

Definition, Deception and the Enterprise of Knowledge

DAYA KRISHNA

O-19A, 4th Floor, HDFC Enclave, Ashok Marg, C-Scheme,
Jaipur 302 001, India.

Definition is suspect, at least since Wittgenstein is said to have given it a death-blow or mortally wounded it and the post-modernists, following Derrida, gave it a hasty burial. Yet man still pursues knowledge, at least that is what the universities and the research institutes, so lavishly funded by the Public Exchequer, are said to do. But no one asks how can this enterprise be pursued if there is nothing to know and how can questions of 'truth' or 'falsity' be even raised, let alone settled. The two positions are at loggerheads, and yet both go merrily along without 'seeing' or 'caring' for the contradictions involved in them.

Strangely, both the notion of 'definition' and that of the 'knowledge-enterprise' harbour hidden problems in them which have not been seen either by those who accept or deny the one or the other for some reasons of their own. The idea of 'definition' does not involve, as Wittgenstein thought, the possession of some common properties by all those to which the term was 'correctly' applied, even if at first glance it may appear to be so. Rather, it involves making a distinction between the qualities possessed by an object on grounds which may be as varied as the 'purposes' of the classifier and the 'order' of 'importance' given to them. This has been traditionally masked by the use of the term 'essential' in respect of those properties, that were taken to be the 'defining' characteristic of the object concerned. The post-modern denial of 'essences', which follow from Wittgenstein's position, underwrites this traditional understanding of the notion of definition as perhaps nothing else could. But neither the post-modernists nor Wittgenstein or his followers seem to have asked the simple question, 'what was a

property?' and 'what was the basis of making distinctions between them?' That this should have happened in face of the long discussion from Galileo and Locke onwards and even earlier, say, since Aristotle, speaks volumes for the ahistorical nature of the thinking influenced by them. The 'ahistoricity' by itself, may not be a fault, but when it results in the total neglect or blindness to distinctions that were discussed and found reasonably well grounded, there is reason for disquiet and wondering what has gone wrong with much of the contemporary thinking that has become the 'fashion' of the day.

The problem, however, is a deeper one and infects both classical, modern and post-modern thinkers alike on the subject concerned. It assumes not only the notion of an 'object', but that *all* 'objects' are of one kind as, whatever be the differences between them, there are 'objects' of knowledge both in the epistemological and the 'ontic' sense of the term. In the former sense, they are all 'objects' to consciousness, provided one accepts that there is such a 'thing', while in the case of the latter they enjoy an independent reality of their own and, it is *because of this*, that they become the objects of knowledge. The glaring contradiction between the two senses has either not been seen or just glossed over. In the former sense, all that is there already exists, there is nothing to be 'known' as the 'presentation' exhausts what there is without any residuum whatsoever. In the latter case, the 'object' is never exhausted by any of its 'appearances' and thus *demand*s to be 'known', a demand that is insatiable and inexhaustible and which thus sets the enterprise of 'knowledge' on its unending course whose possible finality is nurtured only by the illusion that the so-called presentation has no 'ontic' reality of its own independent of the facticity of its being 'known'. The illusion, as should be obvious from the history of the 'knowledge-enterprise' of man, creates the delusion that the 'object' is not only constituted by the 'acts' of the 'knowing consciousness', as in Husserl, but also that ultimately it is as 'definitional' in nature as in mathematics, no matter if this definition is arrived at through a rigorous process of empirical investigation and experimentation, as in 'science' which is accepted as the paradigmatic example of knowledge today. The recent attempt to turn the tables and see mathematics itself as a 'social construction' only substitutes 'society' for the Husserllian

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transcendental subjectivity, without seeing, that it brings once again the 'unendingness' in the enterprise of knowledge, not this time from the ontic reality of the object but from the indefinite temporality of that which is supposed to construct it. The term 'society' in this context, it should be remembered, is most probably a deliberate deception to hide the fact that those who are supposed to construct are a little minority whose members, though mortal, delude themselves into thinking that they are 'legislating' on behalf of the whole mankind and for all future, as without this assumption their 'construction' would lose the aura of authority they want it to have.

