cases mentioned above man has been referred to as an individual. At another level we may have to deal with man as belonging to some kind of a community; and while examining the social behaviour of man or the interhuman relationships, we would have to pay attention to the concepts of right and morality.

In pursuing these investigations, it could only be helpful to keep in touch with other sciences such as sociology, ethnology, archeology, and ethology. As to the latter, for instance, we may be confronted with very interesting and sometimes even surprising results. Take, for example, the much disputed phenomenon of war in the course of history and the life of the peoples. Taking for granted that all animals (and man, after all, is first and foremost an animal) are mainly determined by the instincts, among them the instinct of aggression (and with regard to that instinct there is, I am afraid, not much considerable difference between vegetarians and non-vegetarians, since an elephant or a wild boar, which are purely vegetarian, are by no means less aggressive than a tiger or a wolf), a sound investigation as has been carried out by some ethologists could throw new light upon the phenomenon of war in human life.

Anyhow, by taking into account the results of some particular sciences we could at least be saved from establishing a hypothesis by way of subtle speculative reflections which has already been proved true or indisputably wrong by such disciplines.

Resting on such investigations which are nothing less than a priori dogmas, the philosopher would not incur suspicion of behaving like a fortune-teller or a prophet taking pains in finding out from history a universal meaning or, what would be even worse, to prescribe such a meaning to history.

I definitely agree with my former teacher in philosophy Heinz Heimsoeth, the famous Kantian scholar and last holder of Kant's chair at the university of Königsberg, who in his essay on "Geschichtsphilosophie", 1948 (Philosophy of History) writes:

"The universal meaning and the universal theme of history, world-history as the world-court, the universal connection of all events...these are presumably ultimate and unsettled questions for the human understanding; but they are only 'ultimate' questions, final aims, views across the borderline in order to find out the basic principles of experience...However great and beautiful the formerly designed pictures have been, it is not our task to line up the main epoques of world-history and to work out a uniform way of aiming for all historical events..." (s. 10)

It is on the contrary our task "to reflect on the necessary ways, the process of history in its peculiar order, without concealing the severeness and rigour of the events, in order to gain a more profound understanding of the realities of our times and in order to prepare ourselves for the possibilities of an unknown future." (s. 87)

With those sentences Heimsoeth has given the outline of a programme whose performance would be much more desirable and even more necessary than many undertakings in the natural sciences and technology; since the search for the limits and scope of a philosophy of history draws us back to the more fundamental question regarding the meaning of the world as such or, at least, the possibility of our understanding the world by means of rational investigation. Is it possible for men to conceive the world as such or at least in some events experienced teleologically? If one would dare answer this question in the affirmative (and almost all hitherto fertile philosophy of history has answered it in such a way) one would be so very optimistic and claim that there were no ultimate limits for our rational investigations or explanations of the world; it would mean that the limits of the world and the limits of our understanding of the world were identical. To answer this question in the negative on the other hand would not pave the way for relativism and scepticism. It would mean only to keep ourselves open for a possibility well founded in our commonsense experience that the world is more than a mere puzzle for natural scientists and philosophers,—a conviction which, since the time of Kant, is the characteristic of the critical way of philosophizing and of the critical philosophical mind which is well aware of its scope and its limits.

To sum up, what we have tried to put forward in this lecture was the vital difference between the dogmatic or metaphysical and the critical or analytical philosophy of history. Whereas the former tries to deduce the inner logic of the historical process from a priori principles which are meant to prove this process a necessary and thus irreversible one, the latter confines itself to analyzing the principles

and basic logical, epistemological, and axiological conditions which render a philosophical treatment of history possible. Since the metaphysical systems have obviously failed because of their intrinsic incompatibilities and contradictions, why should we hesitate to tackle the problem of history on analytical grounds?

— *Comments*

*William D. Nietmann*

The bulk of Dr Herring's paper consists of a pleasantly clear overview of philosophies of history of noted authors from Hegel on. Dr Herring rejects their efforts because they interpret history synoptically. Proper philosophical interpretation of history, he avers, must be analytic. However, when I tried to understand Dr Herring's formulation of the requirements for an analytic philosophy of history, several issues occurred to me. Although I am not calling upon him to make snap comments on these considerations this afternoon, he may want to take them into account when he undertakes the task of writing a philosophy of history which he sets for himself and others. The formulation I refer to goes as follows.

Our main task should be to point out the specific categories of the historical, to analyse them with scrutiny and to define them with regard to their realm of application, and in so doing we should try to demonstrate how only from this standpoint a fundamental understanding of the peculiarity and uniqueness of being historical becomes possible.

Since Dr Herring, in referring to “a fundamental understanding”, seems to have ultimate categories in mind, the question arises as to whether one can analyse them, for an ultimate, fundamental category is a concept in whose terms other concepts become intelligible. It would seem, then, that to analyse a concept that is supposed to be ultimate would make that concept less than ultimate, since analysis requires that the concept under question be shown in some sense to depend upon other categories. Moreover, since an ultimate, fundamental category is a principle of widest generality, one is left with the puzzle as to how such a category can disclose “the peculiarity and uniqueness of being historically.” Uniqueness, it should be remembered, has unrepeatability as its essential hallmark, and hence defies generality.

Dr Herring stated that his intention was to raise, rather than to answer, questions. In my case, he has succeeded!

— Comments

Margaret Chatterjee

Dr. Herring's paper is a quest for something new for the philosopher of history to do, given that the speculative approach of earlier thinkers is out of date. After a survey of some of these earlier approaches he makes a plea for an analytical inquiry into history. This would, he thinks, involve pointing out "the specific categories of the historical" and result in a "fundamental ontological understanding of the historical". Such a categorial inquiry would, for example, include analysis of what distinguishes a mere happening from an historic event, what distinguishes temporality from historicity, analysis of terms like rule, law, principle, teleology, right and morality. Such a programme would replace any search for overall meaning in history, although the latter might yet remain as a regulative idea. The consideration behind this seems to be that philosophy of history can only have a *locus standi* as a valid discipline if it is given a strictly logical or scientific basis. I find it interesting that Dr. Herring should ally himself with this approach (more associated with philosophers of the English-speaking world) rather than with the one which German sociologists have familiarized us with—that is, an approach centred on the radical difference between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

I believe that certain changes have occurred which have made the speculative way of thinking out of date and in this I agree with Dr. Herring. But I would like to go into these changes rather more fully than he has done. Earlier philosophies of history can be divided into three types:—(1) The philosophy of classical antiquity where human history was seen in the context of and on the model of events in the cosmos. This was a model which involved the hypothesis of cyclicity. (2) The Christian view according to which human history is illuminated by sacred history (*Heilsgeschehen*)—The central conception here is that of redemption from sin and death. Along with this goes the conception of time as linear. (3) The third is the speculative or rationalist view propounded by Hegel which happened to be combined with the idea of theodicy by him but which later was shown to be capable of radical secularization. In Hegel it is Reason rather than Providence which is the guiding principle. There is no doubt that historical studies in Germany grow up within the wider context of the romantic movement. Moreover the growing sentiment of nationalism has ever demanded the discovery of roots, the search for the past. It was Hegel, no doubt, who turned philosopher's attention from the natural sciences to history as a field for speculative thinking. And yet

the germ of secularization inherent in his stress on the power of Reason was eventually to turn attention back to the sciences. For, Marx notwithstanding, until the time of Einstein it was the natural sciences which still provided the paradigm for deterministic enquiries. The deterministic view has, in this century, fallen into disrepute for a variety of reasons which cannot be gone into here.

What then are these changes which have forced the philosopher of history to think in non-Hegelian terms, indeed even to doubt if there can be such a thing as philosophy of history? First of all the changed nature of the discipline of history itself. The eighteenth and nineteenth century historian and philosopher of history wrote for the educated gentleman, the cultivated man of letters. The twentieth century historian writes, by and large, for the specialist. Ours is an age of detail when untested generalizations are out of favour. To adopt Isaiah Berlin's useful distinction, this is the age of the fox rather than that of the hedgehog. "The hedgehog, he knows one big thing. The fox, he knows a great many things." The detailed study of evidence in support of hypotheses which is the accepted methodology of the modern historian brings his discipline in line with that of the sciences. History is now classified as one of the social sciences. Social and economic history often ranks as more important than political history. The computer and the microscope may not be used by the historian himself but he may often utilize the findings of those who do. Along with this has developed a new discipline unknown in earlier times—that of historiography. This in fact amounts to saying that much of the supervenient task (if I may borrow a word from the theologians) that might previously have been annexed by the philosopher of history is now performed by the historian himself. The historian, in reconstructing fact, has at hand a multiplicity of factors of diverse kinds, economic, social, political, psychological, geographical and so on, the weighting of which is something which only he can do. At the same time he is subject to powerful influences from other disciplines. For example the believer in progress receives grist for his mill from Darwin's theory of evolution; the writer who speaks in terms of 'forces' can lean either on physics or on psycho-analysis.

Philosophers of the empiricist tradition take to philosophy of history with difficulty because of the everywhere/nowhere character of the evidence. Whatever has to be 'constructed' falls under suspicion in the eye of the empiricist. Hume is the only major historian among the British empiricists and there is nothing which qualifies for the description 'philosophy of history' in the corpus of his work. Then again, we reject the speculative approach to history these days not for Burchardt's reason (that finite man cannot plumb the depths of the Divine purpose) but because we recognize a surd element both in nature and society. Indeterminacy, Goedel's theorem and certain

facts about the chemistry of the human body can point in this direction (although they can also point in other directions too). To enforce system upon intractable data is nowadays out of fashion. We prefer to admit our ignorance although we fight shy of calling it finitude. A final caveat to the systematizers, to the philosophers of history of the old school, is provided by the point that *eschaton* now offers itself as, for the first time, the possibility of the complete annihilation of man through nuclear conflagration. This possibility provides final and ironic comment on any concept of the "meaning of history".

I am not, however, altogether happy about the alternative—the eagle-eyed conceptual pounce in place of the overhead and soaring bird's-eye view. It seems to smack too much of the *post factum* conception of the philosopher coming in after the others have done their work. Any historian worth his salt will undertake for himself analysis of concepts like that of 'period' and 'revolution'. Is a non-historian philosopher likely to appreciate the difference in the use of the word 'revolution' in applying it to the events of 1688, 1848 and 1917? The use of concepts in historical writing is so highly *contextual* that I wonder what contribution the analytical philosopher *per se* can make—unless, of course, he is also an historian. Here I voice one of my major misgivings about Dr. Herring's suggested alternative.

Historiography is itself enough to make us aware of the possible 'versions' of the facts. The historian is in the best position to assess these—not the philosopher. In an age of increasing specialization I do not myself believe that acquaintance with certain tools of analysis gives the philosopher competence to undertake conceptual surveys in disciplines with which he has no professional concern. I am aware that in saying this I am putting forward an unfashionable view. There are, however, areas on the borderlands of certain disciplines, say, between philosophy and theology, or philosophy and literature, where useful work can be done. There is one field close to the domain traditionally dealt with by the philosopher of history which could well constitute a central discipline for those interested in the kind of topics dealt with by Dr. Herring in his paper—and that is the history of ideas. It is as yet an infant discipline even in the west. It opens out interesting possibilities for the Indian philosophizer who agonizes over themes like that of tradition and modernity as any thinker must who at all cares about our present dilemmas. I conclude, then, while complementing Dr. Herring on the alternative he has suggested to the old speculative sort of philosophizing, by making a suggestion of my own. If some philosophers interest themselves in the history of ideas this will not only aid us in the much-needed process of self-understanding, the self-awareness all societies need in orienting themselves in the time dimensions of past, present and future, but provide us with a certain background for decision-making, a background, that is to say, for relating theory to practice.

## Theory and Practice in the Buddhist Philosophy of Mahayana

K. Venkata Ramanan

### I

The philosophy of Mahāyāna or the Great Way<sup>1</sup> can be called the philosophy of the undivided being (*advayadharmā*).<sup>2</sup> That the undivided being is the ultimate reality of *vyavahāra*, the world of the relative and the distinct entities which is the world of becoming is also conveyed by the assessment that everything is *śūnya*, devoid of separateness and self-being, devoid of any underived, unchanging essence of its own, which is the negative side of the appraisal that everything is relative and changing. *Śūnyatā* as the true nature of things in *vyavahāra* means the essential relatedness of everything with all the rest; it means also the nature of things as impermanence, change or becoming.<sup>3</sup> Like the actual entities that constitute the world, even the concepts which stand for them and which man employs in the course of his understanding them as well as the ideologies that man builds by means of these concepts are limited and relative. They are limited by virtue of being specific in perspective and selective in import and they are relative by virtue of their relatedness to what they stand for as well as to other concepts in the context of which they become meaningful.<sup>4</sup> To appreciate the *śūnyatā*, i.e., the devoidness of self-being and the relativity of the concepts as well as of the entities is to keep oneself openminded in one's pursuit for truth by refraining from claiming absoluteness for what are only relative, by keeping free from the error of misplaced absoluteness.<sup>5</sup> It is the aspiration of the farer on the Great Way to achieve clear and comprehensive understanding of all things as they are, rid of prejudices and vigilant of motivations.

Philosophy which is the most thorough and the most adequate embodiment of man's quest for the limitless on the plane of understanding is a human concern and is intended to fetch its pursuer the complete comprehension of things free from limitations and to elucidate for him the nature and significance of human existence. In the light of its deliverance man endeavours to revise his understanding and readjust his living, and attempts to work out his inner life so as to be in harmony with the world around him. In one's analysis of concepts and in one's criticism of beliefs and doctrines, in one's attempt to build a unified view of the entire universe with the elucidation of the nature of human existence and of man's place in the universe, in one's

building and rebuilding one's philosophy, in all this, the unfailing insight that guides man is his sense of the real. In everything that man consciously pursues there is constantly present this sense of the limitless, the sense of the real as the underived ground of the derived and the dependent.<sup>6</sup> Although one may not have clearly appraised this side of one's endeavour, it is nevertheless borne out in one's accepting as ultimate or underived the principles or entities that one holds to be basic as much as in one's rejecting of them on the ground that they are not real and not ultimate. The faring on the Great Way is in order to comprehend on the one hand the true nature of things as constituting the world of the determinate and to get on the other at the ultimate truth of things. These are but the two sides of the wayfaring; the determinate entities could not be comprehended as determinate except in the light of the indeterminate or the undivided being, which in its turn could not be realized as the ultimate truth of things except in the context of the world of the determinate. Elucidating the meaning of the ultimate and laying bare fully the import of one's sense of the real is a function unique to philosophy. This is the aim also of the pursuer on the Great way.

## II

It this systematic quest for the real one seeks to be objective or impartial. "The Middle Way is to see things as they are."<sup>7</sup> And as a necessity, one engages in abstractions only in order to facilitate meticulousness as well as absorption in the different aspects and stages in one's study of man and his world. However, exclusiveness at any stage and in regard to any phase is by its very nature a hindrance. Exclusive absorption blinds one to the essential relatedness of the specific object or sphere with the rest of existence, and thus blinds one to the very essentials of its nature. It thus deprives one of the width of understanding and richness of comprehension. This error of exclusive absorption functions by way of clinging to the fragmentary as complete, seizing the relative as absolute. Under its influence, one becomes blind to the integral and organismic nature of things and seizes as absolutely separate what are only relatively distinct.

