

“The poets of the Rig-veda, the Rishis, expressed spiritual knowledge in divinely inspired words and rhythms; the Rishis of the Upanishads had direct vision of the true form of that knowledge and expressed it in a few profound words.”¹ The Upanishads² are the treasure-house of the highest knowledge which is the foundation of the *sanātanadharmā*. The Vedas contain the same knowledge but covered over with metaphors. The Upanishadic Rishis obtained this infallible knowledge not ‘by force of argument, extensive learning or from the flow of inspiration’ but through Yoga. ‘The Integral Yoga, the divine life founded on the Self, in a human body, and the integral Līla conducted by the Divine Power’, these they preach to be the supreme goal of life. Their primary *mantra* was the high aspiration of enshrining the immortal universal Being in the soul of man. “The true aim, the true realisation is the unfolding of the Brahman, its self-manifestation, the visible diffusion of the power of the Divine, the Līla of His Knowledge and Ānanda, not in a few great souls, but in everybody in the nation and the entire humanity.”³ The first stages of this knowledge and sādhanā are found in the Vedas; rather, this secret knowledge finds its earliest expression in an age long preceding the Āryan race. The path of truth and immortality first discovered by the *pitrus* ‘the primeval forefathers of the human race’. What we find in the Rig-veda is only the echo of the words of the ancient Rishis, the ‘fathers’, “of the Divine speech they uttered; consequently, the form of the *dharma* that we see in the Rig-veda can be said to be its earliest form. The knowledge of the Upanishads, the *sādhanā* of the Vedānta are only a very noble and generous transformation of this *dharma*. The knowledge of the supreme Divine and the sādhanā for attaining the Divine life of the Vedas, the Self-knowledge and the sādhanā for realising the Brahman of the Upanishads, both of them are based on a synthetic *dharma*; various aspects of the cosmic Purusha and the cosmic Shakti, the supreme Divine unifying all the truths of the Brahman, the experience and the pursuit of the All-Brahman are its intimate subject-matter.”⁴

The Upanishads are ‘vehicles of illumination and not of instruction’ and therefore ‘proceed from light to light’ confirming the intuitive experiences of their rishi-writers and in any case do not submit their findings to the limit judgment of logical reason. They are composed for those already having sufficient familiarity with Vedāntic thought and ‘even some personal experience of the truths

on which they were founded’, and thus baffle the ratiocinating intellect.

All the great Upanishads are concerned with the same grand theme—the nature and attainment of Brahma-Vidyā, the relation of the human soul with the Divine, and the winning of Immortality and the release of the limited self into the unity, truth and freedom of Brahman. Whereas the Īśa is concerned with the supreme Lord, His workings and becomings and the whole problem of the world and life and human destiny, the Kena Upanishad deals only with the nature and relation of mind-consciousness to Brahman-consciousness. It takes for granted the existence of the material world and the physical life, but these exist for us only by virtue of our internal life and self:

‘That which remains unexpressed by the word,
that by which the word is expressed...
That which thinks not by the mind, that
by which the mind is thought...
That which sees not with the eye, that
by which one sees the eye’s seeings...
That which hears not with the ear,
that by which hearing is heard
That which breathes not with the breath,
that by which the life-breath is led forward in its paths,
Know that indeed to be the Brahman, not
this which men follow after here.’⁵

The world of objects appears to us what our mind and senses declare and determine them to be. But mind is only a veil of something greater than itself. “There is such a greater existence behind, which is to the mind and its instruments, to the life-force and its workings what they are to the material world”.⁶ Again, this Brahman-consciousness is not alien to the mental and physical world; on the contrary, “it is the Lord and ruler of all the world; the energies of the gods in the mortal consciousness are its energies: when they conquer and grow great, it is because Brahman has fought and won. This world therefore is an inferior action, a superficial representation of something infinitely greater, more perfect, more real than itself”.⁷ This is the All-Bliss, the Delight of Brahman which is infinite being and immortal force. To seek it, attain to it and follow after it is the supreme aim of human existence:

‘The name of That is “That Delight”;
as That Delight one should follow
after It. He who so knows That, towards
him verily all existences yearn.’⁸

“Brahman is Truth, Brahman is Knowledge, Brahman is the Infinite, he finds Him hidden in the cavern heart of being; in

the highest heaven of His creatures, lo, he enjoys all desire and he abides with the Eternal, ever with that cognisant and understanding Spirit",⁹ says the Taittirīya Upanishad. It is from Brahman, the self, the Spirit that ether was born and from ether air, fire, the waters, earth and food were born. And man is made of the essential substance of food, *anna-maya*

'Lo, it is eaten and it eats ;
Yea, it devours the creatures that feed
upon it, therefore it is called food from
the eating'.¹⁰

Food is therefore the supporting as well as consuming substance of all life. But the second and inner Self other than food is *Prāṇa*, *prāṇa-maya*, which fills the Self of food. This, the breath, is the life of all living beings. Yet another inner Self other than *Prāṇa* is Mind, *mano-maya*, which is in the image of man. It is 'the soul in the body to the former one which was of *Prāṇa*'. All speech recoils along with the mind baffled, unable to reach the delight of the Eternal.

*yato vāco nivartante, aprāḥya manasā saḥ ;
ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān.*¹¹

And yet there is another Self which is other than that of Mind which is constituted by pure knowledge — *Vijñāna*. The Self of this knowledge fills the Self of Mind, and is made verily in the image of man. This is 'the soul in the body to the former one which was of Mind'. Lastly there is the inmost Self which is fashioned out of Delight and that which fills the Self of *Vijñāna*.¹²

The Spirit having desired of old, says the Taittirīya Upanishad,¹³ to become many, to be born, performed austerity—concentrated all Himself in thought, and by the force of His self-concentration created all this that exists. Having brought forth the whole universe into existence He entered into it and having entered it He became both this and the beyond, the defined and the undefined, the manifest and the unmanifest, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the Truth and the Falsehood and everything else :

*asad vā idam agra āsit, tato vai sad ajāyate,
tad ātmānam svayam akuruta, tasmāt tai sukṛtam ucyate.*

'In the beginning all this Universe was Non-Existent and Unmanifest, from which this manifest Existence was born. Itself created itself; none other created it. Therefore, they say of it the well and beautifully made'.¹⁴

The *Īśa* Upanishad lays down the basis of a divine life for man upon earth by the idea of 'the one and stable Spirit inhabiting and governing a universe of movement' and of the forms of movement'.¹⁵

The Brahman who is at once the one supreme Lord and the multiple movement contains the unity and stability. The Lord and the world are really one Brahman :

'That moves and that moves not ; That is far and the same is near ; That is within all this and That also is outside all this'.¹⁶

He is the One since all existence and non-existence are He. He is stable, unmoving and immutable. Since He is beyond space and time, beyond causality and relativity and 'possesses eternally in Himself all that is, has been or ever can be'. "The world is a cyclic movement (*saṁsāra*) of the Divine Consciousness in Space and Time. Its law and, in a sense, its object is progression ; it exists by movement and would be dissolved by cessation of movement."¹⁷ And the basis of this movement "is the energy of active consciousness which, by its motion and multiplication in different principles (different in appearance, the same in essence), creates oppositions of unity and multiplicity, divisions of Time and Space, relations and groupings of circumstance and Causality. All these things are real in consciousness, but only symbolic of the Being, somewhat as the imaginations of a creative Mind are true representations of itself, yet not quite real in comparison with itself, or real with a different kind of reality".¹⁸ It is the power of 'the pure omnipotent self-awareness of the Absolute unbound by any law of the relativity' that creates the universe. In the words of Sri Aurobindo :

'Unity is the eternal truth of things, diversity a play
of the unity ... reality'.¹⁹

Brahman is thus perceived by the Upanishads as both the Stable and the Moving. It is realised in the eternal and immutable Spirit as also in all the changing manifestations and relativity. It is 'that which exceeds, contains and supports all individual things as well as all universe, transcendentally of Time and Space and Causality' ; It is also 'that which lives in and possesses the universe and all it contains'. "This is the transcendental, universal and individual Brahman, Lord, Continent and Indwelling Spirit, which is the object of all knowledge".²⁰

Brahman is, subjectively, the Self of all that is in the universe. The world of multiplicity constitutes the becomings of this Self in the movement. The Self, *Ātman*, reveals itself in three states, as *Kshara Purusha*, *Akshara Purusha* and *Para Purusha*. As *Kshara* it reflects the changes and movements of Nature, actively participates in them and enjoys division and duality ; "controls secretly its own changes but seems to be controlled by them ; enjoys the oppositions of pleasure and pain, good and bad, but appears to be their victim ; possesses and

upholds the action of Nature, by which it seems to be created. For, always and inalienably, the Self is Ishwara, the Lord".²¹ As Akshara it stands back 'from the changes and movements of Nature, calm, pure, impartial, indifferent, watching them and not participating'. It is the hidden freedom of the former. As Purushottama it contains and enjoys both the stillness and the movement and is conditioned and limited by neither of them. It is this that has to be realised in both the unmoving and the mutable. "It is the Lord, Brahman, the All, the Indefinable and unknowable".²²

Sachchidānanda is the first and supreme manifestation of the Purushothama. Para Prakriti is its higher nature—its nature of infinite being, consciousness, power and bliss; whereas mind, life and body constitute its lower nature, Apra Prakriti. The nature of the higher half of universal existence, *parārdha*, which constitutes Sachchidānanda is one of Immortality, *Amṛtam* and that of the lower half which constitutes the mortal existence in Matter, *aparārdha*, is Death, *Mṛtyu*. Through the perfect realisation of Sachchidānanda mind, life and body can convert themselves into the nature of *Vijñāna*, *Chaitanya* and *Sat* respectively. Such a realisation of the body is the aim of human evolution. Sachchidānanda is the highest and pure state of Ātman; it either can remain self-contained, apart and aloof from the universe or witness, embrace and possess it as the Lord. In fact, "it does both simultaneously".

*andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti
ye 'vidyāmuḥāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo
ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ.*

'It is He that has gone abroad—That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal'.²³

The Lord in His own self-existence conceives and realises the entire process of the many worlds. He is the Unknowable, *Tat*, which manifests itself to us both as Personality and Impersonality; for *Tat* includes the aspect of universal and transcendent Personality. He is sole reality manifesting itself in numberless aspects and forms; subjectively He is the Self, *Ātman*, 'the one Being of whom all existences are Becomings', and has to be realised in all selves and in all things and beyond all things. Objectively He is the supreme Lord, the Purushottama who contains and inhabits the whole universe. "It is He who has become all things and beings, — a conscious Being the sole Existent and Self-existent, who is Master and enjoyer of all

He becomes."²⁴ He manifests Himself as infinite existence, consciousness and self-delight, *Sachchidānanda*. In the manifestation of *Sachchidānanda*, Delight becomes Love, Consciousness becomes conceptive Knowledge and executive Force, and Existence becomes Person and Substance. But, as Sri Aurobindo says, "Love is incomplete without Lover and an object of Love, Knowledge without a Knower and an object of Knowledge, Force without a Worker and a Work, Substance without a Person cognising and constituting it ... In delight of Brahman there is an Enjoyer of delight, in consciousness of Brahman a Conscient, in existence of Brahman an Existent; but the object of Brahman's delight and consciousness and the term and stuff of its existence are Itself. In the divine Being Knowledge, the Knower and the Known and, therefore, necessarily also Delight, the Enjoyer and the Enjoyed are one. This Self-Awareness and Self-Delight of Brahman has two modes of its Force of consciousness, its Prakriti or Māyā, — intensive in self-absorption, diffusive in self-extension. The intensive mode is proper to the pure and silent Brahman; the diffusive to the active Brahman. It is the diffusion of the Self-existent in the term and stuff of His own existence that we call the world, the becoming or the perpetual movement (*bhuvanam, jagat*). It is Brahman that becomes; what He becomes is also the Brahman. The object of Love is the self of the Lover; the work is the self-figuration of the Worker; Universe is body and action of the Lord."²⁵

But Brahman itself is the Unknowable beyond the Personal and the Impersonal. The impersonal aspect of its infinite existence is referred to as *Tat*, and the Personal or self-aware and self-blissful aspect as *Saḥ*. It is Brahman who extends Himself in the relative consciousness 'whose totality of finite and changeable circumstances dependent on an equal, immutable and eternal Infinity' is what is called the universe, *sa prayagat*. There are, thus, two different but mutually dependent and complementary expressions of the Unknowable Brahman, namely, the pure infinite relationless immutability and the totality of objects in Space and Time working out their relations through Causality. This infinite and relationless Immutability is referred to as 'the bright; bodiless, without scar, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil' by the *Īśa* Upanishad. It is the 'still and secret foundation of the play and the movement' extending itself equally in all things, becomes all that is there in Its self-existence which the Seer and Thinker in It visualises or conceives. The same Absolute, as 'the cause, continent and governing Inhabitant of the totality of objects and of each object in the totality *jagatyām jagat*, is referred to in the *Īśa* as 'the Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent.'

'In the universe there is a constant relation of Oneness and Multiplicity. This expresses itself as

the universal Personality and the many Persons, and both between the One and the Many and among the Many themselves there is the possibility of an infinite variety of relations. These relations are determined by the play of the divine existence, the Lord, entering into His manifested habitations. They exist at first as conscious relations between individual souls; they are then taken up by them and used as a means of entering into conscious relation with the One. It is this entering into various relations with the One which is the object and function of Religion. All religions are justified by this essential necessity; all express one Truth in various ways and move by various paths to one goal.

The Divine Personality reveals Himself in various forms and names to the individual soul. These forms and names are in a sense created in the human consciousness; in another they are eternal symbols revealed by the Divine who thus concretises Himself in mind-form to the multiple Consciousness and aids it in its return to its own Unity.²⁶

Brahman is therefore both the Active and the pure Inactive, a well as the individual human soul. Activity does not affect the Self; it is always pure, perfect, inalienably free transcending all activity. It is Ignorance which creates the awareness of limitation, makes the part appear as the whole and separates the individual from its source, Sachchidānanda. But the Active Brahman 'is always Sachchidānanda using for its self-becoming the forms of mind, body and life.' It sees and enjoys all their experiences in terms of Sachchidānanda and uses Ignorance 'as a minor term of its conception.'

'The human soul is one with the Lord; it also is in its completeness Sachchidānanda using...to a man.

To this end it must recover the silent Brahman... universe.²⁷

The universe of objects is the self-becoming of Brahman in the extension of Its own being. It is governed by the double principle of Consciousness and Being. Consciousness dwelling upon its self-being produces the idea, *Vijñāna*. Being using its self-awareness creates the infinite forms of itself already contained in *Vijñāna*. This is the ancient Indian conception of evolution, *pariṇāma, vikāra, vivarta*.

'Brahman is His own subject and His own object, whether in His...objectivity.

All objective existence is the Self-existent, the Self-becoming, *Svayambhu*...Consciousness.

It follows that every object holds in itself the law of its...Fact.