The deeper and perhaps more intractable problem, however, relates to the notion of the 'object' which is said to be known and in respect of which the issue of 'truth' or 'falsity' arises. That which is supposed and said to be an 'object' transcends that which 'appears' at the level of sensuous apprehension and also that which may be said to be an object of thought or reflection and is usually described in conceptual terms that have to be embodied in language if they have to be apprehended at all. The difference between the two relates to the contingency or necessity of language for their apprehension, as is evident in the case of animals who possess the former but not the latter. The fact that living beings that are non-human possess some sort of 'language' for purposes of communication between themselves makes no difference as, even in their case, the so-called 'language' is contingent for the sensory apprehension they have, just as the number of 'senses' they may have for the purpose of acquiring what we call 'sensuous knowledge'. In fact, the 'facticity' of the 'nature' and 'number' of senses and their 'necessity' for what we call 'knowledge' has been the unexamined presupposition of all discussion about knowledge up till now. So also has been the question whether anything like 'inner sense' has to be accepted and, if so, what is its nature and whether it has to be assumed to be as diverse in character as the bodily senses are and whether it is confined to human beings alone.

The so-called 'outer' or 'bodily' senses are usually said to be five and all knowledge is supposed to be based on them but, as everybody knows, not only are there animals who do not have all the senses that we have but there are also human beings who are born blind or deaf,

and yet who 'know' in some sense of the term 'know' and live on the basis of that knowledge. The case of a Helen Keller may be exceptional, but there are others, thousands in number, whose case should have been the object of epistemological reflection, particularly amongst those who contend that 'senses' alone are the 'source' of knowledge or that only in their terms can a 'knowledge-claim' be validated.

That 'knowledge', whatever be its source or nature, provides a basis for 'living' should have raised the question of the relation between sense organs and motor organs, or *jñānendriyas* and *karmendriyas*, as they are called in the Indian tradition. But epistemological reflection on the problem of knowledge has, for some reason, failed to come to grips with the problem in spite of the fact that *pravṛtti-sāmarthya* or the capacity of knowledge to lead to successful action, and the relation of knowledge to liberation or of *jñāna* to *mokṣa* have played a significant role in Indian thinking on the subject just as the centrality of 'cash-value' of ideas or the operational theory of meaning has done in the western tradition.

But whether it be *pravṛtti-sāmarthya* or 'cash value of ideas' or the operational theory of meaning, they all introduce not only an unresolvable ambiguity in the notion of knowledge as they themselves are intrinsically 'ambiguous' in nature, but also surreptitiously give a direction to the enterprise of knowledge which it would not otherwise have had except for, or because of them. Besides this, it also thrives on the unasked question as to how such a formulation would avoid the fallacy of 'affirming the consequent', even if one accepts that the notion of 'success' can be defined in such a way as to suggest that the 'knowledge' on which it was based was true.

Perhaps, the insight involved in these formulations has to be disengaged from the notions of 'success' or 'cash value', and seen in a different way. The crucial question perhaps is whether the idea of 'knowledge' can even be thought of without involving some sort of 'activity' which is intrinsic to it and varies with the type of knowledge that it is. 'Knowledge' surely is not of one type, and the difference in this must affect not only the way it is acquired or comes into being, but also that which it inevitably must give rise to, as 'effectivity' of some sort is generally supposed to be one of the characteristics of

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reality, besides others. Knowledge always requires some sort of 'activity', even if it be only of 'attending' which is minimally required in any 'knowing' or 'learning' process, as it itself is a part of the process, a resultant of some previous activity of knowing and giving rise, in its own turn, to further knowing and thus engendering a chain which may be broken at any moment, but which is unending in principle. And, strangely, even 'knowledge' has to be known, understood, interpreted, disputed, debated and discussed, not only by others but even by oneself as the enterprise of knowledge is as unending as all other enterprises, both for oneself and everybody else.

But how could knowledge be an 'object', and it has to be such if it has to be 'known'? That it is an object can hardly be doubted as otherwise the whole process of 'education' would make no sense at all. But if it be an 'object' what sort of an object it is, and what is its relation to those 'objects' of which it is supposed to be knowledge. The 'objecthood' of knowledge, however, has to be radically different from that which is ascribed to that of which it is a 'knowledge', as questions of 'truth' and 'falsity' can be raised about the former in a sense in which they can never be raised about the latter. Tarski pointed this out in his well known paper 'The semantic conception of truth', where he had argued that 'truth' is a characteristic of sentences and not of things. The sentence 'snow is white' can be said to be true, but to say that 'white snow' is true seems meaningless.