That the error of exclusiveness in understanding and its correlative, selfishness in action, are rooted in the false sense of self is the import that the farer on the Great way (Mahāyāna)<sup>1</sup> lays bare in his analysis of *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, the error which the followers of the Buddha consider as the root of all other errors. *Satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* or the false sense of self is essentially the misconstruing of the import of the sense of 'I', which is the primary sense of the self-conscious individual. The original meaning of 'I' is self-being, unconditionedness. The sense of 'I' is the self-conscious intellect's reference to itself in its underived nature; it is the sense of the real in man. But the self-conscious intellect under

the influence of ignorance comes to apply wrongly this sense of unconditionedness to itself in its mundane nature, i.e., in its nature as a specific, determinate entity. It extends this sense to all that with which it identifies itself and through that to all things that it seizes upon. While the sense of self is due to selfconscious intellection, the falsity in the false sense of self is due to ignorance. This error is the root of all clinging, the clinging to the relative as well as to the absolute. It is the sense of the real misapplied.<sup>8</sup>

As long as this false sense of self persists in man it conditions everyone of his pursuits. It engenders in him an attitude of exclusive self-centredness, i.e., an attitude of getting absorbed in things of one's interest so as to imagine them to be basic, unconditioned and universally valid and to reject or explain away all the rest. This is the root of dogmatism and of scepticism, the attitudes that impede the progress of rational enquiry.

One that is free from this false sense of self is sympathetic in regard to every standpoint, non-exclusive or comprehensive in understanding and is imbued with the true sense of the fullness that is of love and regard for all. He does not allow his attitude to become in any degree distorted, as he has rectified this deflection that is at the root of every kind of conflict and suffering. "The nonexclusive way is the middle way."<sup>9</sup> In being all inclusive it is compared to space (*ākāśa*), the principle of accommodation. The middle Way is the Great Way, the way of comprehension that is inspired throughout by the sense of the ultimacy of the limitless. In this comprehension, knowing and doing are appreciated as the two inseparable aspects of the one integral course of the life of the individual. Man's accomplishment in theoretic understanding cannot be sharply divided from his function as a person on the plane of action. And the greater the depth and pervasiveness of one's understanding the more effective it becomes in determining the course of one's action in life.

The effectiveness of one's understanding in determining the course of existence does not stop with the individual; one's essential relatedness with all the rest has in it the potentiality of one to influence all that one can bring within one's sphere. That there is no absolute division between one thing and another and that the becoming of things is devoid of any absolute beginning or end are borne out by *pratītyasamutpāda*, which means that things in the world are essentially relative and that everything has its causes and conditions.<sup>10</sup> The truth that things are not absolute and unchanging, and that the course of things has an orderliness which can be grasped bears out their potentiality to be directed, given shape to, which man can harness in accordance with his knowledge and skill. In his constant interaction with the world where he belongs, the multiple phases of which he discerns, analyses and comprehends, man gains the knowledge which gives him

the ability not only to receive influences and adjust his own living in order to be in harmony with the world where he belongs, but also the skilfulness to influence his world and to give direction to its course in turn. It is the aspiration of the farer on the Great Way to lead all to the natural fulfilment of their basic aspiration, by leading them beyond ignorance and selfishness, beyond the decrepitude of exclusive self-centeredness. *Upāya* or skilfulness is the fruit of maturity in understanding; it is a consummating phase of wisdom (*prajñā*).<sup>11</sup>

### III

Comprehensiveness in knowledge and compassion in feeling and action are the translations of the ultimate reality of the Undivided Being on the plane of the determinate. While knowledge of things in their specific natures knows no end, and man's awareness of his ability to know provides the necessary spur for him to proceed in the path of knowledge, there are levels and perspectives in the knowing of things. The undivided Being is not a specific entity and the specific is not anything absolutely divided. While absorption in the detailed knowledge of a specific sphere or entity, when exclusive, blinds one to its essential relatedness with all things, absorption in the level of the relative, when exclusive, blinds one to their ultimate reality as the indeterminate *dharma*, the Undivided Being. Absorption in the indeterminate or the ultimate when exclusive, tempts one even to reject the mundane totally.

The understanding of things as they are and in their fullness is not exclusive of any entity nor of any level or perspective. In it the comprehension of one's essential relatedness with all the rest functions as a corrective to self-absorption. It facilitates man's discernment of his urge for fulfilment which is his quest for the limitless and enables him to see its meaning fully in the context of the world of the determinate. The farer on the Great Way is imbued with compassion all-through his coursing and he seeks to put forth effort skilfully in order to carry with him the rest of beings beyond ignorance and passion.

The ideal of knowledge in the Great Way is *sarvākārajñatā*, or knowledge of all forms which is a detailed knowledge of all forms of all things.<sup>12</sup> It is not exclusive of either the world of the determinate, or of the indeterminate reality. It is a comprehension of every determinate entity in the total perspective of the world process, held in harmony in the full awareness of its ultimate truth as the Undivided Being. The faring on the Great Way is although inspired and guided by *prajñā*, that is, the sense of the real which is basic to way-faring. In its widest metaphysical import, *prajñā* is a synonym of the undivided being, the ultimate reality. In reference to the subjective side of personal life, *prajñā*, as a comprehensive term, covers all the levels and

aspects of the individual as the knowing, acting subject, untainted by ignorance.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Way is the perfection of *prajñā*, (*prajñāpāramitā*) itself. The different kinds of perfection that the wayfarer seeks to realize are thus considered to be the perfection of *prajñā* in its different aspects. These are usually counted as six, viz., charity, moral conduct, forbearance or endurance, effort, concentration and knowledge. All these six kinds of perfection are considered as the different aspects of knowledge or wisdom and merit or meritorious action, *prajñā* and *puṇya*, which are themselves regarded as the two sides of the integral way faring. In the list of the six *pāramitās* it is the last that is called *prajñā*. To the rest it is like the eye, the five are the limbs. Devoid of *prajñā* they are like the blind; they do not then get the name of *pāramitā* or perfection, the essential quality of which is to fix one's attention on the way to Buddhahood which is the Great Way, the way to perfection in wisdom and compassion.<sup>14</sup> The factors that constitute the Small Way are comprehended in it but with the necessary correction, viz., that these factors serve not just the purpose of putting an end to one's own limiting factors but are harnessed on the part of the farer on the Great Way, to intensify his sense of the real, to vivify his comprehension of the ultimate reality of the Undivided Being.

In this wayfaring the bodhisattva that is the farer on the Great Way and aspirant to Buddhahood, passes through several stages, usually counted as ten.<sup>15</sup> The seventh of these is regarded as the most decisive stage in which the wayfarer becomes free from all sense of clinging and realizes the capacity to endure and to sustain the comprehension of the ultimate nature of things as the *dharma* devoid of birth (*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*). This is his capacity to bear with every circumstance devoid of doubt, devoid of fear and anxiety; this is his ability to meet every situation with unimpeded insight and unbounded compassion; this is his maturity in knowledge and in action. The *kṣānti* itself is considered to develop here into the unobstructed understanding of all things, in regard to their mundane as well as ultimate natures. Here the bodhisattva becomes irreversible (*avaivarta* or *avinivartaniya*). In this decisive stage of his wayfaring, we are told that the bodhisattva gives up his last physical body and obtains the body born of *dharmatā* that is unimpeded by factors of limitation, and that the farer on the Great Way nevertheless willingly assumes the body of flesh for the purpose of helping all. Out of compassion for all, he works in the world. We are told further that here, at this stage, some even choose to continue in the state of bodhisattva, willingly postponing their own attainment of Buddhahood. Here the wayfarer attains the true status (*nyāma*) of the bodhisattva, purged of all elements of immaturity (*āma*), the foremost of which is the passion for the indeterminate *dharma*, pressed by which one might rush towards effacing one's individuality.<sup>16</sup>

Passing through the eighth stage in which the bodhisattva attains the ability to penetrate into the minds of other people, exercises freely his extraordinary power and understanding and realizes the constant presence of the Buddhas, and passing through the ninth stage in which he attains the ability to understand the different languages of different kinds of beings and gains the ability to teach every one in one's language, we are told, the wayfarer reaches lastly the stage in which he takes birth in an abode of his own choice, and attains the final fulfilment, viz., the attainment of Buddhahood. This is the tenth stage. Here all the merits that he had achieved as a bodhisattva are transformed into those of the Buddha. Whatever residual impressions of afflictions (*kleśa*) had been persisting in him now become extinct here and he realizes the highest kind of freedom, the unimpeded, immediate freedom (*ānantaryavimokṣa*).<sup>17</sup> Here he enters the door of the knowledge of all forms (*sarvākārajñatā*), the highest kind of knowledge of all things, that is attained in the Great Way. He becomes verily the Buddha himself. In the Great Way the *dharmakāya* (dharma-body) of the Buddha is regarded to be constituted of factors which are but articulations of limitless wisdom and unbounded compassion.<sup>18</sup> These are the fruition of the two sides of one's being, viz., knowledge and action, achieved by the bodhisattva by his faring on the Great Way, of which the Great compassion is the root.<sup>19</sup>

## IV

What is given above is a brief survey of some of the essentials in the philosophy of Mahāyāna as presented in *the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* of Nāgārjuna.<sup>20</sup> The present survey is specially with reference to its account of the true nature of things, its elucidation of the meaning of the basic urge in man, and the way that it can best be fulfilled.

Theory and practice, or knowledge and action are here regarded as the two inseparable aspects of the integral course of the life of the individual; the demerits in the one inevitably affect one's faring in the other, even as the merits in the one naturally complement and promote one's couring in the other. Theory and practice or knowledge and action are like the eye and the limbs. *Prajñā* and *puṇya* are the two sides one's faring on the way to Buddhahood, which is perfection in personality. This is the way to fullness of being.

The life lived by every self-conscious individual is a couring on the way, actuated by the impulse for fulfilment, prompted by the quest for the limitless, which is man's sense of the real. An elucidation of the nature of the goal by clarifying the meaning of the limitless, and an elucidation of the nature of the wayfarer himself, along with an exposition of his potentialities and of the dangers that beset his wayfaring are essential for a chalking out of the different phases and

stages of the way to be traversed. In the elucidation of the different issues involved in the wayfaring, however, it is essential that one pays full attention to the fact that the individual is a member of a larger world, with which he is indissociably related.

It is essential also to call to mind that the sharing of factors in this relatedness of the individual with the world is mutual, not one sided. While the self-conscious individual is free to choose a course of "effacing one's individuality," which virtually amounts to putting an end to one's course of existence as an individual, that would not be the way of one who realizes his responsibility to the world where he belongs and is aware of all that he owes to it. That way he would also be failing to comprehend fully the meaning of the urge that is basic to his wayfaring. He would misapprehend the import of the limitless and would be acting in contradiction to the deliverance of his knowledge of the true nature of things. Theory and practice would then be sundered. One's course would then be unrealistic. It would then be an attitude of frustration away from fulfilment.

The couring on the Great Way is not by abandoning the world and rejecting one's potentialities but by retaining them and fully harnessing them by accepting one's place in the world and recognizing one's responsibility in giving direction to its course and striving to do one's best to help everyone to rise above fragmentariness, put an end to the root of conflict and suffering and realize the fullness of being.

1. *Mahāyāna*, the Great Way, the way of comprehension, see the author's *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy* (Published for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland-Vermont, Tokyo, Japan, 1966), pp. 276-78; the Great Way and the Small Way (*Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna*), *ibid.*, 66-79, 278-90.
2. *Advayadharmā*, the Undivided Being, as the Ultimate Reality, *ibid.*, 267-75. see below, n. 5 on *dharmadhātu* and *bhūtaakoṭi*.
3. *Śūnyatā* as the mundane truth and as the ultimate truth, *ibid.* 172-73, 256-57; 338-39a; the positive and negative imports, 317-19, 325, 326-37; impermanence as the door to comprehend, 142, 211, 358a. See below, n. on *pratīyasamutpāda*.
4. Concepts and the entities that stand for (*nāma* and *lakṣaṇa*), *ibid.*, 74-81
5. See below, n. 8 on *satkāyadṛṣṭi*.
6. *Dharma-dhātu*, or the real as the underived ground of the derived and the dependent, and *bhūtaakoṭi*, or the real as the summit or the goal which all beings seek to realize, *ibid.*, 261-67. On the thirst for the real, *ibid.*, 342a-b. *Tathatā*, the nature of things as they are, when referring to the ultimate nature is a name for the ultimate reality; see *ibid.*, 252-61.
7. *Madhyama-pratīpat*, the Middle Way, the non-exclusive way, *ibid.*, 127-50; to see things as they are: *madhyama pratīpat dharmāṇām bhūtaapratyavekṣā (Kāśyapa-parivarta)*, *ibid.*, 32, 50.

8. *Satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, the false sense of self, and the unerring sense of 'I', *ibid.*, 98-105; the root of errors (*dr̥ṣṭi*), 107-110, the root of afflictions (*kleśas*), *ibid.*, 106-107. The false sense of self has to be distinguished from the principle of self-conscious intellection, the center of personal life which is called *Vijñāna*. On *Vijñāna* in this sense see *ibid.*, 217-50, 350a, 355a.
9. See above, n. 7, on *madhyamāpratīpat*
10. *Pratītyasamutpāda*, "Conditioned Origination", as a synonym of *sūnyatā* and of the Middle Way, *Mādhyamika-kārikā* XXIV: 18: *Yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ sūnyatām tām prakṣmahe; sā prajñāptirupādāya pratīpat saiva madhyamā.*
11. *Upaya* (*Kauśalya, Yoga*) skilfulness of non-clinging (*anupalambha*), a consummating phase of wisdom, see *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, p.355a, also *ibid.*, 339a.
12. *Sarvākārajñatā*, the knowledge of all forms, the goal of the bodhisattva's Wayfaring, *ibid.*, 287, 305.
13. *Prajñā* (*pāramitā*), as reality and as knowledge, *ibid.*, 115-19, 265-67, 355a-b. *Prajñā* as the ultimate reality of the individual has to be distinguished from *Vijñāna*, see above, n. 8.
14. *Prajñāparamita*, the perfection of wisdom, the Great Way, *ibid.*, 280-81, 286-90; *prajñā* and *puṇya* (wisdom and merit), 280, 349a, 369a;
15. Stages (*bhūmis*) in the wayfaring of the bodhisattva, *ibid.*, 305-11
16. *Anutpattikadharmakṣānti* (the ability to endure, to sustain the ultimate dharma devoid of birth), *ibid.*, 284-85, 299, 370a; as the irreversible status of the bodhisattva, 307, 374b; *kṣānti* (forbearance) as prior to *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kṣānti* as a consummating phase of wisdom, *ibid.*, 369-70a. On *nyāma* the mature status of the bodhisattva free from all immaturity (*āma*), 298-99, 301, 373b. On the *dharmakāya* of the bodhisattva, *ibid.*, 307-9
17. *ānataryavinokṣa* freedom unimpeded and immediate, which the bodhisattva achieves in the final stage of his wayfaring, i.e., in the stage called *dharmamegha*, *ibid.*, 310.
18. *Dharma-kāya* of the Buddha, *ibid.*, 313-16.
19. *Karuṇā* (compassion) as the root of the Buddha's way, *ibid.*, 315; *Karuṇā* and *prajñā* as phases of comprehension, 277-78, 282, 315-6.
20. *Mahaprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* (Taisho edition of Chinese *Tripiṭaka*, no. 1509, vol. XXV) attributed traditionally to Nagarjuna. The author's *Nagarjuna's Philosophy* is a study of this text.

You know no more than I  
 What is laughter, tear or sigh  
 Or love, or hate, or anger or compassion,  
 Metaphysics, then adieu  
 Without you I can do,  
 As I think you will soon be out of fashion.

Before we inquire into the relation which philosophical theories may have with the practice of men, it may be worthwhile to ask what it is which generally guides and determines our conduct. The answer would probably be that it is by our beliefs, religious or secular, that we generally live and act. In the last analysis, it is these beliefs which determine our conduct. Their chief sources are either the religious experiences of mankind, or the scientific knowledge of the day. These two sources of our beliefs cover almost the entire range of man's activities.