Therefore all things are arranged by Him perfectly...Lord.²⁸

The World of *Vijñāna*, says Sri Aurobindo, is one of "predetermination, of concentration, of compelling seed-state. But it is a determination not in previous Time, but in perpetual Time; a Fate compelled by the Soul, not compelling it, compelling rather the action and result, present in the expansion of the movement as well as in the concentration of the Idea. Therefore the truth of the Soul is freedom and mastery, not subjection and bondage. Purusha commands Prakriti, Prakriti does not compel Purusha, *Na karma lipyate nare*...

This is the truth of things as seen from above and from the Unity. It is the divine standpoint; but we have to take account of the human standpoint which starts from below, proceeds from the Ignorance, and perceives these principles successively, not comprehensively, as separate states of consciousness. Humanity is that which returns in experience to Sachchidānanda, and it must begin from below, in *Avidyā*, with the mind embodied in matter, the Thinker imprisoned and emerging from the objective Fact. This imprisoned Thinker is Man, the *Manu*.

He has to start from death and division and arrive at unity and immortality. He has to realise the universal in the individual and the Absolute in the relative. He is Brahman growing self-conscious in the objective multiplicity. He is the ego in the cosmos vindicating himself as the All and the Transcendent.²⁹

Being and Becoming are, therefore, one; for the many Becomings 'exist and are included in Brahman's view of Himself'. They are merely the many variations of the phenomenal movement of the consciousness of Being. All is the play of the Will, Knowledge and Delight of the Supreme in His World-existence who is Himself free from all modifications in the aspect of His inactive existence. The Pure Passive and the Active Brahman are the positive and negative aspects of the one indivisible consciousness which is the Lord who is beyond both. By becoming one with the Lord, the individual soul would share all this biune conscious existence of Brahman.

The *Īśa* Upanishad, thus, has for its central theme, the complete reconciliation and harmony of fundamental opposites which is most luminously worked out in four successive movements of experience. The first reveals the perception of essential oneness of the apparently incompatible opposites, 'God and the World, Renunciation and Enjoyment, Action and internal Freedom, the One and the Many, Being and its Becomings, the passive divine Impersonality and the active divine Personality, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the

Becoming and the Not-Becoming, Life on earth and beyond and the supreme Immortality".⁹⁰ It discovers the Spirit as the one and only basis of cosmic existence 'inhabiting and governing a universe of movement and of the forms of movement'.⁹¹ Upon this is founded the rule of a divine life for man which, invariably promotes the manifestation of the One through the multiplicity of existence. The second speaks of the identity of 'the one stable Lord and the multiple movement' realised as Brahman which experience founds and fulfils the law of life on earth. For the individual identifies himself with the cosmic and transcendental Self and with all its becomings, and being entirely free from grief and illusion, enjoys all by the renunciation of all. The third takes up the justification of life and works and clearly indicates the lines of their divine fulfilment as well as sets forth 'the degrees of the Lord's self-manifestation in the universe of motion and in the becomings of the one Being'. And it is His 'conception and determination' that constitutes the inner law of all existences. The fourth one deals with the idea of the worlds — the different states of consciousness, and symbolically indicates "under the figures of Sūrya (*the pure self-luminous truth of things*)⁹² and Agni (*the divine force which taking different forms leads man by a progressive manifestation upwards to the Truth and the Bliss*),⁹³ the relations of the Supreme Truth and Immortality, the activities of this life, and the state after death".⁹⁴

The Īśa speaks of Brahman as the basis of cosmic existence. The universe is only a movement of the Spirit in itself; it "is mutable and transient in all its formations and appearances; its only eternity is an eternity of recurrence, its only stability a semblance caused by certain apparent fixities of relation and grouping. Every separate object in the universe is, in truth, itself the whole universe presenting a certain front or outward appearance of its movement. The microcosm is one with the macrocosm. Yet in their relation of principle of movement and result of movement they are continent and contained, world in world, movement in movement. The individual therefore partakes of the nature of the universal, refers back to it for its source of activity, is, as we say, subject to its laws and part of cosmic Nature".⁹⁵ Whereas the Spirit being One, immutable, free, stable and eternal, is the lord of its movement. The movement itself with all its formed objects provides a habitation for the Spirit who dwells multitudinously in the multiplicity of creation for multiplicity is only a play of His cosmic consciousness.⁹⁶ The object of this habitation is the possession and enjoyment of the universe. Man, though in his essence one with the Spirit, does not enjoy because of his ignorance of this oneness. While the Spirit is not bound by Ignorance for it simultaneously dwells both in the consciousness of multiplicity and relativity on the one hand and unity and identity on the other the individual conceives of the object and the Inhabitant not in

the context of their oneness but as standing out separately from the cosmos. Because of the separative ego-sense of man, the object is not seen as 'the universe in one of its frontal appearances', but as having an existence separate from the rest of the world. Such is the nature of the illusion of ignorance which falsifies reality and renders the individual unable to enter into a relation of harmony and oneness with the universe he lives in and enjoy it. Nonetheless the desire to possess and enjoy continue to be the chief impulse of the Ego for it mistakenly thinks of itself as the Lord. The results of such obscurity are necessarily discord, conflict, suffering, disintegration and death. "Enjoyment of the universe and all it contains is the object of world-existence, but renunciation of all *in desire*"⁹⁷ is the condition of the free enjoyment of all .. Therefore by transcending Ego and realising the one Self, we possess the whole universe in the one cosmic consciousness and do not need to possess physically ... Being one with all beings, we possess, in their enjoyment, in ours and in the cosmic Being's, delight of universal self-expression. It is only by this Ānanda at once transcendent and universal that man can be free in his soul and yet live in the world with the full active Life of the Lord in His universe of movement".⁹⁸

The soul is neither a separate entity outside Brahman nor in the Brahman; it is part and portion of both the witness Soul and the active Brahman. By getting behind Prakriti to the Lord of Prakriti and merging itself in the Cosmic Will, the individual soul can act with perfect freedom. Therefore, through conscious identity with the Divine, action not inaction leads the soul into 'the worlds of light and of liberated and blissful being' and founds the basis of divine life on earth.

1. Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, No. 26, p. 44.
2. "Not only Monism, but all the philosophical thoughts and doctrines that have come into being in Europe and Asia—Rationalism, Realism, Nihilism, the Darwinian theory of evolution, the positivism of Comte, the philosophy of Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and Schopenhauer, Utilitarianism Hedonism, all were seen and expressed by the Rishis endowed with the *direct vision*. But what has been elsewhere partially glimpsed, proclaimed as the integral truth—in spite of its being only a fragment of the Truth—and given a distorted description with a mixture of truth and falsehood, has been recorded in its fullness and right perspective, in a pure and unmistakable manner" in the Upanishads.—*Ibid.*, p. 44.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
5. Kena Upanishad, 4-8; Sri Aurobindo's Translation.
6. Sri Aurobindo, Kena Upanishad, pp. 18-19.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
8. Kena Upanishad, IV. 6.

9. Taittiriya Upanishad, II. 1 Sri Aurobindo's Translation.
10. Taittiriya Upanishad, II. 2.
11. Ibid., II. 4.1.
12. Ibid., II. 2.5.
13. Ibid., II. 6.
14. Taittiriya Upanishad, II. 7.
15. Īśa Upanishad, I (Sri Aurobindo's Translation).
16. Ibid., 5 (Sri Aurobindo's Translation).
17. Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 34.
18. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
19. Ibid., pp. 37-42.
20. Ibid., p. 52.
21. Ibid. p. 55.
22. Ibid p. 56.
23. Īśa Upanishad, 8 (Sri Aurobindo's Translation).
24. Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 72.
25. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
26. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
27. Ibid., pp. 82-83.
28. Ibid., pp. 85-87.
29. Ibid., pp. 87-90.
30. Ibid., p.2.
31. *Īśa Upanishad*, 1.
32. Sri Aurobindo, *Īsha Upanishad*, p. 12
33. Ibid., p. 14.
34. Ibid., p. 22.
35. Ibid., p. 24.
36. Ibid., p. 25.
37. Italics mine.
38. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

Is Philosophy a Theoretical or a Practical Study?

Santosh Sengupta

The disagreement among the philosophers on the nature of philosophy is very much in evidence. What is all the more significant is the general acceptance among them of the disagreement. The reason for this acceptance is the belief that philosophy, unlike a simple apriori study, or a mere empirical discipline, is characterised by an indefiniteness or complexity in respect of its scope and method. Philosophy, it is held, is not a field in which one can look for plain proofs or simple solutions of problems. Now the most principal area of disagreement is the issue over the theoretical or the practical character of philosophy. The question is: Is philosophy a theoretical or a practical study? There is no denying that it is in the nature of the answer to the question that one's view of the nature of philosophy is reflected. If it is said that to pose a question like this is pointless as what we call a theoretical study admits practice and, inversely, what is characterised as a practical discipline, presupposes theory (i.e. there cannot be pure theory or mere practice), the obvious answer is that the central point of the distinction between a theoretical and a practical study is the nature of the relation between theory and practice. We can say that while the former considers theory as primal in relation to practice the latter subordinates theory to practice. With this qualification of the posture over the theoretical or the practical character of philosophy it makes sense to make a distinction between the theoretical and the practical philosophy. In this paper I shall briefly illustrate this distinction on the basis of a clear determination of the meanings and the scope of the 'theoretical' and 'practical' and (b) to find out if philosophy is theoretical or practical in the light of independent investigations into the nature of philosophy...

2. There are some who characterise 'theory' and 'practice' in emotive sense. Expressions like, for instance, 'pure theory is idle or sterile', 'mere practice is blind or unenlightening' evince a con-feeling towards 'theory' and 'practice' respectively. Similarly, there are expressions which indicate a pro-feeling about the same. Naturally the emotive meaning of the concepts in question is hardly of any interest to us. We are concerned with the descriptive or the cognitive meanings of 'theory' and 'practice'. Now, in respect of either, we can make a distinction between its loose and accepted usage. 'Theory' in its loose usage means conjecture or hypothesis. This

usage does not conform to what I call the accepted meaning of the concept in question. 'Theory' in its accepted usage means a systematic statement of the principles of an object of enquiry. That is, we have a theory when there is a systematic or an organised account of what is enquired into. The systematic or organised account is in the form of elaboration of the principles underlying the nature or the function of what is studied for the obvious reason that predication-making is essential to a theory. Now the organised or the systematised study is made with a view to yielding knowledge or understanding of the object under investigation for its own sake. In a theoretical attitude, the subject concerned has as his sole object to discover or to find out the real which means, that he is in a receptive attitude. The meaning of this attitude is that the subject is not (as it is the case in a conative attitude) aware of a distinction between what is there and what is to be attained or brought into existence. It follows that a study qua theoretical considers the knowing or the discovering act as an end in itself. As contemplation is another name for the attitude of knowing for its sake a theoretical act is essentially contemplative. In respect of the concept of practice we can make a similar distinction between its loose and its accepted usage. 'Practice' in its loose usage means any interest in life or in what concerns life. This usage is not acceptable in view of its too wide range. It is, for instance, legitimate to say that in some cases the interest in life can be of a theoretical character, i.e. it can be directed to the understanding of what concerns life for its own sake. Practice in its accepted sense denotes action and as such it, unlike theory, naturally relates itself to the function or the operation of the will. The practical attitude vis-a-vis the theoretical one is one of bringing into existence what is not there. This means that the knowing or the discovering what is not by itself enough. What is essential is that the knowing act should be employed to effect into existence what is not there which amounts to the fulfilment of what is needed. It follows that such a fulfilment involves change in the present state of affairs. The change may naturally be in different directions, there being a correlation between the directions and the ends which need to be fulfilled. The range of the ends to be fulfilled is wide enough. It is wrong, for instance, to consider the material end as the only end and consequently to limit practicality to materiality. Practice, therefore, qua action or performance involves change. It is only natural that the upholders of practicality should defend it on the ground of dynamism which is inherent in it. The obverse of this defence is the attempted correlation of the theoretical and staticism. A practical study, therefore, is action or fulfilment-oriented. It, as it has been already observed, admits knowledge but only as a means to the realisation or the fulfilment of the end sought. Inversely, a theoretical study is knowledge-centred.

It requires practice or action only as a preparation for knowledge, considered as the intrinsic end or value. Thus the distinction between a theoretical and practical study represents a reversal of the means — end relationship. That is, what is a means in one is an end in the other. This relationship is different from the causal relation. That is, a theoretical study does not consider practice as the result or the offshoot of theory. Similarly, a practical discipline does not view a theory as the result of practice. There is no doubt that there are over-zealous practicalists who consider the relation between theory and practice as causal. Likewise there are theory centrists who consider everything other than theory as the function of theory. But the point is that the type of the distinction between a theoretical and a practical study which is relevant to the present enquiry does not admit the causal relationship. This is particularly evident from the nature of motivation to a theoretical study or a practical discipline. The motif to what we call a theory-centred study is the acquirement of knowledge or understanding while the motivation to practice-oriented study is the attainment of end or value that is sought. The theoretical acquirement, in one case, is the intrinsic end and everything other than it is a means thereto. The practical attainment, in the other case, is the sole end and anything other than it can be admitted only as a preparation for it. Whether a study is theoretical or practical can be judged only in the light of the nature of its motif that gives rise to it. This is particularly evident from the nature of the distinction between what we call theory-centric philosophy and practice-oriented philosophy. The motif to the former is the promotion of knowledge for its own sake while the motivation to the latter is action in the form of fulfilment of what is sought involving change in the present state of affairs. My present task now is to illustrate the distinction between the two types of philosophy.