But there are 'objects' which share certain characteristics with 'knowledge' as they too are 'human creations', though different from it. The problem of knowledge arises in respect of these also as they demand to be 'understood' and 'known' like everything else, even if their knowledge be different from that which is sought in respect of those that have little to do with man as they are not his creation. The term 'art' collectively designates most such objects, just as 'history' does in another context. Knowledge is sought in respect of both these realms and that knowledge is as much 'knowledge' as the knowledge of any other realm. In fact, if we leave the 'natural sciences' aside, knowledge in most other sciences shares the peculiar characteristics that belong so obviously to those that relate to the realms of art and history.

Knowledge, thus, seems to run parallel to that of which it claims to be the knowledge, whether it be that of 'nature' or of that which man has created either individually or collectively. The 'being' of this knowledge is, however, radically different from all that 'is', including that which man creates, as it lies outside itself in a way that is not the case with his other creations. The knowledge of these 'creations' has always created a problem for man, just as 'knowledge', which itself needs to be known. In fact, many a time doubts have been expressed whether the knowledge of these human creations deserves to be called 'knowledge' at all but no one seems to have doubted that whatever is called 'knowledge' not only needs but deserves to be known. Yet, knowledge about what is claimed to be known is not only a second order knowledge, but all knowledge, whether 'first order' or 'second order' presupposes a pre-existing knowledge in the context of which it alone can arise and which it adds to, finds fault with, modifies, criticizes and chooses to some extent. This process seems as 'beginningless' as that which is involved in the notions of 'causality' and even 'change' which apply to all processes which have a temporal dimension to them. But a process when it is 'thought of' has not only to be seen as 'beginningless' but also 'endless', a point that the 'revisability' thesis about knowledge appears to ignore. If knowledge is essentially revisable in principle, then the so-called claim of knowledge to be 'knowledge' is essentially spurious and based on the illusion that what is claimed to be knowledge is not 'really' so and that one has the warrant to act on it in the belief that if one does so one would achieve what one wants by doing so.

The 'antinomian' nature of the situation, so well pointed out by Kant in his *Antinomies of Reason* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is, however, different from the one discussed here in the sense that the dilemma that knowledge always has to have a previous pre-existent knowledge as its context finds its paradigmatic, yet baffling example, in the phenomenon called 'education' without which no human society or culture or civilization can even be conceived. There has to be such a thing as 'education', and yet one has to learn to unlearn a lot of what one has learnt, to see through the delusions of 'certainty' it had deceptively built, to doubt and to question what one had taken for granted as

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The idea of an 'object' at the perceptual level and the problems whether we 'object' at all till we reach values, mental states and not know what the 'self' is as it intrinsically is incapable of as a substance, as in a flow of momentary episodes

The perceptual 'object' said to be the object of substantive, enduring understood by the different senses the point is that a 'sense-quality' it is conceived of in substances which have, at least possibly just as the perceptual object which itself is supposed occurrence can hardly be atomic particles are said are supposed to have momentum, etc., and then calculated with fair accuracy stated in terms of interacting an 'object' means to be without them the entire mere 'appearance' as in

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Yet, in spite of all this, one is also supposed to do 'research', to add, to discover just as the earlier generation had done, and the generations before that. The 'house of knowledge' is ever being built and rebuilt and yet never completed, even though the whole of humanity has been engaged in it since it appeared on the scene. And, perhaps, there is not one but many 'houses' all half-built and many in ruins as the histories of civilizations amply testify.

The idea of an 'object' that is to be 'known' seems to arise at first at the perceptual level and then gets successively transformed, creating the problems whether what is sought to be known can be called as 'object' at all till we reach such nebulous entities as concepts, theories, values, mental states and, above all, self-consciousness where one does not know what the 'self' is of which one is supposed to have knowledge as it intrinsically is incapable of being an 'object', whether conceived of as a substance, as in *Advaita Vedānta*, or as an incessant, evanescent flow of momentary episodic occurrences as in Buddhism.