While the above two sources of our beliefs, religious and scientific, are practically the originators and modifiers of our conduct, there is a philosophical unsatisfactoriness about each of them. Scientific beliefs, which have the merit of objective validity, have, nevertheless, a grave defect inasmuch as they do not refer to man's deepest question regarding the meaning and purpose of life, nor do they deal with questions of valuation and worth. Scientific knowledge, which deals with the true, ignores the good, and theological beliefs, which have the opposite merit of being practically useful by virtue of their relevance to the practical aspirations of man, have the great defect of lacking objective validity and rational appeal. In other words, while theological beliefs are practical without being always true, scientific beliefs are true without being practical in the sense that, while they ascertain for us the relationship of ends and means, they do not tell us anything of the ends to be pursued for us. While some have made their peace with science or religion, a large number are unable to do so. Nor is the mental vacuum thus created intellectually tolerable. The question, therefore, is: Can we find in philosophy grounds for satisfactory belief-formation and, if so, with what success and how?

It is obvious that the task of philosophy is more difficult than that of science or religion; for, while philosophy is unable to accept the unproven beliefs of theology, it is not aided by science either. It must furnish us with beliefs about the real nature of the world and the meaning and the purpose of our lives which will not only possess the

subjective certainty of the religious consciousness but also the objective validity of the science.

A glance at the balance sheet of contemporary philosophical performance with special reference to its practical utility will no doubt show that philosophy has drifted far away from life and that men no longer look to it for guidance in their daily lives. Deprived of both the subjective certainty of theological knowledge and of the objective certainty of the sciences, philosophical knowledge today seems to have surrendered its role of providing men with any fundamental or basic system of beliefs to live by. Russell, in this respect the most pessimistic of modern philosophers, says, "To teach how to live without certainty.....is perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can still do for those who study it".<sup>1</sup> This opinion of philosophy and philosophical knowledge by one of the greatest philosophers of the age reveals the extent to which the modern mind has despaired of philosophical knowledge. One hopes, however, that things are not as bad as that, and that Russell himself will admit that he is not without at least the belief that he should continue to behave and conduct himself according to his reason and conscience and be free to propagate his views irrespective of their consequences to himself and to his reputation. This itself is a rational belief which has not only guided Russell but also influenced a large number of his admirers and followers in this age of philosophic uncertainty. It may be true that our philosophers have so far made only a negative contribution to our system of beliefs, yet our philosophical beliefs or our lack of them is all that we as rational human beings have to depend upon and live by. In being contemptuous of the role of philosophy in the determination of our beliefs we should not forget that the contempt applied, not to philosophical knowledge as such, but only to particular varieties of it, which, by and large, may deserve the condemnation.

But there is no denying the fact that philosophy has today stepped down from its high calling and has been progressively withdrawing itself from the practical problems of life and straying into both a rarified realm and a stultifying method in which, by the very nature of the case, no conviction or faith is either possible or even desired. To quote Russell again, "The philosophy, therefore, which is to be genuinely inspired by the scientific spirit, must deal with somewhat dry and abstract matters, and must not hope to find an answer to the practical problems of life."<sup>2</sup> It appears that philosophy, now by ridiculing religion, now by imitating science, and in turn being ridiculed by both, has itself become ridiculous without being able to correct the faults of either. From ancient times to modern and from modern times to contemporary, the journey of philosophical reflection in the West has been, broadly speaking, from the "practical" to the "useless" and from the "useless" to the "nonsensical". This may appear as too

unsympathetic an oversimplification, but the element of truth in it cannot be denied. There is little relation today between philosophical theories and the practical affairs of our lives.

That philosophy should have come to such a predicament in the matter of providing certainties and conviction for the guidance of our daily life is regrettable and is certainly not in keeping with its best traditions throughout its history of more than twentyfive centuries. So long as man has an awakened mind whose energies and function exceed his biological and economic needs, there is no relinquishing of philosophical pursuit, which by nature must seek the real behind the apparent and not rest until man has attained to the highest truth and the destiny of his being. Man was, thus, never without a metaphysics or a philosophy about the world, or without some ideals for his life. He must have a metaphysics of life, of right and wrong, and must, from time to time, undertake a revision of this conceptual or ideal framework with which he necessarily thinks about the world. This drawing or the re-drawing, in the world of his thought, of the map of total reality and integrating it with his life, this ideational framework of the highest possible generality, which constitutes his metaphysics, is inevitable for him, for a thoughtful life is not possible without it. This is not to say that philosophical theories are merely inevitable and do not have their uses. The metaphysics of Hegel had a great effect on historical studies in the nineteenth century, and the philosophical ideas of the Renaissance were responsible for the political and social revolutions of the eighteenth century. If the purpose and function of philosophy are understood properly, there is no reason why philosophical theories and knowledge should lack conviction and fail to supply men with a rational and comprehensive system of beliefs for a better guidance of their lives.

In decrying philosophy and philosophical knowledge we are prone to forget that we are criticising thought by thought. If it is through our philosophical reasoning that we are critical of either theological or scientific knowledge, the same philosophical reasoning should also provide us with positive beliefs for the guidance of our lives. The alternative to philosophical beliefs is either to allow the practical affairs of our lives to be governed by the haphazard uncertainties of a skeptical age or to surrender our minds to men who have "power without knowledge" (the politicians), "faith without truth" (the theologians) or "knowledge without purpose" (the scientists). This would be a sign more of our mental regression than of our intellectual advancement.

There is still another reason philosophy should not only step in but also be specially fitted for the task of belief-formation for the guidance of life. Looking at the map of world thought today, we find that the unity of man and his being is torn into numerous separate, disintegrated

ted, and autonomous fields of reason and passion, persuasion and coercion, simultaneously pulling him in mutually contradictory directions without at the same time supplying him with any integrated view of life or of the ends to be pursued. While knowledge in these separate fields is constantly expanding, man's belief and conviction are progressively receding, because truth and knowledge gained in one direction are negated and contradicted by knowledge acquired in another. Lack of unified knowledge weakens belief, and it is philosophical knowledge alone which can stand for comprehensive and unified knowledge. The need of a synoptic vision was never so imperative and urgent as it is today, for, if, in these days of increasing multiplicity of fields of narrower and narrower specialization, philosophy also is to succumb to the temptation of specialization, all hope of a unitary knowledge is lost.

Philosophy, in its subject matter, has tended towards an increasing alienation from life. To be a philosopher is no longer to know anything about the business of life. It is always the other fellow, the non-philosopher, who is the expert in the art of living and who must take care of the philosopher's own problems of life. Knowing and living have become two separate compartments of life, so that a philosopher can live in a world of ideas and knowledge, while others inhabit a world of life quite unknown to the philosopher. Philosophy no longer means a philosophy of life but only analysis and clarification of terms and propositions which have no reference to beliefs or conduct. Its outlook is no longer practical. The tragedy of the theoretical or the abstract philosopher is that the end sought by him is often lost in the activity itself. Seeking itself comes to occupy the place of finding. His aim is no longer truth but knowing. This is a paradoxical situation but not quite unlike an abstract philosophic search. Little wonder, therefore, that philosophical pursuit should be devoid of conviction and inspire philosophers like Buddha to declare: "The Tathagata, O Vaccha, is free from all theories".<sup>8</sup> A philosophy which is not of life and not practised in life is barren. How can our philosophical theories inspire us to belief and action when we find philosophers who have made great intellectual strides in their theoretical fields suffer in their own daily lives, from almost all the failings of common man?

It has been too long assumed by philosophers that man has one or more cognitive faculties such as sense, reason, and intuition, each of which separately and appropriate to its own nature and function reveals to him knowledge of the outside and the inside world. He has senses for external objects, reasons for objects not to be grasped by the senses, and intuition for the reality not to be grasped by either. The common assumption about philosophical knowledge has been that reason alone is its cognitive apparatus and that whatever belongs to or comes through the realm of the heart, feeling, will, or vision is an unphiloso-

phical blend. This analytic view of man and his epistemological tools is a great blunder, for, in reality, the integral cognitive-affective-conative man is never so completely abstracted as to be all sense without reason, or all reason without feeling. Even if he were so abstracted, we have no reason for thinking that the truth or the reality revealed to him by any one of his absolutely pure and exclusive apertures is for that reason more reliable. In fact, it should be the less trustworthy. While the atomistic view of the faculties of man stands condemned by modern psychology, it is not a little surprising that this analytic division of man still persists in philosophical discussions. What, then, should be the source of philosophical knowledge? It is neither sense, nor reason, nor intuition, but the whole of the man. Philosophy is the reaction of the whole of man to the whole of reality. Man is a spirit, an integral whole, consisting of his body, mind, intellect, passion, and will, and his reason alone can no more exhaust him than his animality can encompass his reason. Reason or rational thought is only a part of his being. Purely rational knowledge, therefore, militates against and contradicts the affirmations of the rest of a man's being and receives acceptance only by a corner of his self.

Philosophy, therefore, should not be conceived as merely a rational or intellectual quest, but a spiritual endeavour of the whole of a man's being. It is only of a knowledge born in the whole of a man's being that we can say that to know is to believe. When philosophical knowledge is not grounded in the direct experience of the whole of a man's being, it lacks a necessary union of the knower and the known. In revealed or self-discovered knowledge the knower feels an identity with what he knows as true without any shadow of doubt.

Purely rational and mediate theories of knowledge have lacked conviction, and hence only such philosophical theories as have been based on some form of the unitary theories of knowledge, such as that of the mystic, the sufi, and the Upanisads, have carried conviction and certainty and have been successful in influencing conduct. Also, pure thought, by its very nature, works in dialectics; it creates and develops its own antithesis. It is one of the characteristics of rational and discursive thinking that it is at the same time aware of the other side also, and therefore an element of doubt is always there in the thinker's mind. No stable convictions can be built on mere dialectics. No true philosopher would ever be sure that there could not be another viewpoint or argument which has escaped him.

It would thus appear that whatever is immediately or intuitively known is believed in at least for the moment, and, the more the mind of man takes to a discursive, an inferential, and a mediate way of knowing, the more there is scepticism of lack of conviction in what is thus known even at the time of knowing. Belief and knowledge and an immediate theory of knowledge seem somehow to be related to

each other, as also mediate theories of knowledge and scepticism seem necessarily to go together.

Philosophical knowledge and theories will assuredly achieve all that they can—namely, critical acumen, sharpening of wit, even occasional insight—but will ever lack conviction so long as they confine themselves to inferential and ratiocinative knowledge as the only valid knowledge. In other words, philosophy, before it can affect men's conduct, must revise its ideas about the exclusive validity of its accepted sources of knowledge and include once again what it excluded when it separated from theology.

What is maintained here is that philosophical knowledge and theories will carry conviction and give man a system of beliefs to live by only when philosophical knowledge stands for knowledge acquired by the whole of a man's self and by no single part of him. The truth-quality of such philosophical knowledge will depend upon the all-round perfection of the integrated being of the knowing self. It follows that, if philosophical knowledge is the result of the whole of the integrated personality of a man, the more perfect the soul of the knower, the purer his mind, senses, reason, and heart, the greater will be the philosophical truth revealed to him. No man will claim to have the true knowledge in any sphere if he believes his instruments of cognition to be defective. Similarly, no philosopher can hope to attain the truth except in proportion to the perfection of his soul. Ultimately, therefore, it is the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual perfection of the man which reveals the perfect truth.

#### *The Indian View*

Indian thinkers of the past have left behind some fundamental philosophical beliefs which have not only governed the lives of the Indian people for ages but have not lost much of their hold on men even today. This is rooted in the indubitable experience of suffering in the affair of living itself. This reaction of the whole of a man's being to the experience of suffering is common to almost all the schools of philosophy in India. Philosophical endeavour in India thus began with a practical aim and purpose, which is not merely understanding the why and the wherefore of suffering but an absolute and final elimination of the curse of it all, of the tiring bondage of the causal chain of desire, and of the attainment of a state of liberation from even the possibility of suffering in this life as well as hereafter. This concept of liberation (*mokṣa*) for men from suffering from all bonds or fears whatever is not only a common summum bonum of all the different systems of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, but is also a philosophical concept which is not to be dismissed as merely a theological or religious dogma. The Upaniṣadic philosophers, who were at the same time sages, arrived at this concept by their reflections of

the nature of the one and the many, and founded their doctrine of freedom from pain and death—to be more precise, from fear as such (of any sort whatever)—on the truth of the oneness of reality to be realized within their own and irrefutable direct experience. The systems of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and the Vedānta have been led to the same goal of liberation by not being able to accept philosophically the conditioned and empirical existence of man as his true state, which is declared to be that of a state of freedom from all limitations. What is of significance for us to note here is that all the different schools and systems of philosophy have been occupied with this practical problem of man and with the practical means for its resolution. With all of them, it has not been merely the problem of knowing or of solving an intellectual puzzle but of finding a more satisfactory way of living. Even if all of Indian philosophy had given different answers to the questions of the true nature of man and of the means to its realization, it would have been entitled to the claim of a practical philosophy by virtue of its adherence to the practical problems of man and his life on earth.

It is also significant that, among the different systems of Indian philosophy, tradition should have given the highest place to the Yoga. Patanjali's Yoga, and his school, is through and through a system of psychological discipline, and its being a necessary practical counterpart of the theoretical philosophy of Sāṃkhya has never been doubted. We do not know of any system of philosophical reflection in which a course of conduct has been classified under philosophy. This shows how theory and practice, or knowledge and conviction, went hand in hand and influenced men's conduct in the past. As Huston Smith has pointed out, India's specialization has been in psychological wisdom as against the natural and the social of the West and the Chinese.

The philosophical distinction between the partial reality of this world and the absolute reality of quite another kind of world has had perhaps the most profound and most durable influence on the conduct of men in India. While in all philosophizing a distinction has always been made between the sensory and the ideational, the empirical and the transcendental, or, at least, between appearance and reality and, while all the scientists and philosophers in all parts of the world have had to start from a distinction of a "this" world and a "that", the distinction has remained practically a dead letter in the conduct of our daily lives. In spite of Plato's "World of ideas", Hegel's "Absolute", Kant's "Transcendental Ego", Husserl's or Hartmann's "Essences" or even in spite of the "original" or the "neutral stuff" of the realists and their distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities of matter, the practical affairs of men have proceeded as if these theories did not exist. But, in India, it would not be correct to say that this distinction is altogether erased from the daily conduct of men,

even today, when philosophy, traditional or living, is not playing the dominant role it has played in the past.

Again, the philosophical pursuit was not conceived as merely an intellectual excellence but was meant to be integrally related to the personality and the life of the philosopher, or of the merit and qualifications of the aspirant to philosophical wisdom. One of the repeated strains of Indian philosophical thought is that true knowledge and wisdom can be acquired only by the pure in heart, by one who has already attained the requisite moral virtues and is free from the psychologically and morally undesirable traits of personality and character. He should have controlled certain ignoble emotions and should be free from unworthy motives and desires. Mere mental gifts or intellectual abilities are not enough for the attainment of the highest truth.