3. It may be stated without fear of controversy that history of philosophy evinces the distinction between the theory-centred and the practice-centred philosophy. Generally, philosophy in the West can be characterised as theoretical while philosophy in India can be called practical. I say 'generally' as there are philosophies in the West (i. e. those evincing ethico-religious motivation) and Marxism which are practical. Similarly some of heterodox Hindu systems are hardly practical. But the point is that they are only exceptions and the exceptions prove the rule. It is not an exaggeration to state that it is on the basis of issue over theory and practice that we can profitably draw a distinction between Western Philosophy and Indian Philosophy. The attempted distinction between the two on the basis of some other issues is misleading. For instance, it is wrong to characterise Western philosophy as materialistic and Indian philosophy as spiritualistic. It is equally pointless to characterise Western philosophy as world-

affirming and Indian philosophy as world-negating. In a paper on 'On the Misrepresentation of Hinduism' which I presented at the department of Theology, University of Birmingham recently I tried to show that to view Hinduism in negatives is to misrepresent it. It is not wrong to say that it is on the issue over the theoretical *vs* the practical rather than any other that Western philosophy can be contrasted against Indian philosophy. To come now to the essentially theoretical character of motivation to philosophy in the West. One cannot possibly determine the nature and the bias of philosophy in the West merely on the basis of the etymological meaning of the Western concept of philosophy. That is, it is superficial to say that philosophy is love of wisdom and, therefore, it is theoretical. It is patent that the etymological meaning of a subject does not always indicate its nature. For instance, *darsan*, the Sanskrit word for Hindu philosophy means insight or apprehension. Now this etymological meaning of 'Darsan' is contrary to the essentially practical motif to philosophy in India. One in judging if a study is theoretical or practical needs to (a) enquire into the nature of the basic question in which philosophy or philosophising originates and to (b) ascertain if one common motif is in evidence in the historical development of the philosophy in different periods. There is no doubt that the basic query which gives rise to philosophising in the West is of a theoretical character, involving as it does a demand for the acquirement of knowledge of a comprehensive type. Thales, the founder of Western philosophy, sets himself to discover that, which when known, everything else can be known and this task was theoretical *par excellence*. It is legitimate to say that philosophy in the West originates in the sense of wonder as expressed in the demand for knowing fully and comprehensively. To take up now the second criterion for determining the nature of philosophy. There is no doubt that an unambiguously theoretical motif is in evidence in the historical development of Western philosophy in all periods except the medieval one. But, significantly enough, the philosophy of the medieval period or the middle ages, has not gained recognition in the philosophical world of the West. That is, in the periods, ancient, modern and current, in those which are taken cognizance of the West, the theoretical motif is dominant. In the ancient period, the noted Greek philosophers were consistently moved by the desire to provide a stable and a clearly formulated system of knowledge of what is considered to be real. Socrates, as we know, had as his sole object the formulation of the cognitive basis of matters of practical interest. His thesis of virtue as knowledge is a case in point. Similarly Plato's one principal object was to establish that only the philosophers can know and that they can be statesmen primarily because they know. If we come to the modern period we find the same urge to knowing. The rationalists of this period have as their

principal aim to show that knowledge of the whole of reality can be modelled on mathematics and yield the same certitude which the latter claims and this is possible if one starts with *apriori* concepts and deduces conclusions therefrom in a strict logical way. This is speculative philosophy *par excellence*. With the rise of empiricism there is a breakthrough or a new turning-point. But what is significant that with this change there is no weakening of the theoretical interest. The only change is in the direction of the restricting or the narrowing of the range of the theoretical interest to the extent that with the rise of the critical spirit the need or the demand is felt to know more of less and to apprehend the conditions of knowing itself. Kant's primal philosophical enquiry: Is *apriori* synthetic judgment or knowledge possible? has a pure theoretical interest. There is no doubt that Kant's principal contribution consists in the formulation of the theoretical method of determining the conditions of knowing. With Hegel there is the revival of speculation. We can say that in the alternation between speculation and criticism the theoretical motif remains dominant. In the philosophies of the current period, *i.e.* linguistic philosophy and existentialism, the same theoretical motivation is in evidence. In linguistic philosophy there has been still further restriction of the range or the scope of the theoretical, the restriction being, correlative to the narrowing of the scope and the function of philosophy itself. The task or the function of philosophy is limited to that of analysing the statements of a certain kind *i.e.* the scientific one. The knowledge that the analysis yields is essentially one of proper linguistic usage. The studies in values—*aesthetic*, *ethical* and *spiritual*, are admissible only as linguistic analysis of statements about values which are names for *meta-aesthetics*, *meta-ethics*, and *meta-religion*. The point is that a practical study like *ethics* is so treated that it is completely divested of its practical interest. That is why it is said that *meta-ethics* is not *ethics* at all. Existentialism is a theoretical philosophy. There are some who attribute practical motif to existentialism on the ground of its primal concern for or interest in human existence. This attribution is wrong as the mere interest in what concerns life or existence, as we have already noted, is practical only in its loose sense. Existentialism is characterised by the interest in the understanding or the knowledge of existence for its own sake, *i.e.* not for using it as a means to a change in existence itself. A programme of action or of effecting change in the way of existence through the fulfilment of end or ends is not known to existentialism, considered as a philosophy. For Sartre, or for that matter a typical existentialist, freedom—the highest ideal—is not an ideal to be attained. Rather it is a fact to be encountered. It is a brute contingency that needs to be discovered or understood. We referred to some exceptions to the theoretical tradition of Western philosophy. One exception, as we observed, is Marxism. There is

no doubt that Marxism is a practice-centred philosophy and here there is a meeting point of marxist philosophy and Indian philosophy. The two philosophies having opposed ontological commitments agree on admitting the primacy of the practical. Marx in conformity to dialectics speaks of the unity of theory and practice but in practice he admits the primacy of the latter. The basic question which moves Marx is essentially practical, viz., what needs to be done to bring about liberation? Marx throughout considers the task of pursuing knowledge for its own sake as fruitless. It is a luxury which a bourgeois can afford. Marx's classical utterance is—'The philosophers have interpreted the world: the point now is to change it.' The liberation that is sought is material in character. It is in the nature of freedom from bondage to which the proletariat (the exploited class) are subject. In the words of Marx 'Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being a reality.' The point of Marx's exposure of Feuerbach's materialism is, as we know, that it is not practice-oriented. Now the epistemological or the ontological superstructures that Marx builds can be significant only in their directedness to the fulfilment of the task of liberation. It is in the urge to the attainment of liberation that philosophy in India originates. It can be stated without fear of controversy that the different systems of Indian philosophy except materialism are liberation-centred. There is, however, no denying that the practical motif to the attainment of liberation is made more explicit in some systems than in others. Now the liberation which the Hindu philosophers seek, unlike the Marxists' goal of philosophical thinking, is not material. It has an essential spiritual content so far as it consists in self-realisation, the realisation being in the form of the fulfilment of the self's transcendent or real state, as it is in the Sāṅkhya system, or of the state of union or identity with the Infinite as it is in evidence in the other orthodox systems. Now the liberation or the state of self-realisation is essentially practical and that for three reasons: (a) It is in the nature of bliss, (b) It has a transforming effect on the conduct or the living of the person seeking liberation or realisation. One who attains liberation in this life (*jīvanmukta*) is really different from the one who is not a *jīvanmukta*. (c) The discipline of the will involving ascetic and altruistic conduct is a necessary condition of the attainment of liberation. The emphasis on the release from suffering is in evidence particularly in Buddhism and the Sāṅkhya. Some object to the characterisation of philosophy in India as practical on the ground that at least two influential systems, Nyāya and Advaita Vedānta, have a predominantly theoretical interest in view of their logical and the metaphysical character respectively. The obvious rejoinder to the objection is that both the systems are practice-centred so far as they are oriented to the fulfilment of the ideal of liberation. The practical bias of the

Nyāya school is in evidence in the Nyāya-Sāstras. To quote from the Sūtras: Pain, birth, activity, fault, misapprehension—on the successive annihilation of these in the reverse order there follows the release. Release which consists in the soul's getting rid of the world is the condition of Supreme felicity marked by perfect tranquility and not touched by any defilement. A person by the true knowledge of the sixteen categories is able to remove his misapprehensions. (Nyāya Sūtra, 1:2 with commentary, Sacred books of the Hindus, translated by M. S. C. Vidyabhusana.) Similarly the systematically worked out metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta can be considered to have a practical character for the following reasons. (a) Brahman—the ultimate Reality—which the Advaita Vedānta enquires into is in the nature of bliss. (b) The knowledge that liberation is has a transforming effect on one who is liberated. (c) Karma or action is admitted as a necessary preparation for the attainment of the goal. To elaborate the last two reasons. Śaṅkara, the most noted exponent of Advaita Vedānta, consistently upholds that the discovery or the knowledge of the real which liberates the seeker concerned means a new way of life for him. This is evident from Śaṅkara's description of the mode of life of a *jīvanmukta*. For a *jīvanmukta*, for instance, the virtuous way of life is natural or spontaneous. It is, therefore, wrong to attribute a theoretical motif to the Advaita pursuit of knowledge. To come to the third reason. It is misleading to maintain that Śaṅkara does not have a place for action in his account of the mode of attainment of liberation. He throughout maintains that a rigid cultivation of the will in the form of the withdrawal from the way of ego or of passion prepares one for the discovery or the apprehension of the Real. There is no reason to believe that Śaṅkara is anti-action. The objection to the characterisation of Indian philosophy as practical on the ground of the indifference of the Hindus to materiality has no point as the scope or the range of practicality cannot be limited or restricted to materiality. It may be stated, in this connection that the *Gītā* which is the Bible of the Hindus is action-centred.

4. We have given a brief exposition of two views of philosophy one theory-centric and the other practice-oriented—the views as associated with two philosophical traditions—the Western and the Indian respectively. Marxism which is one of the exceptions to the Western philosophical tradition shares the practical bias of Indian philosophy and in this sharing we have a meeting of the extremes. My task in the constructive part of the paper is to find out if philosophy is theoretical or practical on the basis of independent investigations into its nature. The thesis that I shall try to uphold is that philosophy is theory but the theory that philosophy is, vis-a-vis scientific theory, has what I may call practical implication. By 'practical implication' I mean the internality of practice as a means to theory. Now as the

practice which is internal to theory is not what philosophy seeks as an end, we cannot say that philosophy is practical. In the discussion on the nature and the scope of the meaning of 'theory' and 'practice', I observed that one can judge a study as theoretical or practical in the light of its motivation. The essential motivation to philosophising is the pursuit of knowledge. The elaboration of the thesis is possible through a discussion on the nature of philosophy. Philosophy is an autonomous discipline so far as it has, for its subject-matter, which cannot be fully determined and that it cannot be apprehended through the epistemic method as it is in evidence in an ordinary empirical study or a pure logical discipline. That is why philosophy cannot be modelled on a completely determinate study having a definite method of answering completely well-defined questions. It is not wrong to say that the autonomy of philosophy consists in its indeterminateness and openness which, it may be observed, have their source in its (philosophy's) subject-matter. The subject-matter may be characterised as being. Philosophy is primarily ontology so far as it seeks knowledge of being. Being (which is plural) is beyond, which, by the nature of the case, cannot be fully determined in an empirical and logical way, which means, that it (being) is indeterminate. The approach to being — the beyond — can be called mystical, mystical, as we shall observe later, in what I call its deeper meaning. Being — the beyond — is a mystery and like the latter it is both manifest and hidden. A mystery, as we know, in its complete disclosure loses its mystery-character. This is also true of being. Heidegger in his characterisation of what he calls Being refers to its irreducible concealment. The Being, in its complete manifestation, loses its distinctive character. My difference with Heidegger is that on my view being — the inescapable beyond or mystery — is plural. Philosophy thus seeks knowledge of plural beyond or mystery. Now the starting-point of the enquiry into the nature of being — the beyond — is one's awareness which is indubitable. Descartes' insight that one should not in his philosophical enquiry start with a posited entity but with what he cannot escape admitting is indeed valuable. Broadly speaking, there are three different kinds of awareness (a) object-awareness (b) self-awareness and (c) value-awareness. The phenomenological description of each type of awareness indicates its intentionality which consists in its directedness or reference to something that is beyond the data. The point of the transcendence of the states in question is that the characteristics or the facts about the data cannot be explained on the basis thereof. It is only on the presupposition of something beyond the data that can make the characteristics or the facts in question intelligible. The referent of the data concerned which is the source of the characteristics thereof is a persistent beyond and as such it cannot be completely disclosed as any such disclosure amounts to its reduction

to the status of data with all the difficulties of the explanation of what is given. Thus referent of the given discloses itself into the given and yet it remains concealed or hidden like a mystery. Corresponding to the data of each type of awareness, therefore, is a mystery. Now the thesis of the rationale of the transcendence of the given to mystery can be explained with reference to each of the three types of awareness. The object-awareness which is characterised by an impression of externality has for its data sense-data. Now the dual characteristics of sense data — viz, (a) variation and (b) uniformity — cannot be explained on the basis of the data themselves. To take up the first. We see blood as red, milk as white, taste sugar as sweet and pickle as hot. We apprehend a sofa as soft and a stone as hard. Now the difference in sense-apprehension cannot be explained on the basis of data. It can have its source in the nature of the objects which are apprehended. That is, its objects being what they are, we have different sense-data. The other fact about sense-data, viz., uniformity, likewise cannot have its source in what is given, the sense-data. The normal subjects apprehend the same objects in a similar way under similar circumstances. It is the uniformity in sensory apprehension that makes the ordinary social communication possible. If the normal subjects would have responded differently to the same objects we would have been in a very confused state. Now this basic fact about sensory apprehension cannot be explained on the level of sense-data, the reason being, that they qua data are in the nature of private states i. e. the states as experienced by this or that subject. The uniformity, therefore, has its source in what may be called the object-being which is intelligible, as that what is beyond the data. The object-being which is characterised by externality is the natural referent of the data. The being is in the nature of a mystery as it cannot be completely manifested in the data as the total disclosure of the being amounts to its reduction to the given — the data and as the data qua data are not self-explicable, we face the predicament of the persistent postponement of explanation thereof. The realist insight into the non-reducibility of an object-being into mere data is indeed sound. Phenomenalism seeks to avoid the predicament referred to through the false attribution to sense-data of certain properties which do not belong to them at all. What is characteristic of modern empiricism is that it represents a vacillation between the Realists' insight and the phenomenologists' reductionism. This vacillation is pointless as it is only obvious — and this some of the modern empiricists are realising — that the external object, in its beingness, is something other than the data. It is in the nature of a beyond — a mystery. Now the range of the external object is wide enough extending as it does from the paper I am writing on to the distant star. There is no denying that the mystery-element varies from one external

object to another. To come now to the second type of awareness, viz., self-awareness. This awareness likewise is transcendental as it refers to beyond itself and its data to a being which, by the nature of the case, resists reduction to the data. The data of the self-awareness are the states. The states are not self-explicable as certain facts about the given — i.e. the self as presented — are explicable only on the presupposition of what I call the self-being. These facts or characteristics are identity and unity. The self as presented means, as we know, identity and unity. As the identity is not of each of the successive states of the self but is of the self as a whole it implies unity. It (the identity) implies unity. Now the two inter-related characteristics of the self as presented or given cannot be explained on the basis of the states which are plural and successive. We are, therefore, referred to something which can be called the self-being which makes the identity and the unity of self-experience possible. This something is, by the nature of the case, what is beyond the given—the states. It discloses itself into the states but not totally as any such disclosure would mean its reduction to the states with the inherent predicament as [referred to]. There are, besides identity and unity, experiences of harmony, depth etc. which point to the self-being or mystery as the ground thereof. It is evident that the transcendence as involved in the self-awareness and its data and the mystery as correlative to the transcendence are different from the transcendence and the mystery as involved in object-awareness. The correlation between awareness and transcendence and between transcendence and being is evident also in the third type of awareness viz., value-awareness. Value-awareness is likewise transcendental, i.e. it points to value-being, the being which is other than the data concerned. Broadly speaking, value-awareness is two-fold accordingly as it is of two types of value—ethical and aesthetic—good and beauty. Good-awareness and beauty-awareness have correspondingly different types of data. The former has as its datum the presentation of something as commended or approved (the something, in this case, is action), while the latter has as its datum the presentation of something as appreciated (something, in this case, is an object, the range whereof is wide enough). Now the good as being is more than the state of being approved. One obvious fact about ethical response viz., uniformity, cannot be explained on the basis of the states in question in view of their private character. That is, there is something about ethical value—good—which cannot exhaust itself into the given. Similarly, the beauty—the aesthetic value is more than the state of appreciation. The state of appreciation is not self-explanatory as the fact of uniformity about it cannot be accounted for on the basis thereof. It can have source in beauty-being. The being cannot exhaust itself into the given. Thus the value of either type is a beyond—a mystery. An enquiry into the nature of the different types

of awareness has yielded an insight into the nature of being-mystery. We observed that the mystery — the being — is plural, the difference between one mystery and another being correlative to the difference in the nature of the transcendence involved. The view that God or for that matter, the One alone is the mystery involves an arbitrary delimitation of the range of mystery. In my view there is no reason to affirm being in the singular in the manner of Heidegger.