The perceptual 'object' which provides the model for that which is said to be the object of knowledge is, and has to be, a centre of substantive, enduring unity of all the qualities that are apprehensible by the different senses that human beings may be said to possess. The point is that a 'sense-quality' cannot be an 'object' of knowledge unless it is conceived of in substantial terms as having properties of its own which have, at least possibly, multiple dimensions or 'facets' to them just as the perceptual objects have. An object with a single property which itself is supposed to get 'exhausted' in the moment of its occurrence can hardly be called an 'object', even though some sub-atomic particles are said to display such characteristics. But, then, they are supposed to have multiple properties such as spin, colour, angular momentum, etc., and the duration of their existence can not only be calculated with fair accuracy, but their interaction properties be also stated in terms of inter-subjectively testable prediction. In fact, to be an 'object' means to be able minimally to fulfil these conditions as without them the enterprise of knowledge cannot even take off, as mere 'appearance' as in dreams or in pure imagining, does not and

cannot raise any questions about itself, in the seeking of the answers to which knowledge arises. The issue of truth is central to knowledge and it cannot arise unless that which is claimed to be known has something further to reveal in relation to that which appears to have 'appeared' and even whose 'appearing' may be subject to simultaneous or subsequent 'doubting'. The complex of appearances, even at the sensory level, has to be both related and 'unending' in order that the parallel stream of knowledge may flow diversifying in different directions as the questions themselves diversify and proliferate. That is one reason why 'knowledge' seems to grow incessantly and become more and more complex and complicated even when the object that is claimed to be known seems to remain the same.

Yet, however large the number of properties that an object may be said to have—whether those that are supposed to belong to it naturally or those that arise from its interaction with others—a distinction always has to be made between those on whose cessation the object itself will be considered to have ceased and others whose 'disappearance' does not entail its cessation.

This is the doctrine of essential qualities which are supposed to be captured in its definition which was thought to be the goal of all knowledge at one time and in which knowledge was supposed to consist in. These properties could be seen either in static terms as 'attributes' belonging to some substance or as 'powers' or 'forces' resulting in 'causal effectivity', or even as 'capacities' or 'potentialities' which would be actualized through maturation as in the biological world or through interaction with other substances as in the world usually called 'material'. But, whether conceived of in one way or another, they always have to be thought of in such a way that if they 'ceased to be', whatever may be meant by this phrase the 'object' that was supposed to be defined in terms of them also ceased to exist.

But, for this to happen, not only the object had to be conceived of in a certain manner, but the properties that were supposed to be 'essential' to it had also to be both 'finite' in number and related in such a way that if any one of them ceased to be for any reason, so would the others. As for the conception in terms of 'powers' or 'forces' or 'capacities' or 'potentialities', the notions are so nebulous, dispositional

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and time-dependent that this was actually the case.

The deeper difficulty those that relate to the all taken care of pragmatical purposes. But what cannot choice of what shall be power or capacity of the is supposed to consist in complex, interrelated pointed out earlier, near which is given primacy and always has been a

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The deeper difficulty, however, arises from another direction as those that relate to the above in the context of practical action can be taken care of pragmatically, even on cognitive grounds and for cognitive purposes. But what cannot be so taken care of is the arbitrariness in the choice of what shall be taken to count as the 'defining' property or power or capacity of the object, as that is what 'knowledge' about it is supposed to consist in. In the case of objects with a multitude of complex, interrelated properties and capacities, to be an 'object', as pointed out earlier, means just this. There is always the problem as to which is given primacy or importance over others, something that can, and always has been a matter of dispute.

Definitions do change, as everyone who is acquainted with the history of any subject knows and these changes reflect changes in knowledge about that domain. But what does this really mean? Does it imply that what we considered as 'essential' was not 'essential' and that what was supposed to be 'knowledge' of the 'object' was not knowledge, even though we thought of it as such, and taught and acted on it.