This blend of virtue and knowledge, of thought and moral practice, may seem to be distasteful superfluity to the modern mind, which cannot understand the reason things clearly separate could not be treated as separate. But the view that philosophical wisdom should be ethically conditioned should cause no surprise to anyone today, when it is being increasingly realised that the intellectual and the moral cannot be separated in any ideal system of instruction and learning. After all, what is it to be intelligent or rational? Is it really possible to be intelligent or rational without being moral? If we analyse the behaviour of a truly rational man, we are sure to find a number of qualities in him which will prove to be moral. To be rational, for instance, is not to be partisan, or to have prejudices, or to be swayed by passions or self-interest, or to falsify truth, or to have double standard, but it is to stand for truth under all conditions, etc. These are moral qualities. In fact, to be rational is to be moral, and to be completely rational is to be completely moral. The moral and spiritual qualification of a philosopher is, therefore, a condition of his philosophizing properly. Passion or ethical failings cannot but distort the vision, even of a philosopher. It is one of the merits of Indian philosophical thought to have insisted on virtue for knowledge, for it is only thus that knowledge leading to belief and action can be acquired. It is one of the characteristics of Indian philosophical thought that corresponding to every law that binds man it discovers a law that liberates him. In the realm of action, if our deeds bind us through their fruits, we can so act as to free ourselves from the chain of causal action and reaction by acting in disregard of that chain. We can act and yet not be attached to any thought of our act's consequences. In *niṣkāma karma*, action having been started unilaterally and with no thought of its consequences, the fangs, as it were, of the law of action and reaction to touch or hurt us are removed. The non-attached man who performs actions only because he considers it his duty and not

because he has bargained for results, has liberated himself from the chain of action and consequences to himself. The idea is coming to be gradually appreciated in the West, especially through its psychological and sociological studies of the types of personality and leadership, if not in strictly philosophical fields. It is not merely a moral ideal but a philosophical theory arrived at by deep reflection on the psychology of desiring or striving and its effect on the reasoning purity of the knowing mind. The theory of *niṣkāma karma* is the counterpart in the sphere of action to the theory of the non-attached mind (*niṣkāma citta*) in the realm of knowledge. A *kāmya* (end-seeking or purposeful) mind, a mind that is infected and tarnished by low personal desires and aspirations, can with difficulty see the truth as it is. The *niṣkāma karma* can flow only from a *niṣkāma* mind, which appears to be a necessary qualification of an ideal philosopher, whose task is to perceive the truth about reality with undefective and clean instruments of reason and heart. The non-attached *yogin* or *sannyāsin*, in whom the ideal of *niṣkāma karma* is exemplified, is not only a perfect or ideal man but is also more truly a philosopher, having attained true philosophical knowledge (*prajñā*), because in his life is typified the completest identity of philosophical knowledge and practice.

The above reflections should have shown how Indian philosophical theories of suffering, ultimate freedom, non-attachment, the unreality of the apparent, and of moral requirements for intellectual attainments have produced conviction and belief which have not only altered the outlook of their believers but have also given a different turn to their style of living.

Through sages and saints these philosophical systems of beliefs came to be so crystallised into the common heritage of India that today it does not require a philosopher in India to proclaim that the world is but another name for the unceasing changes of creation and dissolution, the rise and fall of civilizations and cultures, or of birth and death, health and disease, richness and poverty which is believed to be the very nature of the world and is picturesquely characterised as the wheel of life and death (*samsāra cakra*), in which man is caught. Further, it takes ages of tireless effort for the individual to emerge unscarred, as it were, by the ravages of the wheel. The fact that these beliefs came to Indians through their sages and saints, not only does not make them less philosophic, but is actually the reason for their being believed, showing once more the integral and unitary character of knowledge and action. Even today, when these traditional philosophical beliefs have dimmed in the stress and strife of modern life, it is difficult to say that an Indian goes through his daily life of birth, marriage, and death unimpressed and unaffected by these beliefs, the truth of which he seems to feel in his very bones.

A philosophy which is not lived is as barren a pastime as a

religion that is not founded on valid truths is a meaningless ritual. Where theory is divorced from life, reason from conduct, what expectation may one have that such theories can or will influence the practical affairs of men?

Incidentally, the above remarks about the practicality of Indian philosophy also show that the term 'practical' itself has been understood in India in a sense not quite the same as that which it carries in the West, at least in the modern period. In the West, the term 'practical' has referred to man's relation with his environment and to changes and alterations in it. It has not been so in India, where the term has referred to just the opposite meaning of effecting change and alteration within one's own self, where the entire effort has been concentrated on transforming the empirical ego into the pure self, or the egoity itself into non-egoity or mere 'thusness'. In short, the emphasis on the practical in India has been with reference to the inner transformation of man rather than to any socialised transformation in his style of living. The world of objective Nature is to be used as the material for this inner change. The need to become his true self rather than to conquer outer Nature has been his deepest aspiration. His practicality has consisted in a constant effort towards self-discovery, self-discipline, and self-development.

It is heartening to note that one of the great American sociological thinkers, Lewis Mumford, while commenting upon the exclusively horizontal socialization of our present civilization, which equates life with property and power, comes to a similar conclusion about the need of richness and depth in the individual's own personality rather than in externals. "The progressive exchange of his natural, biological and psychological self to his truly human self is what man alone can effect and create and he is human only in so far as this has been effected by him in his own person"<sup>4</sup>. The more a man becomes externally socialized, the less is his depth within himself. This value attributed to the inward depth of the individual in Indian thought continues up to the present time, as is evident from the response of the people to the philosophies of Tagore, Gandhi, and Aurobindo, in which all practical programme of action in political, social, and economic fields are to conform to the belief that no achievement in any sphere is in itself worthwhile unless it leads at the same time to a desired transformation in the psychological quality of the inner nature of man, the individual.

#### *Philosophers and Social Welfare*

What have the philosophers done in day to day helping in the politics of the state, in social welfare of the country, in the matter of housing and lighting, water pollution, sanitation and congestion? It is utterly strange that this species of mankind called philosophers

have been entirely aloof from the practical problem of day to day living of human beings. They are not moved to activity at all.

I went for a few minutes boating in the river Yamuna in Delhi. This was after fifteen years of absence from Delhi. The whole river was nothing but a bed of sewage water as if a whole township of man-holes have been let loose in one bed. I saw thousands of men and women bathing in it because it was auspicious day. I came back at once absorbed in my own thoughts. However, I at once wrote a letter to the health department. But, nothing of course will happen unless they receive a million letters. A few philosophers in the past have been diplomats for a short while and proved miserable failures. What have the philosophers of India thought, written or done about the Vietnam war, of the Israel-Egyptian war, the African conflict or the Cambodian War? It will not do just to leave these affairs of war and peace to the power-mad politicians. They are well reputed for their motives. Philosophers must tell the politicians the right things to do, and do it themselves to set an example. I know of only one or two philosophers of our time, viz., Bertrand Russell who as a renowned philosopher did something and thought and was moved by man and his problems. So was in a small measure, the Indian Philosopher, Humayun Kabir.

There are no less problems of peace to be tackled also. A glimpse at the daily newspaper will give any one hosts of problems to be tackled every day only if philosophers were a changed type of persons. Why should there be this kind of incompatibility and hostility between abstract thought and passionate action!

I think it is nothing but the philosophers' love of ease, comfort and non-involvement, his disinclination to be in the midst of dust and din. And yet he is so active in the matter of his promotion, salary, memberships to various bodies, examinerships that he deems no effort, howsoever servile, unworthwhile for him.

1. Bertrand Russell. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. xiv.
2. Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World* (Chicago and London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1929) p.31.
3. *Majjhima Nikaya I*, 483-488. *Source Book*, p.290
4. Mumford, *The Transformations of Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p.24 Italics mine.

Louis Gardet

Dr. Saksena's paper does throw light upon the crisis not only in Philosophy, but, so to say, in modern Western thought. He opposes "subjective" theology and the "objective" scientific attitude. Between the two, there is an indeterminate philosophy, called here philosophy of sciences or Positivism, and there philosophy of the subject or idealism. In this connection I am interpreting a little bit the distinctions put forth by Dr. Saksena, but I do not think I betray them. Then, the already long aged rupture between philosophers and scientists should not surprise us, and it is quite understandable that, to-day, some theologians, I say *some*, demand their instruments no longer to philosophy but to "human sciences". Philosophy, says Dr. Saksena, has ceased to be practical in as much as it does no longer direct human action, but has become *praxis* in the sense of *making* ("faire") and *made* ("fabriqué"). Truth is in the making (Marx, Hegel and even Heidegger); at the opposite, stands scientific research measured by verification and by the power upon things, not however by truth as such.

Is this irremediable? Do these dissociations adequately cover the deepest trend in Western thought? This is a matter that I would like to discuss with Dr. Saksena.

In contrast with these dissociative ruptures, he depicts the integrative power of Indian thought. There, philosophy, theology and spiritual life, merge in one search after salvation. If Dr. Saksena allows me, I would add: from the point of view of Christian philosophy we would say that Indian thought contains great metaphysical truths, but that its light should be said meta-philosophical rather than merely philosophical. Moreover, Indian thought is not theological in the sense given to that word in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three monotheistic religions which refer to a divine revelation in time. I should say that Indian thought, meta-philosophical as it is, is centered upon the realisation and the life of human spirit, the "self", considered in its power to transcend empirical contingencies. Thereby, it is "meta-mundane".

This is, it seems, what has been hinted at by Dr. Saksena in his conclusion when he summons philosophers from the East and from the West as well not only to give an answer to the fundamental questions on which man lives, but also to guide men down to the most concrete options to which they must commit themselves as man in order to achieve more justice and more peace,—let us say, to build for men as

inhabitable a city as it is possible.

It is in that perspective that I would like to submit a few questions to Dr. Saksena. "To distinguish to unite", according to the title of a work by my master and friend Jacques Maritain.—Is it certain that philosophy and theology are radically opposed to each other, the former being the work of discursive reason, the latter depending upon subjective options? An ancient tradition in Western Christian thought would, on the contrary, put them in continuity. "Human reason, given to us by God, is meant to know that which is." In relation to theology, philosophy provides great human truths; it is at once research-worker at the level of problematics and subservient to the "intelligence of faith". In relation to sciences, one of its functions is to reflect upon their methods, their object and their light; but this is not its only function! I would add that in relation to human sciences, which are only "sciences of observation" and which, therefore, require an hermeneutic, philosophy has also the task of situating them and interpreting them.

In my opinion, it is unfortunate that the great traditions of Indian thought, whose perspective have been clearly summarized by Dr. Saksena, have been in fact confronted with *one* particular Western philosophical view—a dissociative view—which may be the most conspicuous to-day, but is not the most authentic. Indian thought ought to be confronted with other philosophical views that are "views of wisdom"; and this, not to level all differences, for differences themselves could open more than one field of research. Let me refer to Dr. Olivier Lacombe's paper. Such a confrontation could perhaps initiate not only a fruitful dialogue, but also a common endeavour to promote the destiny of the whole of man, so much emphasised by Dr. Saksena. The destiny of the whole of man that includes his earthly task as well, can be promoted only by a true wisdom.

## R. V. De Smet

Dr. Saksena's paper falls readily into three parts: 1) an evaluative description of the present state of philosophy in the West; 2) a presentation of integrative features of Indian philosophy, and 3) an appendix suggesting that philosophers should try to remedy the ills of society.

In the first part, Dr. Saksena notes that men are guided by religious beliefs and scientific knowledge. But religious beliefs lack the objective value and rational appeal; they are practical but not always true. As for scientific knowledge, it is unconcerned with the meaning and purpose of life, and indifferent to moral values. It is true but not existentially practical. I may concede the second point but find the first rather caricatural. Dr. Saksena wonders then whether philosophy can fill this vacuum, i.e., be both true and existentially practical. Today, he says, philosophy is surrendering this claim. However, he remarks rightly that even in expressing this kind of scepticism, philosophers (Russell, for instance) actually trust their own reason and conscience. Furthermore, discontent with philosophy is justified only with regard to some varieties of philosophy. However, it remains true that philosophy in the West went from the practical to the useless and then to the nonsensical.

With regard to this description, it seems to me that it focusses exclusively on the prevalent trend of British philosophy and ignores many other living trends of philosophy today. Anyhow Dr. Saksena stands unreconciled with the situation of philosophy as seen by him. For it is not in keeping with the best tradition of philosophy and, besides, metaphysics is unavoidable though ever in need of revision and self-criticism.

Furthermore, the modern separation of various fields of human knowledge calls for the synoptical and integrative function of philosophy. Criticism of religious sciences and philosophy itself implies a basic trust in reason, and hence a hope that it may be possible to overcome the analytical separation of sense, reason and intuition. This has already been done in Psychology, and we should try to re-establish more integrative views in philosophy itself. This will be possible if philosophy is considered as a spiritual endeavour of the whole of a man's being, and if we cease to neglect the contribution of intuition and immediacy. Philosophy, he says, must include once again what it excluded when it separated from theology. It must also realise that if philosophical knowledge is to be the result of the whole of the integrat-

ed personality of a man, then the more perfect the soul of the knower, the purer his mind, sense, reason and heart, the greater will be the philosophical truth revealed to him. This may be said to be Dr. Saksena's main claim, and though unfashionable, it can hardly be disputed as a general proposition.

In the second part, Dr. Saksena reveals the source of his argument in sketching briefly the Indian view of philosophy. He centres it around the notions of suffering, liberation and *nishkāma karma* or disinterested action. Indian philosophy is certainly concerned with problems which are existentially practical even if its answers are not always practical to the same degree. It demands that the mind be also disinterested (*nishkāma citta*) that it be ethically conditioned. Dr. Saksena suggests that philosophical wisdom indeed demands many virtues but he passes perhaps too quickly from this to a demand for exactly those virtues that are required in the Indian tradition. Ultimately, he would request every philosopher to be a *yogī* and a *sañnyāsī*. More generally, it may be granted that Indian philosophy is practical, but it would be very difficult to accept without a further discussion the very terms of its fundamental problem viz. suffering (*duḥkha*) and *moksha*. Dr. Saksena has of course selected what he considers as most deeply representative of Indian philosophy. But the field of the latter is tremendously cast and varied, and the insights of its thinkers often present not only affinities but also conflicts. We then come back to the question of how to evaluate intuitions or how to harmonise them. Classical India devoted itself to that evaluation and discussion whereas modern India wishes to speak only in terms of unquestionable harmony. The point may be raised whether such an option is truly philosophical or akin to religious belief.

In short I feel deeply in sympathy with the essential claims of Dr. Saksena's paper, but find that his description both of Western and Indian philosophy may stand in need of discussion and revision.

John Hick

One of the themes of this International Seminar is the relevance of philosophy to the problems of the world today, and the possible contribution of the study of philosophy to human unity and world peace. The aspect of this theme that I wish to explore is the bearing of work in the philosophy of religion upon the developing relations between religious communities. These relationships have in the past been the scene of the fiercest and bloodiest of all human conflicts; and to a much reduced extent the borders between religious communities continue in many parts of the world to be flash-points of danger.

Most of us today would say that the tensions between, for example, Muslim and Jew in the Middle East, or Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland, or between Muslim and Hindu or Hindu and Sikh in the Indian subcontinent are really not tensions between religions but between political communities. They are a product of history, politics and economics rather than of theology. But nevertheless there is a religious component to these tensions, even if it shows itself more in the ways in which they are justified than in the ways in which they are caused. Religion is used, on both sides of these disputes, to justify and intensify a communal strife which has its real grounds elsewhere. But the vulnerability of the religions to this kind of exploitation depends upon presuppositions, some of which the philosopher of religion may find questionable.

It is an assumption built into all our languages that there are a number of entities called religions — Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhism being examples. And the problem usually thought to be posed by the fact of the plurality of religions can be expressed very simply in this way: If I had been born in India I would probably be a Hindu; if in Egypt, probably a Muslim; if in Ceylon, probably a Buddhist; if in the Punjab, probably a Sikh; but I was born in England and am, predictably, a Christian. And yet each of these religions claims in some sense to be true, or to tell the truth concerning the nature of ultimate reality and concerning man in relation to his total environment. If then what one of these religions says is true, must not what the others say be to an important extent false?

It was natural in the past, particularly within the semitic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to answer this question in the affirmative—adding that one's own faith is the true one and the others therefore false. But such a position contains within itself a fatal contradiction: one asserts that God is the God of the whole human

race, and desires the salvation of all men, and yet that salvation is to be found only within a single limited strand of human history. In the case of Christianity, for example, it has been claimed that all men must encounter the divine reality through the incarnate Christ; and yet the great majority of the human race have lived either before Christ or outside of Christendom. How can a God of universal love choose to save men in such a way that it is historically impossible for most of them to be saved?