We have now an idea of the ontology which philosophy is. The ontology is, as one has seen, metaphysical in view of the correlation between transcendence and being and of the transcendent or the beyond-character of the latter. It follows that the knowledge which philosophy seeks is such that it cannot be modelled on ordinary knowledge — apriori or empirical as it, unlike the latter, cannot be complete or final and that it cannot be determined in a direct or simple way. What then is the nature of the knowledge which philosophy seeks? In answer we can say that the knowledge is mystical not in its traditional usage but in what I call its deeper meaning. (I have developed my view of the deeper meaning of the mystical in my latest book entitled 'Transcendence, mystery and Maya.') The 'mystical' in its deeper significance denotes an experience of participation in being-mystery. The mystery, on the deeper view of the mystical, is not the one spiritual Being (as it is on the traditional view). It is, as we have seen, plural. The experience of the mystery, the being is, unlike its traditional usage, one of participation in and not complete identity with the being concerned. What is distinctive of what I call the experience of participation is its irreducible awareness of the difference with the object of experience. This awareness is inevitable in view of the persistently transcendent character of the being in question. The point is that the experience of being is dual in character, so far as it is one of participation in one difference from what is apprehended as real. Now the knowledge-through-participation i.e. the type of knowledge which philosophy seeks is different from the type of knowledge which science (pure science) aims at. The distinction between two types of knowledge can be best understood in the light of the difference between a problem and a mystery. We can say that philosophy and science belong to the realm of mystery and the sphere of problem respectively. A problem is that which is clearly determinate awaiting a complete solution thereof. What is distinctive of a problem is that with its solution the immediate task of a scientist is finished and this is so because of the externalistic character of a problem. It (problem) appears as something external to one who encounters it. A mystery has characteristics which are opposed to those of a problem. A mystery is characterised by indeterminateness. It is also such that it cannot be fully resolved. Besides, it is that in which the subject in question is

involved. The demands which a problem and mystery represent, therefore, are essentially different. It is possible to consider a mystery in the light of the characteristics of a problem. But such a view of it involves its reduction or degradation to the status of a problem. The degradation of this kind is in evidence in the extension of the scientific or the externalistic attitude to the sphere of mystery to which it does not apply. The externalistic character of the problem-centred scientific knowledge is equally evident in the cases of the scientific treatment, say, of life and mind. The sciences of life and mind treat the phenomena in question on the model of an external object. Now the distinction between knowledge-through-participation and externalistic knowledge helps us in determining the nature of philosophy in respect of the issue over theory and practice. This brief discussion on the nature of philosophy clearly indicates that philosophy as ontology has as its primary function the pursuit of knowledge and as such it is primarily theoretical. What is significant is that the knowledge in question is viewed as an end and not as a means to the fulfilment of this or that need. That is, philosophy does not seek the utilisation — material or otherwise of the knowledge concerned. Heidegger in the emphasis on the theoretical character of ontology refers to the risk of the adoption of the use-attitude to the knowledge of being. Such an adoption on his view, involves distortion and degradation of ontology, and, for that matter, of philosophy. There is much in Heidegger's insight into the essentially theoretical character of philosophy. But the important point is (the point which Heidegger does not admit) that from the fact that one should be free from the use-attitude to the knowledge that philosophy seeks it does not follow that the knowledge concerned cannot have practical implication. 'Practical implication' as I have already observed, denotes the internality of practice as a means to knowledge — the intrinsic end. This implication is, however, a matter of degree. For instance, it is more extended in cases of self-knowledge and value-knowledge. Now the practice viewed as internal to the type of knowledge that philosophy seeks involves a change in the mode of willing. This change is, not merely appropriate, but is also essential to philosophical or metaphysical knowledge and this is so for (a) the latter's character of participation or involvement in the object concerned and (b) the beyond-character of the object in question. By the same token the practical demand on will as referred to is absent in scientific or externalistic knowledge. The change in the mode of willing as referred to consists in the attainment of the states of detachment and humility which are interrelated. This practical attainment is not required of scientific knowledge. Detachment, it may be pointed out, is not a mere negative state of withdrawal from what needs to be overcome. But it is a positive state of freedom, freedom from two-fold domination, one of the way of the ego and

the other of the interest of what is ordinary or common place. The way of ordinary existence is one of two-fold domination. Similarly humility which is related to detachment is a state of freedom from the claim to exclusiveness or aggressiveness which, it may be pointed out, is reflection or the expression of the first type of domination. Now both detachment and humility are necessary to the knowledge which is in the nature of involvement or participation in the beyond or the mystery. The opening to being which is beyond is possible in the state of freedom from the way of ego. The function of the ego, as we know, is of one of narrowing or obstruction the expansion of consciousness which an insight into the beyond requires. This expansion is all the more required in the case of the relation of involvement or participation in the object concerned. It may be said that the degree of involvement (involvement is a matter of degree) is correlative to the extent of detachment or freedom from what we have called the domination of the ego. The release from the domination of 'everydayness' is not that there should be a temporary withdrawal from the total or the exclusive demand of what is ordinary or commonplace. What is required is that the attitude of withdrawal should be dispositional. Now one who is involved in the beyond is disposed to behave in a way that what belongs to the sphere of what is commonplace or ordinary has a subordinate or secondary role. He adopts the role of being a spectator or witness to the matters of ordinary interest (Heidegger himself admits that the adoption of such an attitude constitutes what he calls 'ontological freedom'). The state of humility is likewise natural to the disposition that is essential to an opening to the mystery, i.e. we have observed that the being is such it cannot be completely known and the mystery, which the being is, cannot be fully resolved. The attitude of admission of the non-finality and the incompleteness of the knowledge of being is another name for humility. The humility is not humiliation as it is in the recognition of the inherent limits of human knowledge and the consequential opening to mystery that one discovers a meaning or purpose of existence. Now the practical demand which is implied in philosophical or metaphysical knowledge is not in evidence in scientific knowledge in view of the fact that it is, as we have observed, externalistic 'Scientific knowledge', we have noted further, is externalistic so far as it is in the nature of the solutions to the problems considered as external to the subject concerned. A problem is that which is there which is encountered and the solution thereof is possible through the application of reason to experience, the application which is independent of the function of will as referred to. It follows that the practical freedom as evinced is detachment and humility has no relevance to scientific knowledge. Scientism or the typical scientific attitude indicates the absence of detachment as understood in the sense

of freedom from the domination of the ego, and of humility. This is so because the assumption underlying scientificism is that man can know everything, given the proper resources, and that the modes of knowing are subject to complete control and manipulation. This overconfidence, which is natural to the scientists' attitude, is rooted in a kind of egoity. In the attitude of overconfidence or egoity the persistent openness to mystery is not possible. The involvement or the participation in mystery is a matter of degree and correspondingly detachment and humility admit of degree. We noted earlier that the practical implication is rather extended especially in the cases of self-knowledge and value-knowledge as a greater change in the mode of willing is involved therein. I shall now show this with brief reference to the nature of self-knowledge. (I shall undertake a treatment of the nature of value-knowledge in a subsequent paper). Self-knowledge is involvement or participation on the inner reality or the mystery and as such it has a greater relatedness to willing than the participation in the outer or the external mystery. The involvement in the self-mystery is, as we have seen, in the transcendence of a given complex of states, the important components whereof are desires, emotions and passions etc. Now the transcendence of the given sub-complex of desires, emotions, passions etc. naturally relates itself to the function of willing to the extent so far as the freedom from the absorption into the complex in question is another name for self-control. It follows that self-control is internal as a means to the insight into the mystery of the self. If it is pointed out by way of objection that it is self-knowledge which yields self-control and that, therefore, it cannot be conditioned by the latter, the obvious reply is that self-control can both be a means to and the result of self-knowledge. There is no contradiction here as the self-control which conditions self-knowledge is not the same as the self-control which results therefrom. The point is that in an attitude of control of what is given that one can have an experience of the involvement in the mystery of the self. The emphasis on the connection between self-control and meditation on the nature of the self which is much in evidence in Hindu thought has its obvious point. Now the self-control is not at all essential to the treatment of the self on the model of an external object the treatment that is typical of the scientific approach to the inner life of man. We have so far tried to give an exposition and a justification of the practical implication, in its general and extended form, of the nature of the knowledge that philosophy seeks vis-a-vis scientific knowledge by way of showing the distinction between scientific knowledge and philosophical knowledge.

It does not follow, as I have stressed from the thesis of the practical implication of philosophical knowledge that philosophy is practical. I have tried to show that philosophy as ontology seeks knowledge as an end and so far it is primarily theory. But the theory

that philosophy is, unlike scientific theory, is characterised by what I have called practical implication. This characterisation does not amount to the reduction of philosophy to a practical study as the practice in question is not intended as an end. Philosophy aims at knowledge as an end and its autonomy consists in the distinctiveness of the knowledge that is sought.

— Comments

C. M. C. Sprung

There are two foci in Dr. Sengupta's paper: 1. his contrast of western and Indian philosophy; 2. his treatment of philosophy as participation in the mystery which is being. Both are very interesting and both deserve further study. I propose to take up his thought on the second of these two questions and to say something about the first only in passing.

Concerning the first matter: Dr. Sengupta says "the basic query which gives rise to philosophy in the west is of a theoretical character." Again, "It is in the urge to the attainment of liberation that philosophy in India originates." I can let the first statement stand, but when the second is contrasted with it, I have doubts about this way of distinguishing Indian and Western thought. The former does not *arise* in the urge to liberation, as I see it: it functions within a thought-world in which liberation is the possibility and end of man; a world in which to understand how liberation is to be conceived is the first problem of thought. But I do not see why this makes Indian thought *practical*. Thought is thought, it seems to me and though Sanskrit thinkers had other problems than men in Europe, as philosophers they were not deciding how to *do* things, they were deciding how to understand things.

I simply want to say that the pair of terms, practical — theoretical, does not in my view help us to understand the qualities of Indian and European philosophy.

Now the prime question. Dr. Sengupta takes the position that "philosophy is primarily ontology so far as it seeks knowledge of being." And he thinks and argues his way to the conclusion that knowledge through participation in being is the knowledge philosophy seeks. Such a position is a challenge it seems to me and a welcome one, overdue, to our conventional notion that philosophy is knowing in the ordinary sense of the word.

Dr. Sengupta arrives at this conclusion in the following way. We have three types of awareness: 1. object-awareness; 2. self-awareness; 3. value-awareness. In each case the data given us points to a being beyond them which alone can allow the data to be what they are, but which itself is not more data. Object-being, self-being and value-being "disclose themselves into the data given" as he puts it but, always remain mysteries themselves and are never given. Being, or

beings, I should say, as Dr. Sengupta insists being is plural, is transcendent to the "given data". It remains "being mystery". Yet philosophy is to know this, though its knowledge is not knowledge in the ordinary sense. What is it? It is "mystical in a deeper sense" and what does that mean? It is "participation in being-mystery"; participation is not identity with. One remains aware of the difference between the object and oneself.

This is an interesting attempt to understand the nature of philosophy. But I have some difficulties. Why call "participation in mystery" knowledge? Knowledge is a relation we can sustain to data, i.e. the particulars of experience, but why retain the word when talking about participation in something which is defined so that it can never be an object of knowledge? Would it not be clear if Dr. Sengupta openly joined me in arguing that philosophy is not theory about the way things are, but is rather concerned with where things come from. My own view seems very close to his but, as some may have observed, I argue that philosophy is not *theory*. Now if one holds, as Dr. Sengupta does, that philosophy must be either theory or practice, and that it is not practice, then one is stuck with it being theory. But why must it be either? Knowing and doing are not an exhaustive dichotomy. The life of thought on the border between facts and understanding facts, between reasoning and exploration, on the border between the visible and where the light comes from that makes things visible, this life of thought does not conform to the specifications of knowing—and that is why the notion of truth as commonly used does not apply to it except as an admonition. This same life of thought does not conform to the specifications of practice because it is not directed towards a future state of affairs. It is the original disclosure of meaning on which both theories and value judgements rest; it is perhaps more like practice than like theory. But first we ought to recognize it as something *sui generis*. I believe that Dr. Sengupta does so recognize it, but obscures this fact by retaining the respectable word theory to describe it.

"Im Anfang war die Tat" (in the Beginning was the Action), says Goethe axiomatically in his *Faust*, wherein he defined the concept of action so as to encompass and thereby permit the substitution of the Word (das Wort), the Sense (der Sinn), and finally the Force (die Kraft).

Investigating the meaning of the term action in the above statement of Goethe, we might ask: Does he refer to the eternal and primitive character of the becoming, as opposed to the idea of a transcendental cause? Did he define action as supreme and sovereign act of God in his transcendental immutability? Or did he mean the anteriority of the nonintellectual, of the instinctive actions preceding the ideas and abstractions? It is difficult to give an answer. Probably the famous verse covers a multitude of different ideas, intuitively perceived by the author, and from the very association of these suggestions originated the profound sense the poetical axiom seems to express.

By examining the etymology of the word action we may get a clearer view which would enable us to gain a better understanding of that term. Action derives from the Latin "agere", literally to move or put in motion: in Greek "atein", to conduct, to push, to direct. That evokes an idea of propulsion. But in spite of being derived from such transitive verbs, acting is an intransitive one, like swimming, flying or travelling. Action also may disregard the object, because it comprehends the causes as well as the consequences. In a sense the verb 'to act' is even an absolute one, intrinsically sufficient to itself. Yet it is like giving birth to two other words, *act* and *action*.

An *act* denotes a thing done, *action* the process of doing. Act is a single exercise, action a continuous one. An act is exterior to the agent, an action interior. The aristotelian definition of God as the "pure act" appears to mean that He is without virtualities, because he already possesses all that is conceivably true being. It is clear that in this sense one could never speak of a pure action.