There is another problem in respect of knowledge that is central to the idea of 'definition' and that is that it not only subsumes an 'object' under a class and sees it primarily as its member, but has to differentiate it from other cognate classes, epitomized in Aristotle's well-known statement in this regard. But this, as Aristotle noted, would make the enterprise of 'defining' restricted only to that which can simultaneously be seen as a member of a class higher than itself and as itself a class having subclasses of itself. Aristotle saw this primarily in terms of 'genus' and 'species' but, as the idea of 'class' has undergone a radical revision since then, it need not be confined to the biological perspective within which it had first been formulated. But, whatever the reformulation, it would still make such a definition impossible in principle as what cannot be subsumed under a class higher than itself, or which cannot have a subclass of itself, for it is not a class at all. This latter is the case with an individual or that which is the subject of singular judgement, just as the 'class of all classes' may be said to be an example of the former. The recourse to the notion of a 'unit class'

and the idea of the 'null class' being a member of every other class as it is necessarily included in it, would be of little avail as the latter, by definition, can have no characteristic at all to characterize it, while the former can only grant the spurious quantitative character of being 'equal to' all other unit classes, bereft of any quantitative identity which was needed to define it.

As for the 'class of all classes', the paradoxes in respect of it are well known and the Russellian recourse to the theory of types to save the situation is only a clever move which deceives no one. The point is that the 'singular' and the 'universal' can have no definition, and thus are incapable of being known, if to 'know' is to know, through the definition of it, in its terms. But if neither the individual nor the universal can be known, what is the 'knowledge-enterprise' doing in which man seems to be engaged since he achieved self-consciousness and got involved in it. But the dilemma is that in order to determine what is 'singular' or 'individual' and what is that 'universal' which has nothing more universal than itself, one can have at the level of thought which is the sphere of intellect or reason only negation, as it is only in respect of objects that are 'in between', i.e. have elements of both 'singularity' and 'generality' that both affirmation and negation can simultaneously occur and 'knowledge' obtain as that is the very characteristic of knowledge. Identification and differentiation occur simultaneously in the judgement as to recognize that 'this is this' is also to implicitly recognize that 'this is not "that"'.

But, paradoxically, it is the 'singular' or the 'individual' which is felt to be the most, or even the only 'real', just as in another context, it is only the 'truly universal' that is felt to be the only real and everything else as being only deceptively so. This may not be knowledge as reason understands it, but it is certainly 'something' in which man 'lives' all the time and provides for that which he calls 'knowledge'. The relation between the two is or should be the central problem for thought though, for some strange reason, it has not been so. The preemption by 'reason' of what shall be considered to be 'true' and the relegation of everything else to the realm of the 'pre-reflective' is perhaps one reason for this. The other is the radical discontinuity between the two as the former is committed by its very nature to seek

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Distinguishing, discriminating and active at all these even though it also characterizes a 'history' of its own. The latter, however, seems to does not seem to have ensures that the 'latter' been superseded by it. which makes all that in reason-centred enterprise which only the ignorant it is 'beliefs' that man turn into superstitious feelings and behaviour overlooked as the very difficult, if not impossible else can be regarded as 'as it has not fulfilled even as such. But the 'denial' characteristic of knowledge can be, no 'finality' in only be in a sense in which

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coherence, consistency and adequacy both in terms of evidence and argument, while the latter seems to be concerned only with immediacy, significance, meaningfulness and fulfilment.

The 'philosophical' and the 'poetic' consciousness perhaps paradigmatically illustrate this, if they are treated as Weberian 'ideal-types' in themselves. The poetic consciousness should be treated as symbolizing the 'aesthetic consciousness' in general which is distinguishable from its closest analogue, i.e. 'spiritual consciousness' in the sense that the former has necessarily to try to embody itself in an 'externality' through an activity which it considers to be 'creative' but which is continuously constrained by factors of which the 'creator' is overwhelmingly aware though he is reluctant to acknowledge them, while the latter just never feels the need to do so, and in case it does, it feels it to be a 'temptation', a 'fall' from what it 'knows' it should be.

Distinguishing, discriminating and evaluating awareness is present and active at all these levels, and yet is not treated as 'knowledge', even though it also changes and grows and stagnates and perhaps has a 'history' of its own just as 'knowledge' is supposed to have. The latter, however, seems to have a cumulative character which the former does not seem to have and has, in most cases, a character which ensures that the 'latter' is better or more reliable than that which has been superseded by it. This results in that ambivalent relationship which makes all that is not accepted and certified as 'true' by the reason-centred enterprise of knowledge as 'superstitious belief or 'faith' which only the ignorant and the 'irrational' can cherish or 'live' in. Yet, it is 'beliefs' that man lives by and the so-called 'knowledge' has to turn into superstitious belief if it is to influence and determine the feelings and behaviour of men. The way this happens is generally overlooked as the very pretension to 'knowledge-claim' renders it difficult, if not impossible, to do so. The 'claim' denies that anything else can be regarded as 'true', or even worthy of cognitive consideration as it has not fulfilled even the minimum conditions for being considered as such. But the 'denial' is itself based on a denial of that very characteristic of knowledge which makes it 'knowledge'. There is, and can be, no 'finality' in knowledge and hence its claim to 'truth' can only be in a sense in which 'truth' is not generally considered as true.