If we (particularly we of the semitic faiths) abandon that traditional stance, as I think we must, the only sufficiently radical alternative seems to involve two closely related hypotheses: (1) The reality of a transcendent object of religious worship; which is unique, so that there is, and can be, only one such reality; which is infinite, and therefore exceeds all human concepts and categories of thought; but which may be known partially, and therefore imperfectly, by mankind; and such that our welfare and the attainment of our highest good depend upon our relationship to this divine reality; and (2) The religions of mankind all arise out of an awareness of the divine reality, which they know under different concepts and names, such as Brahman, God, Allah, Jahweh or perhaps, in Buddhism, a teleological structure of the universe culminating in Nirvana. These different understandings of the ultimate reality have then expressed themselves in appropriately different ways of living in relation to that reality.

On the face of it, these two hypotheses, taken together, generate a paradox, or at least a question. Given the uniqueness of the divine reality why is there not a correspondingly single human awareness of that reality? Why should the divine be apprehended so differently in different parts of the world?

It is, of course, possible to give a naturalistic answer to this question, based on the assumption that the divine is a figment of the human imagination. One could then relate the diversity of religious imaginings to the varying circumstances of human life and culture. But I should like to explore the possibility of a non-naturalistic answer which nevertheless fully recognises these linkages between man's religions and all the other circumstances of his existence. Such a non-naturalistic answer is to be found, I suggest, by starting from the actual phenomena of the religious life of mankind, observing how the diversity of faiths has in fact come about, and regarding this development as broadly reflecting the divine plan and intention.

We must begin, then, by noting that man is a religious animal. He has an innate tendency to experience his environment as religiously as well as naturally significant, and to feel required to live in it as such. This tendency is universally expressed in the cultures of primitive man, with his belief in sacred objects, endowed with *mana*, and in a multitude of spirits needing to be carefully propitiated. The divine

reality is here crudely apprehended as a plurality of quasi-animal forces. This represents of course only the simplest beginning of the later more developed awareness of the divine reality; but it is the beginning.

The next stage (at any rate in the Near East: in India the stages have been different) seems to have come with the coalescence of tribes into nations. The tribal gods were then ranked in hierarchies (some being amalgamated in the process) dominated by great national gods such as the Sumerian Ishtar, Amon of Thebes, Jahweh of Israel, Marduk of Babylon, the Greek Zeus, and so on. This world of tribal and national gods, generally martial and cruel and sometimes requiring human sacrifices, reflected the state of man's awareness of the divine at the dawn of documentary history, some three thousand years ago.

So far, the whole development can be described as the growth of natural religion. That is to say, primitive spirit-worship expressing man's fear of the unknown forces of nature in terms of an innate but inchoate sense of the divine, and the worship of national deities, concentrating and magnifying his fears of nature and of his fellow men, again in terms of the natural religious tendency of his mind, together represent the extent of man's religious life apart from special intrusions of divine revelation or illumination.

But sometime around 1,000 B.C. what has been called the golden age of religious creativity dawned. This consisted in a series of revelatory experiences occurring throughout the world, which deepened and purified men's conceptions of the divine, and which religious faith can only attribute to the pressure of the divine reality upon the human spirit. First came the early Jewish prophets, declaring that they had heard the Word of the Lord claiming their obedience and demanding a new level of righteousness and justice in the life of Israel. Then in Persia the prophet Zoroaster appeared; in Egypt there was the brief achievement of monotheism under the Pharaoh Amenhotep IV; Greece produced Pythagoras, and then Socrates and Plato; China produced Lao-tzu and then Confucius; and in India the Vedas and Upanishads were written and Gotama the Buddha lived. Then after a brief gap came Jesus of Nazareth and the emergence of Christianity; in India the writing of the Bhagavad-Gita; and after another gap, the prophet Mohammed and the rise of Islam.

It is important to note the situation within which these revelatory moments occurred. Communications between the different groups of humanity was then so limited that for all practical purposes men inhabited a series of different worlds. For the most part, people in South America, in Europe, in India, in Arabia, in Africa, in China, were each unaware of the others' existence. There were thus a multiplicity of local religions in which the divine reality was often pictured

as little more than a superhuman communal leader. Religion and culture were one. Accordingly the great creative moments of revelation and illumination influenced the development of the various cultures giving them the coherence and impetus to expand into larger units, thus producing the religious-cultural entities which we now call religions. For a religion, as an empirical unit that can be traced historically and mapped geographically, is a human phenomenon. Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and so on are human creations whose history is part of the wider history of human culture. In his important book *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1964) Wilfred Cantwell Smith, of Harvard University, traces the development of the concept of a religion as a distinct and bounded historical phenomenon, and shows that this notion, so far from being universal and self-evident, is a Western invention. It reached its modern form, in which we virtually equate a religion with a system of theological beliefs, in the seventeenth century. This notion of religions as mutually exclusive entities with their own characteristics and histories, although it now tends to operate as a habitual category of our thinking, may well be but another example of the illicit reification, the turning of good adjectives into bad substantives, to which the Western mind is prone and against which contemporary philosophy has armed us. In this case a powerful but false conceptuality has helped to create phenomena answering to it, namely the religions of the world seeing themselves and each other as rival ideological communities.

However, instead of thinking of man's relationship to the divine as something that naturally or properly occurs in mutually exclusive systems, perhaps we should see the religious life of mankind as a dynamic continuum within which certain major disturbances have from time to time set up new fields of force, of greater or lesser extent, whose movements have eventually solidified into our present pattern of world faiths. These major disturbances are the great creative moments in human history from which the distinguishable religious traditions have stemmed. Theologically, they are intersections of divine grace, divine initiative, divine truth, with human faith, human response, human enlightenment. They have made their impact upon the stream of human life so as to affect the development of cultures; and Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, are among the resulting historical-cultural phenomena.

We are aware, for example, within Christendom that Christianity has developed through a complex interaction between religious and non-religious factors. Christian ideas have been formed within the intellectual framework provided by Greek philosophy; the Christian church was moulded as an institution by the Roman empire and its system of law; the catholic mind reflects features of the Latin mediterranean temperament, whilst the protestant mind reflects

features of the northern Germanic temperament. And so on ; it is not hard today to appreciate the connections between historical Christianity and the continuing life of man in the western world. And of course parallel analyses are possible and have to some extent been developed in the case of each of the other world religions.

To see this is to be liberated from the insoluble but unreal problem of the relation between religions considered as rival systems of truth-claims. For we now see that it is not appropriate to speak of a religion as being true or false, any more than it is to speak of a civilisation as being true or false. The religions, in the sense of distinguishable religio-cultural streams within man's history, are among the many expressions of the diversities of human types, temperaments, histories and thought-forms.

Each of these religio-cultural complexes has then expanded until it touched the boundaries of another such complex spreading from another centre. Thus each major occasion of divine revelation has slowly transformed the primitive and national religions within the sphere of its influence into what we now know as a world faith. The early Dravidian polytheisms were drawn through the influence of the religious experience and thought of the Brahmins into what the West calls Hinduism—a term which, I take it, illustrates Cantwell Smith's thesis, since it does not refer either to a creed or to an organisation but simply to the religious life of India. The national cults of the mediterranean world and then of northern Europe were likewise drawn by influences stemming from the life and teaching of Christ into what has become Christianity. The early polytheism of the Arab lands has been transformed under the influence of Mohammed and his message into Islam. And so on. Thus the missionary expansion of the various world faiths has been mainly into the world of 'primitive' religion, and only to a minor extent and with slight success into territories dominated by other world faiths. Accordingly each of the great religions has gone through a period of geographical expansion followed by a continuing settled period within fairly stable boundaries. (For particular historical reasons—such as that the West was best equipped militarily and technologically to enter Africa when this continent became opened to the outside—Christianity went through a second moment of geographical expansion in the nineteenth century. Islam has now also entered Africa, with considerable effect.)

It is of course possible, as I have already acknowledged, to see this entire development from the primitive forms of religion up to, and including, the great world faiths as the history of man's most persistent illusion, growing from crude phantasies into sophisticated metaphysical speculations. But from the standpoint of religious faith, when that faith looks beyond the boundaries of its own particular tradition, the only reasonable hypothesis is that this historical picture represents at

least broadly a movement of divine self-revelation to mankind. This hypothesis then offers a general answer to the question of the relation between the different world religions and of the truths which they embody. It suggests to us that the same divine reality has been universally pressing in upon the minds of men and that the differences of human response are related to differing human circumstances. These circumstances—ethnic, geographical, climatic, economic, sociological, historical—have produced the existing differentiations of human culture, and within each main cultural region the response to the divine has taken its own characteristic form. In each case the post-primitive response has been initiated by some spiritually outstanding individual or succession of individuals (themselves of course conditioned by the culture to which they preach), developing in the course of time into one of the great religio-cultural phenomena which we now call the world religions. Thus Islam embodies the main response of the Arab peoples to the divine reality; Hinduism, the main (though not the only) response of the peoples of India; Buddhism, the main response in South East Asia; Christianity, the main response of the European peoples, both within Europe itself and in their emigrations to the Americas and Australasia. If this is so, the variety of understandings of the divine reality encompassed by these different faiths will be attributable to essentially the same human differences which have produced the varying cultures of these areas. The tracing of the links between the entire web of circumstances of human life within a given region and epoch, and the modes of religious belief and practice which have arisen there, offers a fascinating field of study which has so far only begun to be investigated.

But there is a further consequence of looking to history for our clue to the relation between the religions of the world. Historical situations are continually changing, and the change has already taken place from a multiplicity of cultures and religions developing in relative isolation from one another to the human world as a communicational unity. In this 'one world' of today new influences have been generated which affect our religious situation. They affect it, at present, however more for the philosopher of religion than for the simple believer whose religious life is still carried within the continuing current of his own particular tradition. Indeed as long as there is a rich variety of forms of human culture—and let us hope that there will always be this,—we should expect there to be correspondingly different forms of religious cult, ritual and organisation. And so long as there is a wide spectrum of human psychological types—and again let us hope that there will always be this,—we should expect there to be correspondingly different emphases between, for example, the sense of the divine as just and as merciful, between *karma* and *bhakti*; or between worship as formal and communal and worship as free and personal, between liturgy and

mysticism. Thus we may expect the different world faiths, as religious-cultural phenomena, to continue in their traditional forms, and also for each to continue to include within itself a wide range of varying emphases and local idiosyncrasies.

But for the religious philosopher the 'one world' situation creates a new task. If we take it that the confessional theologian's work is to articulate the religious beliefs of his community, then the work of the philosophical theologian or religious philosopher will be to seek to formulate (and of course continually to criticise and reformulate) a theology based, not upon the data of a particular tradition, but upon all the available data. If the religious life of mankind is a continuous field of relationship to the divine reality, diversified by a wealth of human factors, the philosophical theologian must try to include all forms of religious experience among his data and all forms of religious ideas among the hypotheses to be considered. His theology should take account of all human experience of the divine. For the varied but continuous field of the religious life of mankind demands unified theories of commensurate scope. These will not be Christian theologies, or Hindu theologies, or Islamic theologies, or Buddhist theologies, but human theologies, which are not sectional but global in their use of the religious data.

This is a philosophical task, though not one of the kind that is most popular today, at least in Britain and North America. For it involves the creation of metaphysical hypotheses, 'pictures' of the universe which will include among their data not only physical experience and the scientific theories based upon it, but also religious, moral and aesthetic experience, and the theological, ethical and aesthetic theories based upon them. For many years now, this kind of constructive speculation has remained almost entirely unpursued by philosophers trained, for example, at Oxford and Cambridge, or Harvard and Cornell. And if such work is to begin again it will have to proceed very differently from the way in which it went before the days of Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein and Vienna Circle. For it must involve a continual self-criticism at the level of precision made possible by the analytical work of the last fifty years. The move from many apparently conflicting ways of speaking about the divine reality, to a recognition of these as mutually compatible alternative languages, will be made possible — to the extent to which it does in fact prove to be possible — by a better understanding of the logic of each strand of religious discourse.

It may be helpful to end by mentioning an example of the kind of investigation that belongs, as it seems to me, to this first stages of metaphysical reconstruction. A fairly intensive process of philosophical criticism has been practised upon the religious concepts of the West, together with a firm confronting of these ideas with the deliverances of the sciences. But to a great extent this has still to be done in rela-

tion to distinctively eastern religious ideas. Let me take as an example the belief, very widespread in Indian religious thought, in reincarnation. A whole nest of questions arise. There is the question of the logical character of the belief. Is it a factual hypothesis? Is the belief in reincarnation open to verification if it is true, or to falsification if it is false; and if so, in what ways? If it is true, what experiences may we expect to have which we shall not have if it is not true? If it is false, what experiences may we have that will show it to be false?

Closely connected with this issue is that of the criteria of personal identity which are operating when we say of two people, one living say two hundred years ago and the other today, that the latter is the former reincarnated. Is it the conscious, memory-bearing personality that is said to be reborn? That this is intended is suggested by the appeal that is often made to the evidence of individuals who report memories of a previous life; and indeed India offers a number of well-known cases of this kind. This appeal indicates that for some the doctrine is, in a broad sense of the word, an empirical doctrine for which empirical evidence can be presented. As such it raises puzzles about its relation to modern genetics, which traces an individual's characteristics to his physical inheritance; and these puzzles might perhaps be met by the idea that the reincarnating soul consciously or unconsciously selects the parents who will provide the right inheritance. If this doctrine is applied to the entire human race it also raises a puzzle in relation to the population explosion. For the thought of the continual reappearance of a given number of souls seems to accord better with a comparatively stable world population than with the rapidly expanding population of the present century. However, no doubt there are ways of resolving this puzzle also.

However others seem to understand the doctrine as a metaphysical rather than as an empirical hypothesis. According to them it is not the present conscious 'me' that has lived before and will live again. Rather a transcendent metaphysical reality, of which I am not conscious, gives rise to a succession of personalities which are related to one another as different instruments of the same spirit. The question which this position provokes is whether as a doctrine of rebirth it has not become vacuous. John Locke, in the discussion of reincarnation in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, formulates the problem:

"Let any one reflect upon himself, and conclude, that he has in himself an immaterial spirit, which is that which thinks in him, and, in the constant change of his body, keeps him the same, and is that which he calls himself: let him also suppose it to be the same soul that was in Nestor or Thersites, at the siege of Troy (for souls being, as far as we know anything of them, in their nature indifferent to any parcel

of matter, the supposition has no apparent absurdity in it), but he now having no consciousness of any of the actions either of Nestor or Thersites, does or can he conceive himself the same person with either of them? Can he be concerned in either of their actions, attribute them to himself, or think them his own, more than the actions of any other man that ever existed? So that this consciousness not reaching to any of the actions of either of those men, he is no more one *self* with either of them, than if the soul or immaterial spirit that now informs him had been created and began to exist when it began to inform his present body, though it were never so true that the same spirit that informed Nestor's or Thersites' body were numerically the same that now informs his. For this would no more make him the same person with Nestor, than if some of the particles of matter that were once a part of Nestor were now a part of this man; the same immaterial substance, without the same consciousness, no more making the same person by being united to any body, than the same particle of matter, without consciousness, united to any body, makes the same person." (Bk. II, Chap. 27, para. 14)

It could be that the connection between, on the one hand, the notion of a transcendent spirit giving rise to a series of distinct personalities, and on the other hand, the notion of reincarnation, is so tenuous that the latter should be seen as a religious myth, comparable for example with the Christian myth of the fall of man from original perfection into sin and suffering. Such a myth seeks to render the present situation acceptable by attaching a pseudo-explanation to it: in the myth of the fall man's present imperfect state is attributed to a primeval fall from grace; in the myth of rebirth, present human inequalities are attributed to the *karma* of previous lives. The idea of the fall has had to be recognised as mythological because it finds no support in the increasing light thrown by modern anthropology upon the early state of man. It could be that the idea of rebirth will have to be recognised as mythological because it fails to deal adequately with the problem of personal identity.