Even in the everyday language, although each term is very often mistaken for the other, the two words have quite different meanings. Act, deriving from "actum est", the past participle of "agere", points rather to the general result of an action, to what has been done, like the acts of a congress. Besides, this word is always applied to man. Action embraces the intension, the élan, thought and will, as well as the continuous series of means that follow. In a second acceptance it may also analogously be applied to exterior things, like the action

of the wind. But when used for the physical world, the term implies the strict connection and succession of causes and effects, the whole depending upon the force which originally started the motion. In man, contrarily, action does not merely amount to a simple and unavoidable link in an uninterrupted chain of events, otherwise we would speak of reflexes. The word implies, in fact, that the acting forces are consciously accepted and even directed in a really chosen direction.

Another important distinction results from the fact that the action, as already mentioned above, is interior to the acting subject, i.e. it comprises the hidden processes that lead to the different conducts, it hints also the incentives which are elaborated into a motive. The act, on the other hand, is exterior to the acting subject, it is the visible result of a psychical development which itself escapes the observer.

The term action then contains many subtleties and difficulties which may lead to various confusions. But what about its contrary, inaction? Does it exist at all? As some old sayings have it: "What is not acting does not exist", or: "A being is there where it acts". Consequently there remains a doubt. Confusion also arises because sometimes passivity, leisure, torpor etc. are mistaken for inaction. Moreover, as action corresponds to an interior, often not visible process, it may falsely be mistaken for inaction. The term inaction is thus scarcely applicable to living beings, and it would be senseless to speak of the inaction of a stone. Nevertheless, we shall come back to that question when treating it from the point of view of the *Bhagavad-Gitā*, in the second part of this paper.

I

Let us now consider some metaphysical aspects of our question. In the first instance we should like to speak of the chiefly French "Philosophy of Action". It was started by Maurice Blondel in a famous thesis he presented in 1893 at the Sorbonne. Other important figures of that philosophical current were e.g. Father Laberthonnière and Ed. Le Roy. Although based upon a rational thinking in the tradition of western philosophy, it represents in fact a Christian Philosophy in the frame of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, in contrast to those who philosophize on the human nature in an abstract way, forgetting the concrete reality and tending towards a gratuitous intellectualism, this philosophy begins by considering in the first line the human being as it is or appears to be. Regarding the endeavour of avoiding bare speculations, we may remind ourselves that approximately at the same period Bergson had emphasized the importance of intuition and Husserl attempted to come back to the things in themselves.

It was the genius of Blondel to put human action into the centre of

his metaphysical investigation. He thus began with the so-called objective reality which everybody experiences without any need for metaphysical or theological pre-suppositions. Although his method confines itself to scrutinizing human acting, other issues and questions inevitably arose therefrom, like for example the problem of existence, of being, of thought.¹ This inevitable consequence leads so far that in a sense Blondel's philosophy could be called a philosophy of existence. He avoids, however, in sharp contrast to the existentialists, to give way to any theory of existence, or to make a definite distinction between existence and essence. He sticks to the human action, from where other problems may soar by themselves. In his initial work, the thesis of 1893, he boldly states with a remarkable sincerity: "I am acting without even knowing what action means, without having desired to come to being, without knowing exactly neither who I am nor if I am at all."

Unfolding methodically the contents of action, he puts himself, so to say, "at the interior of the action", not in order to give it a new character, but to recognize which are its exigencies. "Instead of pretending to put before into action what it does not include, I have scrupulously restricted my effort to discern what it already comprehends."²

According to Blondel it is very important to discover our real will, because that which we think we want is not our true and profound willing: What a man wants without knowing it, what thought thinks without expressing it, what being implies and pre-supposes, but not explicitly, Blondel wants to make it manifest before the eyes of everybody. All this through the unfolding of human action into all its virtualities. In order to achieve this "it is good to re-establish the sense of the intrinsic value of action to recognize in it an essential and substantial function, to bring to light its metaphysical character and its ontological efficiency".³ "The action cannot be reduced to the idea we may have of it, it is not only a sequence, but an initiative..., a link by which is unified what no discursive analysis can exhaust or supplement".⁴

Thus Blondel proceeded towards a particularly original and courageous spiritual adventure aimed at discovering the mystery hidden behind the action and consequently behind the thinking of the human being and willing. No wonder that such an adventure led to a philosophical isolation which remained an outstanding feature in the life of Blondel ever since he was a student at the Ecole Normale. Although sincerely respecting his masters, he thought their teaching to be lacking in many respects and looked for other sources to appease his spiritual needs. He found a substantial support in the works of St. Paul, St. Augustin, St. Bernard and the Spanish Mystics.

By investigating the contents of action, he discovers its profound spiritual meaning. He distinguishes three aspects or degrees in it.

1. —In the first approach action seems to be opposed to idea. In fact it may mould a matter exterior to the agent, bring into cooperation different physical or ideal powers. But in struggling with the refractory matter, this may in the end enrich itself and the agent by its means of expression. Also the action very often incarnates an idea.

2. —Action may further be opposed to intention. Effectively it sometimes appears to construe very imperfectly the intention it should develop and achieve. But in doing so, at the same moment it moulds the agent himself and *he* becomes, so to say, his own work. By so doing the action may strengthen the moral intention in the organism, spiritualize the animal and, through it, the social life.

3. —Finally, contemplative action may realize thought in its most universal and eternal contents. In that sense, action may be opposed to "discursive agitation".⁵

According to Blondel, contemplation represents the foremost action. It is "a kind of active rest concealing a pacified and triumphant dynamism". As contemplative action expresses the perfect unity of being and knowing, there is in fact no radical and final heterogeneousness between action and thought. That could only be if thought were confined to a system of representations, relations, notional abstractions, detached from life and even substituted for it. This, however, is not true, as it would neither be true to see in action a mere pushing of uncontrollable and obscure powers which consciousness could never hope to enlighten. For the author, action has to build the synthesis of spontaneousness and thinking, of reality and knowledge, of the moral person and the universal order, of the intimate life of spirit and the superior sources wherefrom it is fed. Then he quotes Joubert who said: "To think of God is an action". St. John of the Cross declared in a manner even more profound: "The action which envelops and achieves all the others is to think really of God".

In his own words Blondel says: "In the action I am studying what precedes and prepares, what produces and nourishes, what follows and develops the very fact of the distinct thinking... The action, i.e. all the adjoining properties which, coming from the thought as from a virtual focus, little by little show us the real focus and let us understand the law of convergence and diffusion of the beams... To act, in that strong and complete acceptance, means to look for the concord of knowing, willing, and being... It is also to explain and measure the importance of the intervention of thought in life. And it means to substitute to the abstract and fallible logic of thought *the real logic*... In fact I intend to establish a General Logic of which the Aristotelian, Baconian or Hegelian would be but particular cases... But do not believe that I try to legitimate mystical believings in an irrational way".⁶

The real focus just mentioned and distinguished from the virtual

one, is what Blondel called "pure Acting", the absolute and one Being, God in the supreme sense. Starting from the Aristotelian definition of God as "pure Act", he comes to prefer the expression "pure Acting" because the verb is not transitive and does not imply any temporal or spatial notion.

The Pure Acting conceals an infinitely fecund and prolific dynamism without any need to spring out of itself or to introduce in itself whatever may be transient, inadequate or undefined.

Under the motion of Him of whom it is said that "semper agit" not only within the things but in himself we find a universal dynamism which pushes all the becoming towards being.⁷

Through all these considerations Blondel gradually came to the conviction that the most important problems of the ontology is that of the compatibility between the absolute Being and other beings, which are precarious, far from the plenitude at which they aim, and whose very existence appears first as paradoxical and mysterious. That means, of course, also to raise the question of the creation. The answer will be given through his christian metaphysics.

As attentive as he is to safeguard the metaphysical tradition of the Occident, though he deepened it, he was no less careful of orthodoxy as a christian philosopher. Without any violation of the bases of his religion, of the theological mysteries and dogmas, he tries nevertheless by his philosophy of action to deepen, intensify, sometimes even to purify some christian conceptions, adapting them to the modern world. In doing so he sometimes shows a boldness and a critical sense which could not avoid raising some severe objections. We can see it even in his correspondence with Father Laberthonnière, a long-standing spiritual friend, who seemed not to appreciate very much these "innovations".⁸ In connection with this we feel obliged to remind briefly some characteristics of the christian dogma. First of all, the creation is based upon the Grace and Charity of God. The human soul is not part of the divine Substance, it is created by the non-created God. It is a gift, and man is only by Grace what God is by Nature. Yet, in spite of not being immortal by its proper nature, the soul is called to become immortal. This implies that man is requested to participate in the super-natural divine life, not by a "coming back to the source", but by a gracious adoption, a real divinization, to what he is invited to cooperate. On the other hand, this destiny is not imposed upon him. He has the freedom of ratifying it by an interior and free assent.

Thus, there are two liberties, one non-created and creative (God), the other called to participate in the divine life, to divinize itself effectively. Maurice Blondel maintains this christian perspective, but he tries to deepen the sense and to widen the horizon. He was convinced, for instance, that the divinization of man, a created being, and his participation in the life of the non-created, constitute the "capital

problem of the christian metaphysics". Thus arises first the question if there is in man a preparation or a predisposition to realize and to make efficient such a destiny. A second question proceeds from the fact that man is free to accept or refuse that destiny. Will he consent to cooperate? According to our philosopher these two questions can be investigated without turning to morals or abstract speculations. Resting upon the concrete, actual condition of man, an integral philosophy of action is able to provide the answers. The analysis of human action compels us to recognize that the entire reality is right from the beginning adapted to a supernatural aim. Human action, even if one may ignore it, is already impregnated by the supernatural. From there comes e.g. that ceaseless inquietude to do still better, to arrive at a result always more satisfactory. It means that from the onset it is inscribed in the initial initiative to gain access to a really supernatural action, that of the non-created.

The "Pure Acting" (God) works mysteriously in the primitive willing of our action and pushes us forward towards a destiny different from what is purely natural. Incidentally, Blondel denied that we were ever constituted in a condition of pure nature. The energy of the "Pure Acting" penetrates us, and it is possible to disclose its traces. "We must free ourselves from the error of that method which consists in posing beforehand an alleged state of nature".⁹ Blondel subsequently proposed the term of "transnatural" to denote the character and destiny of man according to the christian conception. Neither the term natural, nor that of supernatural would suit it. Because, according to him, the concrete state of man is one of interior instability to which applies the term of transnatural to denote the transitory and partially inconsistent which exists in our nature. Our actions and through them our entire nature search before all to go beyond limits. There is in us a congenital but wholesome restlessness. Man is born for the infinite, said Pascal and, according to Boutroux, "he is man only by surpassing himself". "Nothing enters man which does not correspond in some way to his need of expansion. Our human nature cannot refuse to soar higher without falling lower than the level where we should like to fix it. We cannot resign ourselves to brute nature."

It is to be said, however, that human acting cannot be considered as ontologically sufficient. It depends upon a nonmanifested and fecund Acting, the traces of which can be disclosed within ourselves and this creates our liberty, our action, our thinking, our being.

"It seems that we wanted to do everything by ourselves; and by this very intent we are led to recognize that we do nothing and that God, acting within us, gives us the being and the possibility to do what we want".¹⁰

Thus, if man by his own transnatural nature carries within himself

from beforehand the necessary acquisitions to participate in and cooperate with, the divine life, and if by his concrete action he follows the "willing will" which acts in him, by his profound consent to become divine, there remains the question by which concrete means this divinization may be fulfilled.

At this moment Blondel presents a severe criticism of the superficial conception of the term "charity" and emphasizes "the danger of a doctrine which stresses charity as the only, even exclusive directing principle". The Christian who is satisfied with the gift of his existence, evoking a primordial generosity, and who deems it sufficient to expand in moralism and glorification of the Lord, sees God only in the human fashion and makes of Him an anthropomorphic image. In this way, he comes to believe that the union with God amounts to a mere relation of friendship, analogous to the affectionate connection of free choice by which two human beings are linked together though leaving them exterior the one to the other and thus without a real communion.

Neither the divine Charity nor the charity by human moralism are sufficient to produce our real incorporation into the divine life. Furthermore, how could there be a union through charity where there exists an incommensurability of nature? It would be childish to disregard the obstacles which must be overcome, ridiculous to believe that in order to become divinized, it is sufficient that man is satisfied with the gift of his existence and acquiesces. It is indispensable to work actively for that goal, to act in order to be consequent with our human dignity and our profound desire to resemble the pure Act and the infinite Charity.

In order to create free beings God has, so to say, partially retired from his sovereign domain, exiled himself or committed suicide. For that reason it is our duty to give Him back his empire, to make room for Him in us, and if we owe Him that power, he owes us to recover his very Being in us. "We have to go thus far in order to apprehend something of the divine intentions in the creative and deifying work. But in order to reconstitute Him the empire from which he freely divested himself, freely also and by love we have not only to act but to give". And the question is: To give what?

Blondel then answers: our *native being*. By this, he means the total sacrifice of our egoism, the renunciation of all our typically human ambitions. This represents only an apparent negation, says Blondel, in fact it is the most radical affirmation, the only means by which we may be liberated and give room to the divine work. Man cannot attain his divine destiny without stripping off the old man in order to become a new creature, a new being. That birth can take place only after a radical *mortification* of the natural being. It is the operation of the cross which prepares the advent of the supernatural

and divine being. We may even claim that in that moment we literally give birth to God.

In reality this current of Blondel's philosophy treats the action as a means of reaching the truth. Still, "what is it finally to possess truth? It means to live from it and to let it live within ourselves; it means to work in order to make it operate and to be open to its suggestions", says Le Roy.¹¹ "Dead or merely verbal any idea which does not proceed through a real experimentation of the will; dead above all and fictitious any knowledge which does not transform itself into action."¹² "Certitude is a profound region where thought can maintain itself only through action. What action? There is only one: that which fights nature and thus creates it, that which moulds the ego by squeezing it. The evil is egoism, which is in fact cowardice. Cowardice itself has two aspects, the research of pleasure and the avoidance of effort. To act is to fight against it".¹³

Let us now consider the Indian view on the subject which we are treating. Again we quote a verse from Goethe's Faust using it as an inspiring transition point in our analysis. He says:

"Dass ich erkenne was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält" That I may recognize (at last) what, at the innermost, sustains the universe.

The problem of action is clearly stated in three verses of the *Bhagavad Gītā* (4th chapter, 16-18):

"What is action? What is inaction? As to this even the sages are bewildered by this question. I will declare to thee what action is, knowing which thou shalt be delivered from evil."

"One has to understand what action is and likewise one has to understand what wrong (unlawful) action (is) and one has to understand about inaction. Hard to understand is the way of work."

"He who in action sees inaction and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is *yogin* and he has accomplished all his works."

These three verses contain important points reminding us of Blondel's encounter with the problem of action:

(a) First of all the difficulty of defining action.

(b) Secondly that the right apprehension and knowledge of action leads to the realization of what precedes human action. In Blondel's view, God, of whom we may participate according to our divine destiny. In the *Gītā* the liberation of evil or the release.