Normally, 'truth' is supposed to be both infallible and complete and yet knowledge, that is 'human knowledge', can never be so. The attempt to save the situation by seeing 'truth' as a characteristic of 'atomic propositions' designating 'atomic facts', as in Wittgenstein, would result in a 'relationless' world where nothing affects or makes a difference to anything else and all the so-called 'relations' will be only a superimposition by the 'logical reason' on 'reality', designated as 'logical connectives' in his system. Wittgenstein's is a Leibnizian monadic world where 'reason' as the 'organon' of knowledge functions as it does in Buddhism or Advaita Vedānta without his being aware that it is so. The question, however, is whether this world of 'atomic facts' is 'open' or 'closed', and in case it is the former, how does a new 'atomic fact' come into being and in case it is the latter, how does one know that it is 'closed' and that nothing further can be added to it. The deeper question, however, relates to its reflexive relation to language which it is supposed to mirror and which itself is supposed to be 'atomic' in character without any 'real' relations in between them, thus destroying the very character of language as 'language' for just as 'words' have to be related to form 'atomic sentences', so 'atomic sentences' have to be related *ad infinitum*, at least in principle, to yield language.

Yet, the moment one gives up the notion of 'atomic facts' and 'truth' as being a characteristic of 'atomic propositions', one also gives up the notion of knowledge that characterizes it as true in the *deceptive* sense of the term. Knowledge is certainly 'true', but this 'truth' is always bound to be 'less' than that of which it is supposed to be knowledge, as it is the latter which provides that perennial dynamics which makes the former perpetually move forward and never rest content with itself.

But though knowledge never rests still and is ever incomplete, the illusion of having grasped the 'truth' affects both the consciousness about the object of which it is the knowledge and the self-consciousness that thinks it possesses the knowledge, and is 'sure' of the 'certainty' thereof. The 'object' begins to be conceived of in terms of its knowledge and defined in its terms, so that now it is the 'definition' that begins to determine what 'object' shall be correctly designated by that name or word. And, as knowledge changes, which it must, definition also changes, 'changing' the objects designated by its name or term.

The changes thus intruding into thought and action, transforming reality, could not have happened if the 'illusoriness' of the illusion of being is the strange world that knowledge and the reality exist in the context of the way the 'self' and 'other' relate to each other in their relations between them.

The story of civilization is a story of delusion and deception since reality at all levels, both of the individual and of the society, is a net created by the cognitive process.

The enterprise of reason, which is the search for essences, is a process which, however, itself becomes either a delusion or a creativity-centred aesthetic process, primarily in terms of 'feeling' which is either actively negated through the process or in business and politics.

Each of these, paradoxically, is a reflexive self-consciousness which are not only at the level of the individual but also at the level of the creation of that human world which is contradictory because of the nature of all of these, including the process, in contradictions which lead to the creation of the world.

The contradictions arise because they continue to persist even though the process itself provides a clue not only to the nature of reality in all its dimensions, but also to the way it permeates every aspect of human existence. Injustice has dogged it since reason has always been a process because it has seen 'reality' in its own definitions. Definition is the process of creating the world.

infallible and complete and yet can never be so. The attempt as a characteristic of 'atomic facts' in Wittgenstein, would result in effects or makes a difference to 'relations' will be only a 'reality', designated as 'logical facts' is a Leibnizian monadic function of knowledge as it without his being aware that it this world of 'atomic facts' is never, how does a new 'atomic fact' matter, how does one know what can be added to it. The deeper relation to language which it is supposed to be 'atomic' in between them, thus destroying 'sense' for just as 'words' have to be 'atomic sentences' have to be able to yield language. The notion of 'atomic facts' and 'truth situations', one also gives up the sense as true in the *deceptive* sense 'truth', but this 'truth' is always supposed to be knowledge, a continual dynamics which makes it never rest content with itself. It is and is ever incomplete, the facts both the consciousness of language and the self-consciousness and is 'sure' of the 'certainty' of it in terms of its knowledge is the 'definition' that begins to be designated by that name which it must, definition also defined by its name or term.