However, I am not arguing here for this or any other conclusion concerning the concept of rebirth. I am making the point that this doctrine has to face the same battery of clarifying questions that has been directed by recent work in the philosophy of religion upon the Christian concept of God. And not only the idea of reincarnation, but all the major concepts of the religions of both east and west. When this process has gone far enough it may then be possible to begin to see to what extent the affirmations of the different theological traditions are capable of being understood as alternative ways of speaking about a single ultimate divine reality.

The suggestion of this paper, then, is (a) that it is reasonable today to hope for the expression of our human unity in an approach to

a common understanding of the divine reality (comparable with our common scientific understanding of physical reality); though such a common theological understanding will no doubt be compatible with a continuing plurality of religions as historico-cultural entities reflecting natural human diversities; and (b) that in the approach to such a common theological understanding a great deal of work is required, first critical and then constructive, in the philosophy of religion.

William D. Nietmann

Human unity is taken by Professor Hick to be an overriding good. Philosophy of religion can serve as a means for realizing this good. Therefore the (theoretical) philosophical work of formulating a viable global theology takes on an instrumental character. This kind of philosophical activity is indeed practical, according to Professor Hick.<sup>1</sup>

The lucidity of exposition and disarming straightforward espousal of a cause that speaks to our nobility makes me reluctant to be the one to call into question the rationalistic optimism that gives Professor Hick's paper its warm glow. I shall therefore invent two "fictional" recalcitrants who are neither partisans of reason as a source of solutions to human problems nor optimistic about human nature. To these imaginary rascals we shall give the names, Søren and Paul. First, a speech by Søren:

"The trouble with John", Søren tells us as he comments on Professor Hick's paper, "is that he does not practise what he preaches. How our theoretical hearts began to pound with excitement when, in repudiating the rationalistic account of religious diversity offered by philosophical naturalists, John declared that a non-naturalist answer could be found 'by starting from the actual phenomena of religious life'. But does he start from the 'actual phenomena'? Does he, for example, point us to the awareness of human finitude which generates the phenomena of religious life? Does he exhibit the helpless, hopeless, and worthless condition of each of us? Since he is so enamoured with the objective marks of religion, why did he not at least press home that most reliable of objective statistics, namely, that the death rate remains constant—at one a piece! It is our response—in despair or in trust—to our awareness of our finitude that is the human source of religious life. The response of trust, or faith, is always a risk for which there can be no objectivistic insurance; and here, too, in risk, is a source of religious phenomena which finds expression in the cry, 'I believe, help thou my unbelief!'

"But no; instead of starting with the 'actual phenomena of religious life' as he promises, John offers us speculations about 'divine plan and intention'. But he does not fool us with his bland talk about 'intersection of divine grace and human initiative', for we will not be put off by the substitution of rational fruits of religious life as though they were its existential roots."

Søren has much more to say, for he wants to point out that Professor Hick, although rightfully denying that religious life can be true or false, does so for a very wrong reason, namely, to dissolve the cultural relativism issue. Propositional claims made for religious truth may indeed be true or false, but in religion "truth is subjectivity", and it is for this reason that religious life is a-cognitive. But at this point we must interrupt Søren, for he wants to develop the difference between "subjectivity" and "subjectivism" — as though scholars of our sophistication would confuse them!

Paul's turn is next, and like other victims of predecessors who have taken more than their share of time, we must cut him short.

"John", admonishes Paul, "even so irenic a philosopher as you cannot devise a theology, global or otherwise, which does not owe its sanction to your own creativity; and who can be saved by his own creature? One is not saved by works, especially one's own! Moreover, announce your harmonizing, unifying global theology if you must, but don't be surprised to find many hundreds of colleagues, each rushing forward with his own harmonious, unifying 'word' enforced by his own sanctions, to displace yours. This fate would befall you even if you were God incarnate. 'Rational men of goodwill' cannot agree so long as the reason and will of each is his own. For there is in human beings an unwholesome perverse streak which gives the lie to your optimistic view of them. In my own case, more times than I care to admit 'the good that I would I do not and the evil that I would not, that I do, O wretched man that I am!'"

Although he has had his turn, Søren is back on his feet. "Did you hear him, John," he demands. "Here is another 'actual phenomena of religious life'. And what did you do with human perversity? You dismissed it as a Garden-of-Eden myth which can be cleansed from human nature by the intellectual exorcism you call demythologizing. How your rationalism has brain-washed you! For shame, John."

Since these observations of Søren and Paul are but imaginary remarks, an interesting question arises: if Professor Hick chooses to comment on them, will his comment likewise have to be an imaginary comment? Or perhaps before he can even begin to respond to this commentary he will need to demythologize it!

1. In passing, it is interesting to note that another colleague, Professor Saksena, takes a contrary view, for the latter doubts the adequacy of philosophical discipline to form beliefs which prompt social action. A dialogue between these colleagues would be instructive.

— Comments

*Margaret Chatterjee*

I find myself in very substantial agreement with what Professor Hick has said and what I say, therefore, must be taken as only supplementary, appreciation rather than criticism. He draws attention to the fact of religious plurality (reminding us that it is men who encounter each other and not religions as such), and explores the kind of understanding this demands of us all and of the philosopher of religion in particular. The paper has already been summarized. I will therefore raise a few questions that arise in the course of going through the text and then close by suggesting a few others.

The issue of religious truth is a most difficult one, especially for the man who adheres to one of the semitic faiths and who tends to find the faiths that other men live by falling outside what he understands by the truth. The radical alternative suggested by Professor Hick involves, if I understand him aright, the admission of the reality of a transcendent being, accessible as it were, not through one unique revelation but through many revelations (he has not used, perhaps advisedly, a phrase liked by a certain kind of Victorian theologian, 'progressive' revelation). The reason why man's understanding of such a reality varies so widely is found by him in the involvement of religion with culture which in turn varies in respect of time and place. About the inextricable connection of religion and culture there is no doubt and examples from this country could bring home the point vividly. After all, even our apprehension of natural objects varies from culture to culture (the Australian bushman surely sees the bush differently from the way the visiting tourist sees it). Relativism is a bogey only for the thing-in-itself type of metaphysician and religious diversity is a bogey only for the dogmatist. But I have some problems.

To begin with, stress on a transcendent object of religious worship seems to me to limit the area within which dialogue between men of different faiths can take place. I wonder, here I tread on dangerous theological ground, if transcendence *per se* is strictly compatible with infinity. The language of immanence (or rather its addition to the language of transcendence) might offer more opportunities for communication. To return to the crucial question of truth — I sympathize with the point that we should not speak of religions as rival systems of truth-claims. And yet he does use the phrase 'divine truth' and he does speak of the different world religions as "embodying" truths. Religious experience *qua* experience is some-

thing human. It is diverse and it has a history. At the same time it can be looked on a response to the divine initiative. I can follow at this point his shift from history and anthropology to a definitely theological stance. My question is at what point exactly the question of truth comes in. What kind of examples of 'truths' would we give. Would they be doctrines, dogmas? Or should we speak of truth as subjective, in the Kierkegaardian manner? For my part I would like to be able to retain the concept of religious truth. But for a different reason. I would like to be able to exclude the fanatic as being wrong, as pronouncing falsely, not as being "not quite correct" and not (needless to say) as being "wicked". But I have a serious philosophical problem on hand here as the fractional view of truth (the Hindu view) which most recommends itself to me, would seem to permit a modicum of truth to the man whom I might otherwise regard as being wrong (say, the man who is convinced 'God wants us to exterminate such and such a group of people'). The following clarification is possible. We may say, 'Truth is absolute but our understanding of it is always imperfect'. I wonder if we will not also have to say that all revelations are incomplete, for to be able to say this is the presupposition of being able to greet the man of another faith as a fellow-being who is in partial possession of the truth as I am. But incompleteness need not be synonymous with imperfection. Incompleteness is rooted in man's nature as a historical being. This historicity incidentally, which is built into the Semitic consciousness, and which Buddhism also can perhaps at a pinch contain, is difficult to fit into the Hindu view where the deepest ontological level is situated outside time.

I appreciate very much Professor Hick's idea of a philosophy of religion which draws on all the data (we may not be able to use the word 'theology' which he has used, since there are religions and substitute religions with no god). I like too the idea of alternative religious languages being cases of alternatives which are not contradictory but which are mutually compatible. The word 'compatible' would, I think need some analysis. Two religious languages (or sentences) may be compatible because they concern different areas of experience and so do not conflict. Or they may be compatible because they both affirm things which are not mutually exclusive. Or they may be compatible because they overlap at some point, or because they are on different levels—and there are no doubt other meanings of compatible as well as these. These various meanings need sorting out.

The critical part of the task of the philosopher of religion would in my view require scrutiny of belief, language, myth and practice. His own interesting example, that of reincarnation, would certainly seem to lead us to examination of each of these and to their interrelation, also to more metaphysical questions about fact and illusion.

This is a field where the philosopher of religion needs to encounter the social scientist. No generalization worth the name can be made without a base of case studies. The theologian has perhaps in the past not been sufficiently interested either in the many mansions in which the religious impulse dwells, or in the empirical evidence of belief—I am referring here to practice. For example, with reference to the latter, if case studies showed that Indian villagers regulated their day to day affairs without conscious reference to possible future existences I would be inclined to relegate the theory of reincarnation to philosophical treatises (where I suspect it belongs) rather than imagine that it plays any significant role in the mental make-up of people here in their day to day lives. I would set about finding out whether people in the so-called Bible-belt in America 'really' believed in hell in the same kind of way.

I would like next to suggest what I hope is an unnecessary caveat about the use of 'evolution', 'development' and 'growth' language in the study of the history of religions. We need, I think, if we are sincere pluralists, to regard the temporal succession of religious Blik in terms other than that of a movement from the primitive to the sophisticated. The historical approach tends to encourage a linear way of thinking but we would be better off with a one plane model where differences are plotted on a map rather than on a ladder. Let me illustrate. The nineteenth century evangelical Christian in England inhabited two landscapes concurrently, that of the land of Moses and Isaiah and the landscape of industrial England. The landscapes were completely diverse. The mythology of the first has for many people retreated far in time and memory in this century. The believer has retreated in one way and the unbeliever in another. The relation of the Hindu villager's beliefs to his particular mythological system and his environment is much more intimate than that of either the nineteenth or twentieth century Christian 'believer' was in the west. All these differences can be analysed and plotted horizontally. Primitivism and sophistication are matters of definition. Even deliberate demythologization is witness to its own myth. Here I would venture an aside with reference to something Professor Hick has said. There is immense scope for the analysis of concepts in the religions of India and the Far East. As far as Christian theology is concerned the demythologization campaign is a matter of recent history and of the present. I would throw out the suggestion that the history of religions in this part of the world already has a lot to show in respect not only of demythologization but of its recoil, i.e. deliberate mythologization, I am thinking especially of the history of Buddhism in countries like Burma and Tibet. We obviously have a lot to share with each other in tracing the decline and fall and resurgence of myth.

To turn to another point. We have been asked to consider the

theme of practice in our deliberations here. Reference has been made to the involvement of religious communities in conflict. Beliefs and mythologies would be harmless enough if they did not lead to practices which cause friction between man and man. Professor Hick has very rightly made mention of the political and economic factors that lie behind religious conflict, and this is as true of Ulster and the Middle East as it is of Orissa or of Gujerat. It is also a fact that some of the bitterest conflicts have taken place between men of the same faith who belonged to different denominations—I refer to the religious wars of the continent of Europe. It is also a fact that many people living in primitive tribal communities with what we may consider to be 'primitive' beliefs and practices live more harmoniously with each other than do members of more sophisticated societies. I would suggest that where alteration of religious beliefs and practices is needed in the interest of peace and progress the philosopher of religion should not retreat from this task—the task of disengaging the 'message' from its historic and 'dated' adjuncts. Lest I appear tendentious at this point I give three examples affecting three different religious communities where such clarification on the part of the philosopher of religion would be very helpful—contraception, cowslaughter and personal law.

Finally, recognition of plurality will, I think, rule out any type of convergence theory (such as that of Teilhard's Omega point) as it will likewise rule out the cruder types of universalism that plead that all religions are 'really' one. If this is so, the 'equipment' (this word must be pardoned) needed by the philosopher of religion may be pondered over. He will presumably be 'committed' to his own faith, but be in a position to 'entertain' those of others. One can entertain a proposition but can hardly 'entertain' a faith. So I imagine him to be undergoing a continuous process of self-education (as any scholar must) but of a particularly demanding kind, an education in understanding. He will dwell in a kind of cosmopolis of the human spirit and yet have a dwelling place of his own. Professor Hick has set before us a very high ideal but he has also indicated the kind of piecemeal work which seems to be the way towards it.

## I

## Introduction

Philosophy has been conceived differently by different philosophers and it is difficult to find anything common to all these conceptions. We analyse here a few views about philosophy in order to find out their essential features.

(i) Philosophy is the art of living a tranquil and serene life—it is a skill to be acquired by prolonged training and rigorous practice. There may be a theory behind this art, as there is one behind every act and that theory too may be called philosophy but only in a derivative sense. Too much concern with theory may be an impediment to attaining the practical goal in philosophy as elsewhere. So theorising is discouraged and the emphasis is on practice. Patanjali, for example, in his celebrated theory of the eightfold method for attaining *samādhi* which consists in arresting the movement of the mind, includes moral practices (like non-violence, speaking the truth, non-stealing, abstinence, cleanliness, contentment etc.), physical exercises (like physical postures, breath-control etc.), and exercises of attention (like concentration, meditation etc.). As a result of these practices, one attains a practical result. Patanjali, of course, asserts that these practices remove *avidyā* which is the root of all *klesas*, and ultimately lead to self-realisation, but this self-realisation is *automatically* achieved without any intellectual or cognitive activity. As soon as all movements of the mind are arrested, the self remains in its pure state and this staying in its pure state is what is meant by self-realisation. The point to be noted here is that although self-realisation is really a state of pure self-consciousness, yet in order to achieve this no specifically cognitive activity is needed. As a matter of fact, according to Patanjali even knowledge about empirical objects can be attained without any cognitive activity. Thus in giving details of the results of the various exercises, Patanjali mentions that by meditating on the sun, we attain knowledge about the world, by meditating on the navel we attain direct knowledge of the state of the body, by concentrating on the heart we attain direct knowledge of the mind — of our own as well as of others. But the results of all types of concentration are not cognitive; for example, by concentrating on the throat, we get rid of thirst and hunger, but do not attain any knowledge of objects, empirical or non-empirical. Thus concentration sometimes yields

knowledge sometimes non-cognitive powers. The knowledge attained through concentration on specified parts of the body or on special objects, although empirical, is still extra-ordinary in the sense that ordinary people do not have this type of knowledge. This type of knowledge is empirical, not in the sense of being derived from sense-experience, but in the sense of being about spatio-temporal objects.