(c) In order to understand what action is, it is indispensable to know even what unlawful action is, a common argument of the *Gītā* and Blondel.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* has undergone various interpretations by the different schools of Vedānta which are beyond the scope of this paper. We shall try to concentrate ourselves exclusively on its teaching about

action and inaction and to expose its universal appeal:

1. In the opening chapter we see that it is in the becoming, in the very action, that man searches transcendence.

2. The problem of action and inaction is put forward by a warrior, that is to say by a champion of action. It is presented as an existential crisis of man, and not as a mere intellectual curiosity.

3. The confusion and anxiety of Arjuna is provoked by conventional morality. Not being a philosopher but a warrior, he does not question whether it is right or wrong to kill, but whether it is right or wrong to kill his relatives, members of his honourable family of whom he is proud.

We cannot forget that Arjuna as a warrior had faced many battles before and that, being entirely submitted to his social conditionings, he did not challenge the right or wrong of his actions. Then came the crucial moment in his life when the earlier felt security was waning. Suddenly he became aware of the limitations of his conventional existence. *The conflict and doubt* while facing the choice between action and inaction provoked fear and anxiety, yet at the same time Arjuna was seized by a profound aspiration to transcend his human limitations and to realize his authentic existence. In that moment, the divine voice had revealed itself.

The incarnated God approaches Arjuna as a friend for guidance. Straight from the beginning Kṛṣṇa recommends action. He encourages Arjuna to engage himself according to his personal conditionings and to fight. Yet he also invites him to search for a superior knowledge which transcends all conventional morality and thus points to the state which is beyond all conditionings.

To sum up the teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa on this question in the 2nd and 9th chapters we could say: The world, although being a divine creation, is nevertheless a show of events which come and go. They are subject to modifications. Forms are incessantly transforming themselves and conditions are in perpetual change. Construction follows destruction, joy is followed by suffering, life by death, and vice versa. It is a world of opposites and contradictions. But behind all this continuous process there is the *one*, unmanifested, stable, indestructible, eternal Reality of the Self.

The Supreme Reality does not exist in time though it sustains time. It is the eternal Spectator in front of whom the continuous becoming is unfolded.

"Him the weapons cut not. Him fire burns not and Him water wets not Him wind dries not". (II. 23).

"Not dried, not wetted, not burned, not wounded. Innermost Element, everywhere, always, Being of beings. Changeless, eternal, for ever and ever". (II. 24).

It is by this affirmation of the indestructible reality within us that the divine instructor tries to calm Arjuna's suffering.

To come back to the Lord's specific teaching about action: In order to encourage and persuade Arjuna to act, he explains to him the reasons not only why action is better than inaction, but that the latter cannot even be accepted as far as the individual is concerned. For even the maintenance of his physical life cannot be effected without action (III. 8). The Lord further gives to Arjuna his own example of incessant activity without which the world would be reduced to disorder and destruction and would cease to be (III. 22, 24).

He invites man to become equivalent to His nature; moreover to act also or cooperate with Him in the same way God is acting in the universe.

What then is the nature of God (Īśvarā)? What is the way of the Lord's acting?

It is said to contain within himself the immutability as well as the mutation of being; that He is *sat* and *a-sat*, being as well as not being (IX. 19). And that His power, the energy of God, which enables Him to produce mutable nature out of Him, is called *māyā* (XVIII. 6 and IV. 6).

The Lord produces the universe out of two elements of His being, *prakṛti* and *puṣa*, matter and consciousness. All mental and material phenomena are the outcome of His *prakṛti* with its three modes (*guṇas*) which, appearing in different proportions, produce the variety of the actual existence. With reference to the matter, they act as lightness (*sattva*), movement (*rajas*), inertia or heaviness (*tamas*). This represents the inferior nature of God. It is here that mutation and becoming are expressed as well as the determinism which governs nature, the law of causality (*karma*). Yet the superior, real nature of God, the eternal spirit *puṣa* lies behind this phenomenal universe as the Eternal Spectator. He is the unborn, impersonal, absolute and infinite Being as well as the immanent will. He is the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover. Though he is the macrocosm He cannot be identified with the cosmic process, for he extends beyond it (X. 41.42).

So there are two natures, the one native, transient and inferior, the other unborn, eternal. They constitute not only God's nature, the macrocosm, but also that of man, the microcosm. Likewise the three modes, just mentioned of God's inferior nature (*prakṛti*) are present in man as intelligence (*sattva*), aggressive activity or passion (*rajas*) and torpor or laziness (*tamas*). According to the preponderance of one of these modes we get the different human temperaments. Everything man does or fails to do is a product of those qualities. He is therefore limited and conditioned by them. Yet, behind lies the Self, the Spirit, which is not affected by them. It is unborn, ever

free and eternal. It is the non-manifested ground which at the innermost, sustains the universe as well as human existence. However, while God is fully aware of his spiritual and eternal nature, man is not.

“This bewildered world knows me not, the unborn and unchanging. Veiled by my creative *māyā*, I am not revealed to all” (VII. 25).

The result of this bewilderment is that man's acting is contrary to that of God. Man acts without knowing what his real nature is, while God's acting is done in full awareness of his Being. So the goal of human action is to become aware of the indwelling Spirit of God in himself :

“Unite yourself with Me and then act without fear” (VII. 30; VIII. 12).

This is one of the profoundest sentences of the *Gītā*, the meaning of which is repeated or implied in various ways. From it two questions arise :

1. How can this union be effected?
2. How must the human being act?

Regarding the second question we may say that man has to act not contrarily, but in the same way as God is acting, i.e., without being affected by the mutability of nature or under the influence of the three *guṇas*.

God acts spontaneously and out of his free and immanent will. Human actions, however, are generally done under the influence of passions, often completely dependent on emotions, impulses, involuntary reactions, egoistic desires. Some of our actions are only seemingly ours! The will and spontaneity in them is only apparent. Therefore man is invited to act like God, i.e. unaffected by the nature of the three modes.

The *Gītā* distinguishes between the field (*kṣetra*) and the knower of the field. Nature and the human body are the field or *the object*, undergoing incessant changes. The Self (*Ātman*) is the knower of the field, the subject, the element of him who knows and stays behind all changes. *It is the Spectator, who eternally dwells behind man's phenomenal individuality, that man has to recognize within himself and with him to identify, but not to his individuality, his ego.* The latter forms a part of the cosmic nature and as such any identification with the ego is in fact but a subordination to matter and its law of determinism (the wheel of *karma* and rebirth, *saṃsāra*) from which then man cannot hope to escape.

The error arises from the mistaken feeling of “agency” which leads man to say: “I am the doer of my actions”. In truth, it is only God, the immutable Self, the *Ātman*, God who by sustaining and animating the whole universe, enables beings and things to act. The Self is the Essence, the “source”, non-manifested and

luminous, which gives light to all and renders possible thought, feeling, action.

The individuality is not a separate and independent entity, but a dependent one. In its utmost depth it is *united* with the total organization of the universe in which man is to act, just as the organs of a body are acting, distinctively perhaps the one to the other, but in dependence of the totality of the organism. In every conjunction we must try to integrate the individual in the Totality. It is a man's duty to control his aggressiveness and passion, his torpor and laziness by means of his *sattva* nature, his intelligent will, his power of discrimination (*buddhi*). The point is that even by such control man is not entirely free although his desires do become nobler. For the sense of the ego is still operative. We must transcend even the intellect ...

“While all kinds of works are done by the modes of nature, he whose soul is bewildered by the self-sense thinks: ‘I am the doer’” (III. 27). It means that the deluded soul attributes the activity of *prakṛti* to itself and man thinks he is himself the agent.

“The sense of agency proceeds from the *guṇas*. He who knows also that which is beyond the modes, he attains to my being” says the Lord (XIV. 19).

This does not mean to diminish the will of acting; on the contrary, it signifies the strenuous effort to purify the motive of acting. In this we find the greatest lesson of the *Gītā* concerning action. Its teaching does not recommend the action for the action's sake. Greatest stress is laid upon the motive from which springs the action. In fact we do not exaggerate in saying that the entire teaching of the *Gītā* is centered upon the idea of the *preponderance* of the motive over the action, whether physical or psychical.

We have to admit that in general we always act through a selfish and personal desire. We commit ourselves to the profit gained by our actions. We consider only the result obtained by our actions. It is clear that this holds even for the ritualistic activities, the profit of which may be gained only here or hereafter.

It is this motive of personal interest which the *Gītā* condemns in action. Therefore a *purification of the motive* has to precede the action itself. What does this purification consist of? In the total and radical annihilation of the ego. This is the unique pre-supposition for the attainment of the goal of human life and action, *the union with the Divine*. “Unite yourself with Me and then act!” is the sentence which contains, as in a nutshell, the entire teaching of the *Gītā*.

As already mentioned, the Song of the Lord is a metaphysical as well as a practical treatise, a research for truth while at the same time an instruction of the disciplines capable of rendering the truth efficient in human life. It is *brahmavidyā* and *yoga-śāstra*.

The word *yoga* (from the root *yuj*) means binding (yoking) together one's psychic powers. Harnessing the energies by the most intensive concentration in order to enable the narrowness of the ego to dilate till it becomes a universal consciousness. For such a purpose, three disciplines are proposed according to the different temperaments known as *karma-yoga* (discipline through action), *jñāna-yoga* (through knowledge) and *bhakti-yoga* (through devotion). The goal of the three is the same, i.e. the annihilation of the ego, but the ways are different. The *Gītā* exposes them in a large and flexible, so to say many-sided, manner. In the 12th chapter (8-12) this flexibility is expressed in a majestic and compassionate fashion by the divine instructor, what we may summarize as follows:

... "If you are not capable of attaining Me through concentration and *meditation*, try to do it by the way of *devotion*. Through that you shall accede to perfection. Is this too much to ask of you? Then try to do it by disciplined *activity*, laying at my feet the fruits of all your actions". Yet the most expressive verse teaching the *karma-yoga* is:

"To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be thy motive; neither there be in thee attachment to inaction" (II. 47).

Giving himself as an example of acting without aim for the fruits of work, Kṛṣṇa says: "Works do not defile me; nor do I have yearning for their fruits. He who knows Me thus is not bound by works" (IV. 14).

Whatever its various interpretations may be, it seems to us that the central teaching of the *Gītā* is that of *karma-yoga*, the discipline of disinterested activity as a direct means for man's liberation (*mokṣa*). This does not mean that action is considered as such, but that it could never be disinterested if its motive had not previously been purified by the knowledge of the Self who is the sole real agent of action in us, "the first agent", as Arjuna calls God. (XI. 37).

Again we cannot easily forget the two great ideals of orthodox Indian culture. The first deals with *nivṛtti*, i.e. with giving up all work (*karma*) and withdrawing from the world in order to live in contemplation. The second, *pravṛtti*, recommends to live in the midst of society, fulfilling all kinds of duties and obligations ordered. In a deeper analysis though, we cannot say that either of these ideals is absolutely free from selfishness. The *Gītā* discovers the golden mean between contemplation and action. For *karma-yoga* although not abandoning activity, preserves the spirit of renunciation, the surrender to God in acting, and thus the extinction of selfishness.¹⁴

An ideal clearly indicated in the *Gītā* also is *ahimsā* or "non-violence", evident in the 7th and 12th chapters. In spite of the fact that Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to fight, in fact he recommends action, not

war. The was has to be understood as an illustration. The important point lies in the *equanimity of mind* that has to be reached before acting. This quality is represented as the principal characteristic of the man who has won the authentic existence in this world, the transcendence of human limitations, who has become a "freed soul".

Many views are represented concerning such a realization of man, not only in the *Gītā*. *Jīvan-mukta*, the freed soul, is the extreme expression of such a realization where the recognition of the complete identity with the divine leaves no trace whatever of duality. For the *jīvan-mukta* spirit and body are an irreconcilable duality. There is no room left for action. Absorbed in the reality of the Self, the seer of action is only implied by a tremendous spiritual efficiency, which he propounds around him by his peace, calm and silence.

Though mentioning the state of *jīvan-mukta* the *Gītā* emphasizes its equivalence, instead of its identity with God. Liberation is for this teaching not isolation of the immortal spirit from the mortal human life. It is a new and infinite perspective of life, an expansion of man's personality which is raised to its fulness. Such a "freed man", though acting in this world, is no longer entangled by actions. Having completely destroyed the sense of agency which all action implies, the sage is no longer in doubt over his harmony with the universe. He works and acts in cooperation with the cosmic laws for the triumph of good and not for evil, for the realization of spirit upon earth.

"As the unlearned act from attachment to their work, so should the learned also act without any attachment, with the desire to maintain the world's order" (III. 25).

It is this orientation of the spirit of action which makes the Lord interpret to Arjuna the word "being" and "not-being" (*sat* and *a-sat*) in the following manner:

"The word *sat* is employed in the sense of reality and goodness; and also, O Arjuna, the word *sat* is used for praiseworthy action".

Also:

"Steadfastness in sacrifice, penance, gift, is also called *sat*, and so all action for such purposes is called *sat*".

On the contrary:

"Whatever offering or gift is made, whatever penance is performed, whatever rite is observed, without faith it is called *a-sat*. O Arjuna, it is of no account hereafter or here" (XVII. 26-28).

Out of what has been expounded till now it appears to result that there is not an unbridgeable gulf between Blondel's view and that of the *Gītā*. Yet we might say that the thought of the great French philosopher is even nearer to the one we find in Rāmānuja and his Viśiṣṭādvaita, though here also contrasts are not excluded. Both affirm the reality of the physical world, the finite souls and

the infinite divine personality as inseparably united within the Absolute.

However, our subject would be too incompletely expounded if no mention were made at all of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. This is not due to the fact that the great master still occupies the first place in the contemporary conceptions of Indian metaphysics. Nor would it be easy to make an approach between Śaṅkara and Blondel. On the contrary, essential and important points would prevent any attempt of the sort. Śaṅkara's "acosmic" view, considering the phenomenal world as *māyā* and the plurality of finite souls as equally unreal, to name only these two elements, would constitute a fundamental obstacle impeding right away any possible comparison. Yet there are to be mentioned some striking, extremely interesting, features which distinguish the two great figures:

Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, a philosophy of being and in its own way also a philosophy of action, exposes an altogether original view of the latter by stating that action is not the means to reveal us the being. (Blondel's greatest spiritual pre-occupation). It is true that both philosophers rest on an experimental basis, rejecting theoretical principles or theological pre-suppositions. But while Blondel's philosophy could be called an integral philosophy of action through which the character of being is manifested, Śaṅkara's philosophy is that of an integral experience of Being, by which the character of human action is explained. Blondel asks: "I act, but who am I?" and then turns to the problem of action. Śaṅkara could put the same question thereafter insisting upon the analysis of the sense of the I, the ego, trying to investigate Reality by scrutinizing the outer, "objective" as well as the inner, "subjective" world.