The changes thus introduced affect, at another level, both feeling and action, transforming the self and the world in a way which would not have happened if the illusion had not been there, or if the 'illusoriness' of the illusion had been realized. What comes thus into being is the strange world created by man through actions based on that knowledge and the feelings engendered by it, specially in the context of the way the 'self' and the 'world' are conceived and also the relations between them.

The story of civilizations is the story of this interplay between the delusion and deception superimposed by the successive definitions of reality at all levels, both of objectivity and subjectivity, and the attempts to get out of them only to get caught in some new snare or conceptual net created by the cognitive enterprise of man.

The enterprise of reason or the cognitive enterprise determined by the search for essences and the grasp thereof in definitions may, however, itself be either totally given up as in the so-called 'spiritual' or creativity-centred aesthetic pursuits of man, or submerged in living primarily in terms of 'feeling-relationship' with the 'other' at all levels, or actively negated through the pursuits of wealth and power, epitomized in business and politics.

Each of these, paradoxically, however gives rise, because of the reflexive self-conscious nature of man, to a view of self and reality which are not only at loggerheads with one another, but result in the creation of that human world which has necessarily to be self-contradictory because of this very fact. Man has to see himself in terms of all of these, including all that he knows about them even if it results in contradictions which he finds difficult to live with.

The contradictions arising from the conflicting definitions which continue to persist even after one is supposed to have superseded the other provides a clue not only to the dynamics of the human situation in all its dimensions, but also to the unbelievable tragedy which permeates every aspect of it since its very inception. Wars, cruelty and injustice have dogged it at every step. But, what is stranger, human reason has always been able to find 'reasons' to justify them, mainly because it has seen 'reality' and defined and constituted it in terms of its own definitions. Definitions constitute knowledge and knowledge

determines the way 'reality' is seen, and the way reality is seen determines the way men feel and behave and act on its basis. Once, one loosens the bonds between these, one would also 'free' oneself from the compulsions which the uncritical acceptance of reason and the belief or 'faith' in the knowledge that is its result, result in.

Knowledge is an unending, 'open' enterprise of man, while that which is sought to be 'known' is supposed to be ever the same, and even when it is supposed to change, there is the 'unchanging' law according to which it is said to change. To treat the former as if it were the latter, is the mistake and 'definition' does just this, just as the formulation of a 'law' does at another level. Both, if not understood as steps in that open unending process, generate dangerous delusions as they superimpose deceptions leading to what has been called 'arrogance of knowledge' resulting in that state of the 'cogito' which asserts 'I know' when it knows nothing. The 'unknown' is always greater than the 'known', and what is 'known' is not only incomplete but full of inaccuracies, inadequacies and errors about which one knows nothing except that they *must* be there if the enterprise of knowledge has to go on, as it must.

Once this consciousness takes hold of man, the enterprise itself will become radically different, 'freed' as it will be from the 'I-centricity' which is the bane of all knowledge-claims, and that 'past-centricity' which thinks that all that is to be known was already known as evidenced in a revealed text or the utterances of a Master who had 'seen' the truth. The 'unendingness' of the enterprise, if existentially realized, might also cure one from the illusion that there would ever be a time in the future when the enterprise would cease, as man would have known all that was to be known and there would remain for him nothing more to know. There is, and can be, little difference between the past and the future in this respect, though many consider the 'illusion' about the 'future' to make the enterprise move forward. But this itself seems an illusion as otherwise the enterprise would have stopped long ago as many a time, in the past, man had thought he had found the truth 'finally' and that there was nothing more to find.

The illusions of 'finality' are thus not necessary for the human enterprise of knowledge, just as they are not necessary for his other

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 thus, have to be 'freed' from the notion of 'finality' which has been
 associated with them up till now, if the knowledge-enterprise is to be
 seen as an 'enterprise', 'open' and 'unending', like the other enterprises
 in which man has engaged since he appeared for reasons about which
 he can know nothing.

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