(ii) The Hegelians conceive philosophy as a form of knowledge, indeed, as the highest form of knowledge, a sort of super-science which is superior to science, just as science is superior to common sense. This highest knowledge is at once immediate and rational, all-comprehensive and concrete. Now reason has two aspects — a theoretical and a practical one. Kant, although admitting the unity of reason, still made a distinction between the pure theoretical reason and the pure practical reason. A cognitive act according to Kant, is an act of the theoretical reason and cannot be identified with a moral action which is the function of the practical reason. But according to the Hegelians this distinction is not ultimately valid. For any one who attains philosophical knowledge also attains moral perfection. Now, it is not clear whether this identification is achieved only at the highest level or is present at lower levels also. For apparently, being moral, i.e. performing moral actions and moral actions only, is not a way of knowing. It is not clear how at the highest stage morality and knowledge become identical. Reason which is the synthesis of sense and understanding in the sphere of knowledge seems to effect a harmony in the moral life of a person so that a philosopher necessarily leads a morally perfect life. This relation between theoretical knowledge and moral perfection needs to be explained; we may ask, for example: Is every morally perfect man a philosopher, i.e. does he possess the supreme knowledge of the Absolute which is the unity of subject and object, matter and mind which is, indeed, the highest synthesis? or, is philosophising a way of becoming moral?

(iii) The linguistic analysts deny that philosophy is knowledge; they identify philosophy with a particular method of thinking. To 'do philosophy' is to practice analysis which dissolves, rather than solves, the philosophical puzzles. The goal of analysis is thus a practical goal — getting rid of the philosophical puzzles which trouble the mind. Philosophical analysis is claimed to have a therapeutical value comparable to that of psycho-analysis. (Indian philosophers in general go a step further and claim that philosophy not merely rids the mind of puzzles, but puts an end to all types of worries, indeed, to all suffering.) The problem is: How can analysis achieve this practical result? The analysts say that the puzzles arise only when the rules of language are violated; and if we realise this by practising analysis of the philosophical problems, then we shall cease to ask these

questions. That is, the mere knowledge that the puzzles are due to a mistaken use of language suffices to put an end to all philosophical questioning. The reason for this is that we cannot be genuinely puzzled by knowingly misusing language. No further explanation seems to be necessary; yet as we shall see, much clarification and even theorising will be necessary to explain this point.

(iv) The phenomenologists, too, identify philosophy with the phenomenological method, rather than with any particular result. The essence of this method consists in effecting a change in consciousness, in the common sense attitude to the world. To philosophise is not to theorise, but rather to 'see' the objects in an essentially different way. The method of reduction involves suspension of belief in the existence that accompanies our everyday life and scientific thinking. Now this is not merely an intellectual act, but involves self-discipline for to suspend existential beliefs is to withdraw our commitment to them, to stop identifying ourselves with such beliefs. This ultimately amounts to a total transformation of the personality of the individual comparable to a 'religious conversion'. Yet it is not clear whether phenomenologically reduced consciousness is morally perfect. In religious conversion it is the moral life which is primarily transformed, a religious person is necessarily morally perfect, but does not appear to necessarily possess philosophical knowledge, whereas phenomenological reduction makes one a philosopher. Husserl, of course, has claimed that phenomenological reduction goes even beyond religious conversion and "has the significance of the greatest existential conversion that is expected of mankind" (Husserliana VI, 140; quoted by Spiegelberg. *The Phenomenological Movement*, Vol. I, p. 136, fn I). Yet the nature of this has not been revealed. Hence phenomenology has sometimes tended to become an esoteric practice not amenable to the uninitiated.

(v) The existentialist philosophers have emphasised the role of the self in experience. The self which tends to be overlooked and forgotten in the scientific attitude comes to the forefront in the realisation of crisis. It is only when we are deeply engaged, when we are in the world in the fullest sense, that *Dasein* is revealed. But if the function of philosophy is merely to make us aware of our authentic existence, then it does not involve any fundamental change in our personalities comparable to that of conversion. It merely restricts our tendency to escape into a world of abstractions and imaginations, to avoid responsibility for our choice and to conform mechanically to social and ethical standard.

This brief survey of some concepts of philosophy shows that philosophy always involves a change in our consciousness, i.e. has a practical aspect according to all these views. Their difference lies in the appraisal of the nature of the change brought about

by philosophy. Yoga and other systems of Indian Philosophy claim a total transformation of personality and cessation of all suffering as effects of philosophy; Hegel seems to come very close to such a theory claiming for philosophy the power to produce moral perfection in man; analytic philosophers claim only a limited therapeutic value for philosophy; Husserl claims a 'total personal transformation' as a prerequisite, not a consequence, of philosophy; but the nature of this transformation and its method remain yet to be explained; the existentialists urge us to eschew the palliatives of either socially directed responses or intellectualised acts in favour of responsibility and to live authentically.

The main problem which remains to be solved is:

(i) How does philosophical knowledge produce a practical change in our consciousness or a personal transformation?

We shall not discuss the problem we found in Patanjali's theory—How can concentration produce sometimes cognitive, sometimes non-cognitive results? Patanjali himself states these results without offering any explanation and it is difficult for us either to dispute the truth of these statements, or to justify them.

We shall explain and examine two types of answers to this question, namely, that given by the Nyāya system and that given by Advaita Vedānta. As both these systems explain their answers only by explaining the nature of self-knowledge, we shall have to understand their theories of the self, the inner sense, the nature of false cognitions and wrong notions and the nature of knowledge.

## II

### *The Nyāya Theory*

Nyāya postulates the existence of two types of selves: one supreme self which is identified with God, and a plurality of finite selves. Both these kinds of selves are conceived as substances possessing consciousness as a quality. Not merely the supreme self but even finite selves are eternal and omnipresent; the supreme self differs from the other kind of selves in being omnipotent and omniscient. By 'omnipotence' is meant not 'the power to create everything', but only 'the power to create whatever can be created'. The supreme self creates the universe, keeps it in existence so long as it exists, and then destroys it—all by one act of will. There is no need to postulate different acts of willing in the supreme self. This one act of will which is postulated is, of course, eternal. Just as one act of will is directed towards all created objects, so also the omniscience which is postulated in the supreme self is one eternal state of knowledge about everything. Although the supreme self and its consciousness or knowledge are both eternal, yet they are not identical. The self is never identical with consciousness.

Every finite self is eternal and also omnipresent. It is not identical with consciousness, nor is it essentially conscious. Consciousness is only an accidental quality of finite selves. A finite self happens to possess consciousness only when the following conditions are fulfilled: (a) In order to be conscious a finite self has to possess a body; (b) the self has to be related to the inner sense in a characteristic manner; (c) consciousness is always of some object. Let us explain these conditions.

(a) Every finite self is omnipresent. If in order to have consciousness or knowledge, a relation between the self and the object be sufficient, then every finite self being present everywhere will be related to everything and hence would have knowledge of everything i.e. every finite self would be omniscient. But it is not omniscient, so, at least one more condition is necessary for consciousness. Moreover, consciousness is experienced to occur in the self as associated with the body, no one experiences that his knowledge belongs to the self beyond his body.

Now it may be objected that so far as the facts of consciousness are concerned, the finite self is not omnipresent. What do we gain by saying that the self is present everywhere, if we have to admit that consciousness belongs to the self as limited within the body? In order to understand the Nyāya position, it is necessary to know the Nyāya theories of eternal entities, and perception of things and their attributes.

According to Nyāya if a thing is eternal, it cannot be composite. For if a thing is composed of parts, then it is always possible for the parts to fall apart destroying the whole which, therefore, cannot be eternal. Nyāya postulates two types of simple entities, atoms (of earth, air, water and fire), and infinite substances. Infinite substances are necessarily eternal, and hence cannot be composite. Now every self is eternal; hence it must be either atomic or infinite. It cannot be an atom, for an atom cannot be perceived whereas a self is perceived in introspection. No attributes of atoms can be perceived, but we all internally perceive our happiness, sorrow and other internal states of the self. So the self is not an atom, yet it is eternal. Hence it must be infinite in magnitude, i.e. must be present everywhere.

Consciousness according to Nyāya is the same as cognition. The other states of the self, namely, feeling and willing, are not conscious states. But when they occur in the self they are immediately followed by their introspective awareness. So for all practical purposes, there is no feeling or willing which goes unnoticed. But this introspective awareness of feeling or willing is not identical with the feeling or the willing.

Consciousness is neither the essence of the self nor is it identical with the self. In deep dreamless sleep we are wholly unconscious.

This would be impossible if the self were identical with consciousness, or if consciousness were the essence of the self. The problem for Nyāya is, then, how to explain the nature of our cognition—that we slept well—which we have on getting up from sound sleep. According to Advaita Vedānta this cognition is memory, i.e. we remember on getting up from sleep that we slept well. But this memory will be impossible if we did not have direct consciousness of sleeping well, i.e. if we did not have experience of sleep during sleep. This implies that we are conscious even during deep sleep. But according to Nyāya this is impossible; we can never remember that we slept well. How then can we ever say that we slept well? According to Nyāya this is an inference, not memory. We infer that we slept well from the feeling of freshness etc., which we have when we get up from sound sleep. If the self is thus unconscious in deep sleep, then there must be some other condition of consciousness than the body. For even when we are asleep, both the self and the body remain, still we are unconscious. This brings us to the Nyāya concept of inner sense (*manas*, or *antaḥ-karāṇa*).

(b) The concept of inner sense as distinct from the self is common to many systems of Indian philosophy. The inner sense, according to Nyāya as according to all systems which admit its existence, is material in nature. According to Nyāya it is also an atom. The function of the inner sense is necessary not merely for introspection, but for cognition, i.e. consciousness as such. In deep sleep, although the inner sense is there, yet it is not characteristically related to the self, does not perform any function and is at rest. This is why in such sleep there is no consciousness even though the self as restricted by the body is there.

The inner sense, according to Nyāya, must be an atom, not a composite, spread-out substance. For in that case it would have been related to the self at more than one point, thus giving rise to more than one cognition at the same time. But according to Nyāya only one cognition can originate in the self at one time. Sometimes we seem to have different cognitions at the same time, but according to Nyāya this is an illusion. What actually happens is that different cognitions quickly succeed one another producing in us the illusion of simultaneity.

(c) Consciousness is always directed towards some object. As we have already remarked, consciousness according to Nyāya is cognition. Non-cognitive mental states like willing are unconscious states; they can be directed towards objects only through some cognitive state. Thus desire can be directed towards an object only because desire for an object involves the belief that the object is good, and that the object is attainable by me. These beliefs being cognitions have their objects, and the desire is directed to these objects of belief

in a secondary sense. Only cognitions are directed towards objects in the primary sense.

This directedness towards objects takes different forms corresponding to the different forms of cognition. In perceptual knowledge, there is a real relation between three entities: (i) the self and the inner sense, (ii) the inner sense and the sense organs, and (iii) the sense organs and the objects perceived. We should note here that Nyāya does not find any difficulty in holding that the self can be directly related with material substances, like the inner sense. This threefold relation between the self and the object of perception is, of course, completely different from the epistemological relation of the knowledge to the object. Nyāya makes a distinction between the relation of the knower and the known and the relation between knowledge and its object. This is possible because according to Nyāya the self is not identical with consciousness, hence the relation of the self to the object is also different from the relation of the cognition to its object. Here we shall be concerned primarily with the relation of the cognition to its object. Single objects are known according to Nyāya in a way roughly akin to what Russell calls 'knowledge by acquaintance'. Here the knowledge is related to its object in one way which is completely different from the way in which knowledge of an objective complex is related to the complex. According to Nyāya all ordinary cognitions are of relations holding between two terms. Thus when I see a jar, the knowledge is not of the single entity, but of the objective complex, the jar, the universal jariness, and their relation. So the objective complex can be schematically represented by 'aRb'. The first term of the relation known (here, *a*) is the *viśeṣya* of the knowledge, the second term, *b*, is the *viśeṣaṇa* or *prakāra* of the knowledge. When we know a complex whole, then although there is one knowledge in the self, still this one knowledge is related to the different elements of the objective whole in different ways. The knowledge is related to the first term of the relation known, i.e. to *a*, in one way (*viśeṣyata sambandha*), to the second term, *b*, in another way, *viśeṣaṇata* or *prakārata sambandha*, and to the relation itself, i.e. to R, in a still different way (*saṃsargata sambandha*). Conversely, the first term of the objective complex, i.e. *a*, is related to the knowledge in one way (*viśeṣyita sambandha*), the second term, *b*, is related to the knowledge in another way (*prakārata sambandha*) and the relation is related to the knowledge in a still different way (*saṃsargita sambandha*). Thus the converse of *viśeṣyata* is *viśeṣyita*, of *prakārata* *prakārata*, and of *saṃsargata* *saṃsargita*. Apart from these three relations and their converses, there is the fourth type of relation between knowledge and its object when the knowledge is acquaintance. Nyāya admits further types of complex cognitions involving relations of second order (*viśiṣṭa-vaiśiṣṭa buddhi*). In this type of knowledge we know that something as related by a certain

relation to a second term is further related to a third term by another relation. For example, when we know a man wearing a red coat, we know that the coat which is related to the red colour is again related to the man who wears it. But in this type of higher order knowledge, no new type of relation is involved between the knowledge and the object.

Now we come to the Nyāya theory of bondage and liberation. A man in bondage suffers pain, liberation is the cessation of pain for ever. In deep sleep there is no suffering, but deep sleep is not liberation because the painless state ends when we wake up. According to Nyāya consciousness of objects is a necessary precondition of suffering. We suffer because we do not get the desired object, and desire for an object is caused by a cognition of objects together with other conditions. Thus objective consciousness is a necessary condition of desire, and desire is a necessary condition of suffering. Thus to be free from suffering it is necessary to destroy objective consciousness. But as according to Nyāya consciousness is consciousness of objects, to remove objective consciousness is to become totally unconscious. Thus in the state of liberation the self becomes totally unconscious. We have already explained the Nyāya theory that a precondition of consciousness is the relation of the self with the inner sense. This relation is due to our ignorance of the true nature of our own selves. If we realise that the self is altogether different from the body, from the sense organs including the inner sense, then the self will cease to be related with the inner sense and thus cease to be conscious, and will escape suffering. We are ignorant about the true nature of the self, because we have wrong notions of the following objects: (i) the self, (ii) the body, (iii) sense organs, (iv) sensory qualities, (v) cognition, (vi) the inner sense, (vii) good and bad deeds, (viii) desire and aversion, (ix) rebirth, (x) suffering (xi) pain and (xii) release. About these objects various types of false beliefs are usual. For example, about the self one may believe falsely that there is no self, or that the self is identical with the body, and so on. If all these beliefs are destroyed, the self stays in its pure state, without pain, and also without happiness and consciousness. These false beliefs are destroyed by knowledge about these objects and primarily of the self.

Now we come to the Nyāya explanation of how false beliefs are destroyed or rendered ineffective by knowledge. Nyāya does this by its theory of preventing (*pratibandhaka-pratibādhyā-bhāva*). According to Nyāya cognitions of a particular form are prevented from occurring by cognitions of another form. We have to note here at the outset that this relation of prevention obtains only between cognitions, beliefs, knowledge etc. only so long as they are actual states of the self, but do not belong between mere dispositions. We have already noted that the analytic philosophers of ordinary language hold that

It is impossible to be puzzled by knowingly misusing language. But the term 'knowledge' is used by them only in a dispositional sense. It is not a fact that a mere disposition can prevent us from misusing language and being genuinely puzzled. There is, for example, a controversy among philosophers whether any one can think or believe in self-contradictory propositions. Eric Toms says: "That an object may be said, or *even believed* both to have and not to have a certain property, every one knows to be possible, alas! Thus there is no problem about the actual occurrence of contradictions in language" (Being, Negation and Logic, p. 3; italics mine). Arthur Pap, on the other hand, argues thus: "Thus explicitly self-contradictory sentences do not express anything that could possibly be believed; that there are round squares, for example, is not something that could possibly be believed, and the impossibility is not just *psychological*. That somebody should believe both (and at the same time) p and not-p is itself a contradictory supposition. The frequent claim that people, alas, are capable of holding self-contradictory beliefs notwithstanding, the statement 'X believes at t that p and not-p' is itself self-contradictory" (Semantics and Necessary Truth, p. 173; author's italics). According to Nyāya this controversy can be easily solved. When any one believes that p and also believes that not-p, at least one of the beliefs has lapsed into a disposition; that is, one has forgotten that one believes that p or not-p. Pap uses the term 'belief' not in the sense of a disposition but in the sense of an actual mental state. This is clear from his emphasis on 'believing at t', and 'believing at the same time'. If 'belief' or 'believing' is used in a dispositional sense, then one can, and very often does, hold self-contradictory beliefs. Thus according to Nyāya both Toms and Pap are right, only Toms uses the term 'believe' in a dispositional sense, whereas Pap uses it in an episodic sense. Nyāya uses the terms 'cognition' ('cognition' and 'consciousness' are synonyms) 'belief', 'knowledge' etc. only in their episodic sense. For dispositions they use other terms, like 'traces' etc. Every actual mental state, cognitive or non-cognitive, has three moments, of origination, of duration and of cessation. Nyāya bases its theory of prevention on the moments of origination and duration. We may note here the following points.