For Śaṅkara Being (*sat*) denotes, as we know, the transpersonal, absolute Brahman, which constitutes one and the same reality as Ātman, the Self, the intimate essence or soul of man. Being is the experience of the non-dual, non-intentional, transcendent consciousness, analogically indicated by the famous formula: *sat-cit-ānanda*, terms which are interchangeable and equivalent the one to the other. Śaṅkara then emphasizes the immutability, calm and silence of the Being (*sat*).

Now, etymologically speaking, the word *sat* is the present participle of the verb *asmi*, I am. It corresponds therefore to the Greek verb *ipā'rho*¹⁵. However, it is remarkable that in Sanskrit there are two different roots for the verb to be, *as* and *bhū*. The first denotes the pure ontological actuality without reference to action or becoming while the other contains that significance. Being and becoming in the Advaita are often considered as two aspects only of one and the same reality of absolute Being (cf. Nirguṇa-and Saguṇa-Brahman).

In the Kāśmīra Śivaism we face the same conception expressed by the terms *śiva* and *śakti*, yet with the pronounced distinction, that

śakti, the becoming, is a real power, manifesting itself in the varied universe (wherfrom the formula: *sat-cit-ānanda-śiva*), while in the Advaita *māyā*, the becoming is not real.

Whatever the difference between the two conceptions, the goal is the same: The soul of man must recognize its profound identity with the Being and "come back to its source". Moreover such an experience can take place in an unexpected, sudden and abrupt way. No need for a gradual preparation or waiting for another world, a post-mortem condition. Śiva or *sat* is the supreme spiritual act, consisting in the recognition of the eternal presence of the Being in the profoundest depths of human existence.

The endeavour of man to draw back his soul, in a way or another, to its unmanifested source, the Being, holds for all orthodox Hinduism. Leaving aside all theoretical considerations, we must say that even in modern times we had three living examples incarnating that Indian ideal: *Gandhi*, the liberator through the efficiency of non-violence, *Vivekananda*, the creator through the efficiency of giving up all sense of agency or ego, *Ramana Maharshi* through the efficiency of his silence with still resounds around the world.

1. Blondel, M.: "La Pensée". Paris 1933. Félix Alcan (2 vol.) — "L'Être et Les Êtres". Paris 1963 (nouv. éd.): P. U. F. — "L'Action". Paris 1936. Félix Alcan (2 vol.).
2. Etudes Blondéliennes. Paris: P. U. F., p. 21.
3. Blondel, M.: L'Action, vol. I, p. 450.
4. Blondel, M.: L'Action, vol. I, p. 290.
5. Cf. a note of M. Blondel, quoted under the heading "action" in Lalande, A.: "Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie". Paris 1962: P. U. F.
6. Lettre de M. Blondel to A. Lalande. Bul. Soc. Philos., July 1902. (quoted in Lalande's "Vocabulaire", p. 1250).
7. Blondel, M.: "L'Être et Les Êtres", p. 524.
8. Blondel, M. & L. Laberthonnière: "Correspondance philosophique". Paris 1961: Ed. du Seuil.
9. Etudes Blondéliennes, p. 24.
10. Blondel, M.: "L'Action". Thèse Paris, p. 422.
11. Le Roy, Ed.: "Essai d'une philosophie première". 2 vol. Paris 1958: P. U. F., p. 209.
12. Blondel, M.: "L'Action". Thèse Paris 1893, p. 296.
13. Lagneau, J.: "Fragments". In: Rev. Métaphys. 1898, p. 169.
14. Hiriyanna, M.: "Outlines of Indian Philosophy". London 1964 (5th ed.): George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 120.
15. A remark on the differences between East and West: Modern Indians prefer the word Existence to indicate the Being. We could do the same, referring not to the Latin ex-sistere (being placed out), but to this Greek verb which means literally I direct, I govern or control from within, exactly like the Sanskrit 'Antaryāmin', so much used for Being (cf. B. A. U. III. 7. 15.)

Troy Organ

Earlier in this seminar we heard a paper by Dr. Nasr in which he laid down some "necessary conditions for meaningful study" of Eastern and Western philosophers and philosophies. In this paper he said, "Comparative studies must be based on the whole upon which the parts depend and must not seek at all costs to show similarities where they do not exist, especially when it is a question of Western philosophy during the past four centuries and the intellectual tradition of the East." I regard Dr. Nasr's caveat as extremely important—yet I do not know how to apply it to Dr. Burgi's paper. She has called our attention to the remarkable similarity of the relation of action and inaction in Blondel and the *Gītā*. I have only one criticism to make of her treatment of the *Gītā*: I would not agree that "the central teaching of the *Gītā* is that of *karma-yoga*." Rather I think that all the yogas are offered—or better, that the central teaching is an integral or synthetic yoga.

In view of Dr. Nasr's "necessary conditions," we might ask: "What purpose is served in comparing Blondel and the *Gītā*?" But when we come to Dr. Burgi's brief discussion of Blondel and Śaṅkara I find something which seems to me to be very important. Yet Dr. Burgi demurs just where I think she could make a significant contribution. I refer to her words, "Nor would it be easy to make an approach between Śaṅkara and Blondel. On the contrary essential and important points would prevent any attempt of this sort. Śaṅkara's acosmic view, considering the phenomenal world as *Māyā* and the plurality of finite souls as equally unreal, to name only these two elements, would constitute a fundamental obstacle impeding right away any possible comparisons." She then identifies Blondel's philosophy as "an integral philosophy of action" and Śaṅkara's as "an integral experience of Being." It seems to me that Dr. Burgi could at this point have made an important clarification of the action-inaction syndrome of Śaṅkara. Specifically, what she reports about Blondel's view of God—Pure Acting—helps remedy the view of a static, inactive Brahman which is sometimes offered as the view of Śaṅkara, e.g., "Śaṅkara holds that the universe is an illusory projection due to *māyā* or cosmic nescience. According to this view, the world is an irrational, sorry scheme without meaning or significance." (P. N. Srinivasachari, *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*. Second edition. Madras: Sri Krishna Library, 1958, p. 66.)

Blondel Argues that Pure Acting has exiled itself in order to create

free beings. Man in his activity of divinization must recover the Being of Pure Acting. Blondel as a Christian philosopher personalizes this Pure Acting, thus making the divinization process a restoring of "empire" to God. Here we have insights which may make Śaṅkara's view of Brahman and the world more graspable. The Absolute Brahman, the *Sat* which does not exist, must in order to be the Absolute be manifested. Moreover, the manifestation must include every possibility and potentiality of being. Were there no manifestation, no pluralization, Brahman would be less than Totality. So Brahman—Pure Being—must also be Pure Acting. Creation is a necessity of Being. Pluralization is inherent in a monism that is Totality. Brahman is this Absolute One, not the first in a numerical series nor the genus of all species. Pluralization of the One, becoming of the Being, and action of Inaction are all necessary to the Brahman-ness of the Brahman. These, it seems to me are insights which clarify the status of the *māyā* world within Śaṅkara's metaphysics. If man must transform himself in order to be man, as Blondel, Pascal, and Boutroux claim, must not the Absolute manifest Itself in order to be the Absolute? *Māyā* is the divine art, the *līlā* of the Brahman. *Māyā* is the positive, objectifying, and manifesting aspect of an act of which *avidyā* is the negative aspect. This view of Brahman and *māyā* has been stated by Frithjof Schuon as follows: "In a certain sense *Mayā* represents the possibility of Being of not being. The All-Possibility must be definition and on pain of contradiction include its own impossibility. It is in order not to be, that Being incarnates in the multitude of souls... Nothing is external to Absolute Reality: the world is therefore a kind of internal dimension of Brahman. But Brahman is without reality: thus the world is a necessary aspect of the absolute necessity of Brahman, Put in another way, relativity is an aspect of the Absolute. Relativity, *Māyā*, is the Śakti of the Absolute, Brahman. If the existence of the relative were excluded from possibility, the Absolute would not be the Absolute." (*Language of the Self*. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1959, pp. 22—23.)

This view, it seems to me, is inherent in Blondel's interpretation of God—and as such it helps us understand the *māyā* action of the Brahman. If the Inactive were not also the Active, the Real also the *māyā*, the One also the many, and Being also the becoming, then Brahman would not be Brahman.

If I am correct in extending this out of Dr. Burgi's study of action and inaction in Blondel, then I maintain that sometimes a comparative study of a modern western philosopher and a classical Indian philosopher is fruitful in spite of their divergent cultural backgrounds.

The Relationships between Philosophy and Mysticism in Western and Muslim Thought

Louis Gardet

The relationships which we are going to study would seem to constitute one of the elements of the dialogue between Western Philosophy and Eastern Philosophy.

By "philosophy", we mean all effort of reflection by the Light of the human reason (there are thus a plurality of philosophies); and by "mysticism", we mean the fruitive experience of an absolute, either by way of immanence, or through an intentional union of love with Another.

Let me add that to my mind an authentic philosophical view of the world has on the one hand a "theoretical" function (or rather "speculative"), viz. the search of truth for its own sake and for its being truth; on the other hand, a "practical" or rather "speculativo-practical" function, concerning the rules of human behaviour. These two functions are neither separate, nor separable, since the rules of behaviour depend upon the discovery, by the mind, of first truths and of the first Truth. Moreover, we must clearly distinguish between that "practical" function which commands moral action, and the domain of making, the *praxis*, which, in our contemporary world, tends to replace it. With regard to mystical experience, it is the privileged one in which theory and practice fuse together. Through the Absolute towards which it tends, it is finalized by the highest truth man can grasp from this earth, i.e. in the silence of apophasis. And it is like the blossoming of its existential behaviour. If it is an authentic experience, it takes it away from none of his human tasks, but allows man to realize each one of them, in total freedom and independence of the self.

We encounter three possible types of relationship between philosophy and mysticism. Either the philosopher disavows mysticism, whether deliberately or in practice. Or his thought is in some way finalized by an experience of what is absolute. Or, finally, he aims at establishing hierarchical distinctions. The object of this paper is to explicit these different kinds of relationship.

I

The first kind of relationship: the specificity of mystical experience is not recognized.

This seems to me to be the case most frequently encountered in those forms of modern western thought which are dechristianized

or which aim at integrating Christian values while neglecting their religious context. The philosophies in question, considered separately, may well be very different. But it could be said, I think, that they have this in common: they are all philosophies of praxis, whether this envisages things to be done, or simply the act of knowing considered as an end in itself. In speaking here of praxis, I do not take the term as being simply the opposite of "theoretical". The sphere of moral action is "practical"—it is distinct from the speculative sphere, of which metaphysical research is the eminent type, but it is not opposed to it; in fact, the moral sphere is in one sense subordinated to the speculative, and in another sense completes it. Praxis in the modern sense of the word implies *making* much more than *doing*. It is no longer a matter of seeking truth, but of making truth and of measuring it by reference to the very act (whether transitive or immanent) which aims at thus constructing it.

I do not intend to list all the philosophies in this category. There are too many of them. But different, even opposed, as they are among themselves, they are almost always either a research of dialectical equilibrium between the mind in act of knowing and the world, or the reflexive analysis of a subjectivity in quest of itself. Without wishing to be exhaustive, I would distinguish four principal types which I will take as examples.

Positivism and Marxism

We have here those philosophies which I would define as being a phenomenology of sensible and empirical being. I have included on the one hand the different forms of empiricism, positivism and neopositivism, and on the other Marxist dialectical materialism and its derivatives. It may seem paradoxical to put them together under the same heading, and that would certainly not be valid if it were a matter of studying them in themselves. Empiricism and neopositivism are by nature nominalist: they refuse to admit that the human mind possesses a properly abstractive power (that of formal abstraction) capable of apprehending what exists, and they limit themselves generally speaking to a reflection on the positive sciences. As for Marxism, it originated in an encounter between the materialism of Feuerbach and the dialectic of Hegel. Its object is to "put Hegel back on his feet", according to the well-known expression of Engels. But perhaps finally it is not so much a realism as the idealism of idealism. In any case the ultimate aim of these diverse forms of thought is that of controlling things, of using them or of changing them. "It is no longer a matter of knowing the world, but of transforming it" (which means transforming it scientifically, that is to say materially), said Marx in an often quoted sentence. For the two groups of thought in question, there cannot exist an absolute; what alone counts is man's control over contingent

realities, and the logical structures which permit this control. And this is, without a doubt, one of the principal temptations of modern man, intoxicated as he is by the thirst for efficacy and power.

Hegelian idealism

Another temptation—or rather the same, but transposed on to the level of the mind—is that of idealist philosophies, particularly of modern dialectical idealism whose eminent master is Hegel. Indeed it is well known that the method of Marxist analysis (and Marxism is method) has sprung from it; for the Marxist phenomenology of sensible being originates in the Hegelian phenomenology of mind, as in its contrary, and not as in its contradictory. But in opposition to dialectical materialism, Hegelian idealism is centred upon an absolute, the absolute Mind. This absolute Mind or Spirit, synonym of God for Hegel, *constitutes itself* in the continual becoming of affirmation, negation, and negation of the negation, and is by that very fact immanent in all mental dialectic.

This dialectic is not, as it later becomes in Marxism, simply a privileged and complicated case of the constitutive principle of things in general. No, the Hegelian dialectic makes this principle, and thus operates a creative super-unification of the absolute Mind. But it is as opposed as Marxism to a contemplative attitude. For it does not seek the fruitive experience of an absolute, but an operative praxis which will make the absolute. Thus although Hegel integrates mystical and even theological values, they are reassumed not on the level of extramental truth which is proper to them, but as concepts or categories which hypostatize logical structures and tend to become ontology. Let me take an example. Hegel uses the term kenosis but it becomes for him a dialectical, and therefore conceptual, procedure by which the Yes is abolished in the No, and the No in the Yes. The expression is borrowed from St. Paul and from certain mystical writers, but instead of being applied to a lived experience of an apophatic nature, it is constantly transposed on to the level of logic, thus forming, we could say, a kind of super-logic which constructs itself and which creates the positive term of its own movement.

To wish to explain the great mystics of Christianity, such as St. John of the Cross, in terms of Hegelian dialectic—some have recently attempted it,—would be to betray them. It would be to imprison them in a closed world, dynamically closed admittedly and in a state of internal expansion, but which is certainly not their own. Dialectical idealism is incapable of recognizing the specificity of mystical experience and knowledge. It transposes them and digests them according to a process of conceptual logic which is their very negation. This is the real explanation, it seems to me, of the use which Hegel makes of various themes drawn from Master Eckart and Luther. Hegel's joy on

encountering certain texts of Eckart is well known. But he assimilated them into logical patterns, and thus misunderstood the depth of experience which they contain.