(i) When one cognition originates it prevents the origination of any other cognition. In the case of introspective cognition of a first order cognition of objects, the objective cognition first originates, then passes into its second phase of duration; it is only then that the second order introspective cognition originates. Thus when the introspective cognition comes into being the first order cognition endures, and hence is directly known in introspection. But the two cognitions cannot originate at the same time, and cannot endure at the same time.

(ii) Nyāya then calculates the strength of the conditions of

different types of cognition. In every moment of waking life, there are conditions which *can* produce perceptual knowledge; i.e. the conditions which suffice to produce perceptual knowledge are always present. Yet we have other types of cognition, inferential, memory etc. This means that when we have inferential cognition, the conditions which suffice to produce this cognition prevail over the conditions for perception of some object or the other. For as we have already seen the conditions of perception are always present, so whenever we infer or have a different type of cognition, the conditions of inference etc. have to prevail over the conditions of perception. For example, when I infer that there is a man in the next room, instead of performing this act of inference I could have perceived the table in the room where I am sitting. As conditions sufficient for perceiving some object or the other are always present, these conditions have to be subjugated if we are to have any other type of cognition. Here Nyāya gives the following rule: In the case of the same objective complex the conditions of perception *normally* prevail over conditions of other types of cognition; in the case of different objects, the conditions of inference prevail over the conditions of perception. Let us explain this rule.

According to Nyāya we can know the same objective complex in different ways. For example, we can know that there is fire on the hill by perception, by inference, or even by hearing words spoken by others. Suppose we are standing in front of the hill from where we can perceive that there is fire on the hill, and also from the perception of smoke we can infer that. When conditions for perception and inference are thus simultaneously present, normally we shall have the perceptual knowledge. But if we *want to infer*, then we shall have the inferential knowledge, not perception. The desire to infer what can at the same be perceived will produce the inferential knowledge. When this desire to infer is not operative, i.e. is not an actual mental state, then we shall have the perceptual knowledge. But when sufficient conditions for perceiving an object are present, and also sufficient conditions for inferring a *different* objective complex are present simultaneously, it is the inference which will always take place, not the perception. Suppose I am standing in front of the hill, and sufficient conditions for the perception of the hill are present, and also sufficient conditions for inferring that there is fire on the hill are present at the same time; then according to Nyāya, I shall not see that this is a hill, but shall have the inferential knowledge that there is fire on the hill.

(iii) Now we come to the theory of cognitions of contradictory propositions. The question here is: Supposing that I have a cognition that S is P, can I also cognise that S is not P? When will one cognition prevent the occurrence of the cognition of a contradictory proposition? Thus here there are two cognitions; one preventing

cognition, the other the prevented cognition, i.e. the cognition which is prevented from occurring or originating. Nyāya enumerates the different characteristics of the preventing and the prevented cognitions of contradictory propositions.

Characteristics of the cognition which is prevented from occurring :

- (i) The cognition can be either true or false.
- (ii) It may or may not be attended with belief.
- (iii) It must not be a supposition.
- (iv) It must not be an ordinary perception, or an illusory perception due to any psycho-physical defect.
- (v) The cognition must have as its object a complex of the form 'aRb'. Characteristics of the preventing cognition :—
  - (i) The cognition must be attended with belief.
  - (ii) It may be either true or false; if false, it must not be known to be false.
  - (iii) It must not be a supposition.
  - (iv) It must be about the proposition which is contradictory to the proposition cognised by the prevented cognition.

Let us now explain these characteristics.

We first note that we are dealing here with cognitions of contradictory propositions only. A mere supposition of a proposition can neither prevent nor be prevented by a cognition of the contradictory proposition [characteristic (iii) of both]. If we suppose that S, is P, then this supposition even when it endures as an actual mental state cannot prevent us from cognising or even knowing that S is not P. So also even if we know that S is P, even this knowledge will not be able to prevent us from supposing that S is not P. The supposition, in this case, will be a contrary-to-fact supposition. Then an illusory perception cannot be prevented from occurring by any cognition of the contradictory proposition. For example, if we are suffering from jaundice, then even though we know (in the episodic sense of 'know') that the wall is not yellow, yet we shall see that the wall is yellow. Thirdly, the preventing cognition can be either true or false, but it must not be known to be false. Suppose that it is false that S is P, but we firmly believe that S is P. This firm belief (when it is an actual mental state) will prevent us from knowing the truth that S is not P. But if we know that our belief is false, then of course, we shall no longer hold it, i.e. shall withdraw our conviction in it; then this cognition which has been known to be false will not be able to prevent the occurrence of any cognition of the form 'S is not P'.

These are the three ways in which, according to Nyāya, the occurrence of a cognition can be prevented. Now let us see how the knowledge about the true nature of the self destroys the false cognitions about it, and thus liberates the person who has it.

Suppose, we who are in bondage believe firmly that the self is identical with the body. This is a false cognition which has to be cured by knowledge of the self as it really is. Suppose also that the self is not really identical with the body. Destroying the false cognition that the self is identical with the body means nothing but preventing the occurrence of this cognition in the self permanently. The method prescribed by Nyaya to achieve this result is this. First of all, we have to learn from someone who knows that the self is not really identical with the body. Then we shall have to strengthen our belief in it by argument, and finally know the truth. Then we shall have to constantly meditate on this truth. Meditating on it is nothing but keeping the knowledge of truth constantly in mind; any one who desires liberation cannot afford to forget the truth even for a moment. The knowledge of the truth must not lapse into a disposition, for as a disposition it will not be able to prevent the false cognition from occurring and deluding us. When the false cognition has thus been blocked from occurring, meditation on the truth results in illumination or intuition of the truth. Thought collapses yielding place to an immediate apprehension of truth. This immediate apprehension of the real nature of the self may be called self-realisation. Ordinary men do not have self-realisation, because even though they know that the self is not really identical with the body etc., still most of the time they forget it, and behave as if the contradictory were true. But Nyaya goes a step further and claims that this intuitive knowledge of the self is not the final stage, but is the penultimate stage leading automatically to the cessation of all consciousness and suffering. For consciousness which is due to the relation of the self to the inner sense ceases as soon as this relation is broken. The relation which is due to false cognition is destroyed by the intuitive knowledge of the nature of the self etc. If this state of unconsciousness be the state of self-realisation, then it is not a state of knowledge. Self-realisation as a state of knowledge has the following characteristics :—

- (i) It comes as the culmination of intellectual and rational activity, like arguing, inferring etc.
- (ii) It is a constantly actual mental state, which is not allowed to lapse into a disposition.
- (iii) It is held with the greatest conviction.
- (iv) It transforms the entire personality of the individual by completely dissociating the self from the body, the sense organs, the inner sense etc. This it can do only because the self's association with the body is due to false cognitions about the nature of the self, the body etc. And this ignorance is beginningless, though it ends with the attainment of liberation.

Finally we note the following points about the Nyāya theory of liberation :

(i) The process of liberation is a personal process; when a person is liberated it is his personality which is totally transformed, but nothing else in the universe is affected. For although the self can be associated with the inner sense, the sense organs and the body, and can have objective cognitions only because it is ignorant, still this transcendental ignorance which is at the very root of objective consciousness, cannot in any way affect the knowledge of the reality of other objects of the world. This transcendental ignorance makes one ignorant only about the twelve objects listed above, and this ignorance about these objects is the cause of bondage. When one attains liberation he is rid of the wrong notions, but this does not mean that all objects have been wrongly cognised, or that the entire world is unreal. Objective consciousness is destroyed, but not the objective world.

(ii) Nyāya has therefore no difficulty in explaining how if one person is liberated, others remain in bondage. For when a person is liberated, there has been a transformation only within himself, others remain unaffected by his transformation.

### III

#### *The Theory of Advaita Vedānta*

According to Advaita Vedānta, the self is identical with pure consciousness which is not essentially related to any object, for it cannot be really related with anything. It is eternal and beyond all change, and is the highest reality. Empirical consciousness, however, is of objects. In order to explain the nature of empirical consciousness it becomes necessary for Advaita Vedānta to introduce some principle which will explain what cannot be a real relation. This is sought to be done by *māyā*. Thus every knowledge of objects, as distinct from the pure, transcendental consciousness, is based on a transcendental illusion. Owing to this transcendental illusion the self-shining consciousness is 'reflected' in the inner sense. This inner sense is, according to Advaita, material, being an evolute of *māyā*, and is spread out, and hence can assume modes which are images of objects. The inner sense with consciousness reflected in it is the empirical self. This reflection of consciousness in the inner sense is due to the transcendental illusion, i.e. a false identification of the transcendental self with the material, unconscious inner sense. According to Advaita Vedānta, in perception of an external object the inner sense goes out to the object through the outlet of the sense organ and assumes the shape of the object with which the sense organ is in contact. This shape or modification of the inner sense is the *vṛtti* of the *antaḥkāraṇa*. This mode is illumined by consciousness and is known. This means that the relation between consciousness and the external object is mediated on both the sides. Consciousness itself is not related with the object, only the inner sense which is illumined by consciousness is thus related. But again it is

not the object itself which is related to consciousness as reflected in the inner sense, but only its image in the inner sense which is directly illumined by consciousness. Thus the inner sense acts as the medium where the subject and the object meet.

Now we come to an analysis of the subject-object relation when the object is internal. According to Advaita Vedānta, only external objects need to be copied by the inner sense in order to be presented to consciousness, but the copies themselves are known directly by the witnessing consciousness. The copy theory of knowledge will lead to an infinite regress if the copies themselves have to be copied in order to be known. So the witnessing consciousness is postulated which can and does know the internal states without the mediation of images.

This witnessing consciousness which is sometimes the direct awareness of the internal states is also objectless at times. Thus in deep dreamless sleep there is consciousness of sleep, but there is no object of consciousness. For even the internal states do not arise in deep sleep. This direct awareness is independent of the images and witnesses the passing away of one image and the origination of a new image. The images succeed one another, they are discrete, yet the finite self even in its finitude is a unity. There is a consciousness behind the changing states of the inner sense which remains unaffected by the change and knows everything that goes on in the mind. No one can deceive this consciousness which is the witness of all our mental states.

The witnessing consciousness reveals not merely the mental states but all objects either as known or as unknown. This is why when one knows a new object for the first time, he has the feeling that he is knowing an object hitherto unknown to him. This is possible only because the object was not merely unknown to him, but was known to be unknown to him. The knowledge that the object was unknown to him is the function of the witnessing consciousness.

Now if the witnessing consciousness reveals everything, subjective and objective, is infallible and unerring, then how is it that a finite individual still remains ignorant of the true nature of the self? We have already seen that Nyāya also faces the problem of explaining why a finite individual should not be omniscient. This problem arises in Nyāya because Nyāya conceives a finite self as omnipresent, and to solve this problem Nyāya had to postulate a special function of the body in the production of knowledge. Now Advaita Vedānta admits that the witnessing self is omniscient in a sense, for it has direct knowledge of everything. But this direct knowledge is not sufficient to make one omniscient in the true sense of the term. Omniscience should cancel all ignorance, but the type of omniscience which the witnessing consciousness enjoys cannot do this. Ignorance, according to Advaita Vedānta, is not mere absence of knowledge, but is false

cognition. This false cognition can be cancelled only by a true cognition which involves modes of the inner sense. We have seen that the witnessing consciousness is direct consciousness which does not involve any mode of the inner sense. Hence it is incapable of cancelling ignorance. In order to attain liberation it is necessary to have an image of the ultimate reality i.e. a mode of the inner sense. This is the last mode which the inner sense presents to the consciousness of the finite individual. This awareness of the ultimate reality which is identical with the transcendental subject cancels maya, the principle of finitude, and the individual is liberated.

*Comparison of the Nyāya and the Advaita theories.*

We first note the points of similarities which are rather unimportant.

(i) According to both Nyāya and Advaita, consciousness of objects has to cease if the individual is to be liberated. According to Nyāya this means that the liberated self has no consciousness at all; according to Advaita Vedānta, this means that the liberated self merges itself totally with the pure transcendental consciousness.

(ii) Both prescribe the same method for attaining liberation, i.e. *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. The self is realised in its true nature by intuition which is the culmination of intense rational activity.

Now we note the points of difference between these two theories which are fundamental.

(i) According to Nyāya, the finite self is eternal and omnipresent. It cannot be destroyed. According to Advaita Vedānta, the finite self is essentially a mystery; an irrational and unreal relation of the pure consciousness with the material inner sense is at the root of its being. Liberation is not a continuation of the finite self in any form but the release of the pure consciousness from its association with the not-self. The finite self being a product of maya is beginningless but comes to an end when the self is liberated.

(ii) According to Nyāya, liberation is just cessation of suffering; according to Advaita, it is not a negative state, but a state of pure bliss.

(iii) According to Nyāya, the intuitive knowledge of the self cancels false cognition when it is kept continually as an actual mental state, whereas according to Advaita Vedānta this final knowledge consists in having an image of the ultimate reality. According to Nyāya, the inner sense being atomic, there can be no image of anything whereas according to Vedānta, the inner sense is like a plastic substance which can assume shapes of objects, i.e. can have images.

(iv) According to Nyāya, the process of liberation is purely a personal affair which leaves the rest of the world unaffected, but according to Advaita Vedānta, this is a cosmic process. The ignorance

which is the cause of bondage is also the cause of the world. So the process of destroying bondage is also the process of the dissolution of the world. But this gives rise to a problem for Advaita Vedānta. According to this theory the ultimate reality is one transcendental consciousness, the finite selves are many, for *māyā* which is involved in the constitution of the individual, though one, is yet the principle of multiplicity thus giving rise to a plurality of finite objects and finite subjects. If liberation is the cancellation of this principle, then liberation is also the dissolution of the world. If *māyā* is cancelled, then all finite objects and also all finite subjects should be annihilated. That is, the liberation of one person will be the end of everything, and the liberation of one person will be the liberation of all. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo who differed radically in his interpretation of *māyā* from the Advaita interpretation, accepted this consequence of the Advaita theory. He admitted that the liberation of one person is the liberation of all persons, and it is Sri Aurobindo who will liberate all mankind, indeed all forms of life, by his own *sādhana*. If *māyā* is destroyed (transformed) then not only one person but all persons are liberated. If *māyā* is not destroyed, then none is liberated. Personal liberation is thus impossible. Advaita Vedānta solves this difficulty by distinguishing between two types of *avidyā*, *tūlāvidyā* and *mūlāvidyā*. There is a type of *avidyā*, which attaches to the individual and is different from the universal cosmic *avidyā*. For the liberation of the individual it is sufficient to destroy his personal *avidyā*, not the universal *avidyā*. If this explanation of the Advaita school is accepted, then on this point, the difference between Nyāya and Advaita is considerably diminished. For now according to both, liberation is personal, and when a person attains liberation, the rest of the world remains unaffected. On other points their differences remain.