Husserl

Let me draw attention here, at once by way of comparison and of opposition with Hegel, to the phenomenology of Husserl. It can be said that Husserl was haunted by the nostalgia of an absolute, of an existing not of a self-constructing absolute. Such is perhaps the sense of the advice he gives to the student in phenomenology to return to things themselves, *zu der Sache selbst*. To attain reality beyond and through the phenomenon, Husserl, it is interesting to notice, establishes as an experimental method the procedure of *epoché*. This is not without recalling the first two stages of the *yoga-sūtra* of Patañjali. But in spite of being experimental, this Husserlian putting-in-brackets is a suspension which remains in the conceptual order, in quest of the "thing itself" which is always out of reach. For the intentionality of Husserl is purely intramental, consisting in the transcendental relation (in the Kantian sense) of the knowing subject to his mental act, of the *noëse* to the *noëme*. This phenomenological process thus appears as a sort of inefficacious aspiration towards a mysticism of the Self. But this movement of return which tends obscurely towards the sources of being, finds the passage barred and becomes enclosed within the transcendental Ego. Never, it seems, is an experienced apophysis attained, and it is by means of an extremely refined dialectic, always operating in the rarefied sphere of conceptual abstractions, that is sought the master-world.

To my knowledge, the phenomenology of Husserl never encountered mystical experience. Besides, as in the case of Hegel, and in spite of existential tendencies which are much closer to a fruition of an absolute, his philosophy could only have integrated such experience in terms of its own dialectic. It remains nevertheless suggestive that many of his disciples encountered faith in God, and that the last word of the Master himself, on his death-bed, evoked the sudden appearance of a "light". But this implies something beyond all phenomenological research, and the encounter is realised by the breaking open of the closed world of intramental intentionality.

Hegel, by wishing to integrate it within his conceptual dialectic, denied the very reality of a mystical way. Husserl, striving to re-discover a thirst for what is absolute, but by a method which remains exclusively conceptual, symbolizes, it could be said, the mystical approach, but encloses it within the symbol itself. But whether we consider dialectical idealism or phenomenology, it is always (and only) a matter of a truth which constructs itself, and which forms its own concepts in the self-transcending discursive movement of an intelligence in the positive act of knowing.

Existential philosophies and philosophies "of the subject"

Our conclusion would be no less disappointing if we were to examine the range of existential philosophies, meaning by that the different forms of existentialism as well as the so-called philosophies of the subject or of the conscience. It might seem that they also symbolize a mystical way: that of recollection, passionate search for a lived interiority, and so on. But a closer regard shows that the philosophies of the subject, to whatever tendency they belong, remain centred upon the reflexive activities of the faculties of intelligence and will—in most cases immersed in the memory, imagination and sensibility—in quest of themselves. Now the reflexive descent into the subjectivity *does not lead* to apophasis; it goes from immanent act to immanent act, one provoking another, the acts being always transitory (transientes), in a world of irremediable finitude. An experience of what is absolute cannot begin until the reflexive apprehension ceases.

But the philosophies of the subject, in particular the existential philosophies, cannot but propose and consider their dialectical descent into the indefinite recesses of the subjectivity as being the unique "interior life." They thus exclude the very possibility of that necessary rupture, of that necessary "turning-point", which would project them into a sphere beyond the phenomenal level. That was perhaps the tragedy, profound and moving, of Kierkegaard. He explored unceasingly the world of the distinct and individuating categories of the "unique" (enkelte); he was torn by the triple movement of anguish, mortal sickness and repetition; he could only affirm transcendence as the dialectical negative of immanence; and the grasp or encounter with a fulfilling reality never appeared even in outline nor on the horizon.

The dominant notes of modern philosophical thought, at least if we consider the four main types to which I have referred, tend therefore either to deny the effectuating value of mystical experience (positivism and Marxism); or to substitute for it a purely conceptual process (dialectical idealism); or to symbolize its experiential mode by a positive intellectual act of intramental self-transcendence (Husserl); or, finally, to enclose it within a reflexive subjectivity which ought to, but cannot, renounce itself (existentialism and philosophies of the subject). But if such are the dominants of modern thought, may it not have taken a false route, long, bitter and without issue in spite of its brilliance? Is not the passionate interest shown by so many western thinkers of today for the fact of mysticism a sign of this? Admittedly this interest often enough shows little enlightenment, and is frequently parasited by illusions and counterfeit forms. It is therefore worthwhile to consider the entirely different answers which western thought, both Christian and Muslim, has offered to this question, in the past as in the present.

II

The second type of relationship : philosophy and mysticism are united in a state of non-distinction at least in regard to their finalities

We are no longer in a climate of thought dominated by the praxis, whether material or spiritual, of a truth which constitutes itself. We are confronted this time with an Absolute which *is* truth, and which it is not so much a matter of knowing by an abstractive effort of the intelligence—the Absolute being beyond all discourse—, but of experimenting or "realizing" in the ultimate depths of one-self. Certainly philosophical investigation, a philosophical vision of the Absolute, of the world and of man, remains present; but it can hardly be said that it has a finality in itself. It offers itself rather as being at once the preparation and the interpretation of a realizing experience.

In the West this attitude was sometimes that of philosophers, more often that of mystics. I will take some examples, in Hellenistic thought, in Islam, in Christianity and finally in the modern world. (I would willingly add that the most eminent example is probably provided by the Vedāntin *advaita*. But I will not permit myself to speak of it here, in the presence of Masters so much more qualified than I).

Plotinus

Probably enough we could refer to certain pre-Socratic thinkers such as Parmenides and Empedocles. But the texts which have come down to us are too fragmentary to allow us to examine the existential relationship between lived experience and conceptualization. The case, however, is quite different with the *Aeneads* of Plotinus, a work of capital importance for the entire history of western philosophy. The emanationist monism of Plotinus is well known, with its hierarchy of three principal hypostases: the Soul, the Intellect and the One. Is it a matter of establishing a philosophical representation of the world? Have we not rather to do with the transcription in philosophical terms of the different stages traversed in the movement towards an identifying "vision" — I mean that experience which Plotinus lived, late in life and always in a transitory manner according to Porphyrius. There is in Plotinus a first movement, dialectic in nature, of ascent towards the Intelligible World; It is here that intellectual apprehension, philosophy it could be said, exercises its preparatory function. For there arises a sphere beyond dialectic, a rupture of thought in which the *noûs*, the intellect conscious of its highest intellectual apprehension, suppresses itself, by that very act, in a non-intellect, a *mi noûs* supra-conscious, while at the same time the "vision" becomes touch or contact, as a capital text of the V *Aenead* informs us. The psychological movement of "going out of self" *écstasis* is transmuted, in its ultimate term, into a "stasis"; for, as Plotinus says, "the repose of the *noûs* is in no way a going out of itself". The soul attains "the trace of the One

which is in itself", and thus becomes what it is. The Soul becomes the One in the deepest source of its own substantial act of existing.

Fruitive experience of an absolute? Certainly. Not however of a transcendent God, touched in his intimate Mystery, but of the existence of the "I" in all the depths of its being. The "vision", the typically Greek desire to "see the divine", is consummated in an ontological identity. The influence of Plotinus was immense, in Christian and Muslim thought alike, and we constantly find traces of it, in greater or less degree, in much modern philosophy. It witnesses indeed to that longing inscribed in the nature of the human spirit to attain its own ultimate reality over and above the play of the empirical and contingent, to attain that absolute which is its own first act of existence by a backward-turning movement which transcends and abolishes all formulated distinctions. The dialectic inherited from Plato, passing from the sensible to the intellegible, and from the intellegible to the Good or the One, was for Plotinus like the preparation for that turning-point in which the intellect transmutes itself into the supra-consciousness of the non-intellect; and his vision of the world, in which the problem of the one and the many is resolved in terms of an emanationist monism, is like the transcription, in philosophical terms, of an experience of identity by way of immanence, and of the meta-philosophical self.

A Muslim philosopher and a Muslim mystic

I would like to mention in Muslim thought two characteristic examples, which are in close accord with Plotinus, and which in fact owe much to his influence, directly or indirectly. Ibn Sînâ (iv-v century of the Hegir), known as Avicenna by the latin Middle Ages, is above all a philosopher. He has left us one of the most coherent and powerfully orchestrated systems in the history of philosophy. He was directly influenced by Plotinus through the pseudo-"Theology of Aristotle", those extracts of the Aeneas V et VI which were falsely attributed to the Stagirite. The impact of his Muslim faith made him identify the One with God (*Allâh*), and caused him to insist on the essential contingency of possible being, and therefore on the real distinction between essence and existence. Nevertheless it is a "necessary and willed" emanation, affirms Ibn Sînâ, which is responsible for the production of created things, according to a strict determinism in the line of existence. And since from the One can only come forth what is one, this emanation is produced in accordance with a descending dialectic, passing from separated Intellects, Souls and Celestial Bodies, which are successive participants of being and light, down to the "world of generation and corruption"; and corresponding to it is an ascending dialectic of purification and love (ontological love). The human intellect, in itself pure potentiality,

becomes the purified mirror in which is reflected the illuminations received from the universal Intellect, which is in its turn a direct reflexion of the One, supreme intellection (thought which thinks itself) and supreme love.

The "mystical" note is certainly much less marked than with Plotinus. It is no longer a matter of becoming the One, but of receiving illumination from it, by the intermediary of the universal Intellect. It is nonetheless noteworthy that Ibn Sînâ should have undertaken to integrate all the experiential contribution of *tasawwuf*, usually called Sufism or Muslim mysticism. He devotes a chapter of his *Isharat* to the subject, and returns to it in several "small treatises". Nevertheless what is primary with him is not a fruitive experience of an absolute, but a philosophical view, highly organized conceptually, and which intends to give an explanation of mystical experience in conformity with the main lines of his system.

It is on the contrary a realising experience which holds the first place with Muḥiy al-Dîn Ibn 'Arabî. He is one of the greatest Ṣūfis, and at the same time one of the greatest thinkers of the Muslim world. Born at Murcia in Spain, in the VI century of the Hegir, he also received, among many other influences, that of Plotinus, whether directly or through Ibn Sînâ. His thought develops as a gnosis, powerfully orchestrated by a genuine poetic gift, and which is nothing else than the transposition into poetic language of an experience of identity. He considers the creation, which culminates in the myth of the Perfect Man (*al-insân al-kâmil*), as being "the shadow of God". It is in and by his creature that God, unique Reality, knows Himself and manifests Himself to Himself. It is thus by a return to his origins that man accomplishes his destiny. He reaches this goal by a series of annihilations (*fanâ*), abolishing his empirical being and all the qualities, even spiritual, which determine and limit him, and thus finding an endless super-existence, the *baqâ*. It is by means of the active and creative imagination and its world of symbols that the sphere of humanity is reabsorbed and projected into the sphere of the Divinity. There unity is realised, not with the hidden God of the absolute Essence, but with the primordial Cloud which envelops him. "What exists in reality", says Ibn 'Arabî, "is the Creator-creature, creator according to one dimension, creature according to another, but the concrete all is one". It is the *wahdat al-wujûd*, the Unicity of Being, in a large emanationist perspective in which everything is ontologically One. And this unity which he is by nature, man must realize in an act of identification (*ittiḥâd*), in which all differentiating appearances are abolished.

We could also mention here Ibn Sab'in, the Ṣūfi-philosopher, or the great poet 'Abd al-Karîm Jîlî. For Ṣūfism, from the VII century of the Hegir onwards, remains profoundly marked by Ibn 'Arabî, and

professes in general the Unicity of Being. We will see in our last section how these tendencies are situated with regard to the official teaching of Islam. One could, besides, compare many speculative themes of the Jewish Kabbal, such as those of God hidden and God manifested, of the eternal Logos and the Perfect Man, of the microcosm and the macrocosm. In both cases, in the context of a quest for total non-duality, philosophy and mysticism are united together; or rather the philosophical elaborations are only so many ways of approach which act as guides, under the veil of words and of discourse, towards an experience of identity of self to self, perhaps we should say the Self, in which alone remains the Absolute which is all.

In Christianity: Flemish mysticism

In the same line of thought, I will now cite some examples from the Christian Tradition. For in Christianity also we encounter certain tendencies towards mystical experience proceeding by way of pure immanence. Their faith incites these mystics to call the term of the quest God or Deity. But is the experience which they describe really in accordance with the realism of the Christian faith? The texts which they have left us, generally of the finest literary quality, remain ambiguous. For they intermingle without distinguishing them, on the one hand union with the God of revelation by acts of faith and love, and on the other hand a realization of identity operating by absence of all distinction, consisting in the identity of self to self, of self to the absolute present by essence or substance in the depths of the soul. We have thus two different forms of mysticism, the mysticism of union and the mysticism of unity. Both express the term attained or researched by the word "God" or "Deity". But in reality neither the term nor the process nor the formal means coincide, though often enough the two lines are mingled in the same experience, sometimes the one, sometimes the other being the dominating factor. It should be noted that in nearly every case the "mystics of unity" have been profoundly influenced, directly or indirectly, by Plotinus.

We find traces of this mysticism in various Patristic works of the first centuries, in the Platonizing writings of Evagrius for example, and above all perhaps in the works of the pseudo-Denys. But the most typical example is provided by the Flemish mystical movement of the XII to XIV centuries. From the XII century onwards, the Beguins of Belgium and the Low countries sought for an "ecstatic" abolition of self in the ineffability of the divine Essence. It was the *Wesensmystik* or *Seinsmystik*, the "mysticism of Essence" or of "Being". It could be compared, allowing for the great differences of formulation and context, with the *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the Unicity of Being of an Ibn 'Arabi. In spite of opposition and condemnation, this tendency continued, and various philosophers and

theologians attempted to defend its orthodoxy with regard to the truths of faith. This way of immanence, beginning with the recollection of the soul within itself, aimed, by the rupture of all discourse and of all distinct apprehension, at penetrating into the abyss of Unity, beyond "the persons, the modes and the names" according to Ruusbroec's expression.

Eckart (XIII-XIV century) particularly merits a moment's attention. He is the master of what is called "speculative mysticism". It is in no way a mystical union sought after by means of intellectual speculation, but a way of not-knowing or intellectual nescience. The principal lines of Eckart's philosophy could be described in broad outline as follows: in epistemology, the use of an analogy of pure attribution, as the Russian theologian Vladimir Lossky has clearly shown; in ontology, a participation of being taken univocally; and in theology the conviction that the relations between the creature and the Creator can only be expressed, on the conceptual level itself, by way of negation. His Catholic faith excluded from Eckart's thought any emanationist view. Besides for him the problem of the creation *ex nihilo* of spiritual substances was no longer posed. Let us listen to some extracts from his sermons. "The God of faith, Unity and Trinity", he tells us, "is a way towards the Absolute; but is he really the Absolute?" Again he says: "This is why I pray God to liberate me from God; for my essential being is above God in the measure in which we consider God as the origin of creatures (...). That is why I am not-born, and why, in accordance with the mode of my eternal birth, I can never die (...). I receive in illumination (literally, in an irruption) this: God and I are one". The deity is above God "who becomes and passes", he says again, and above the Deity lies the unfathomable Abyss.....

Such affirmations incurred the condemnation of Pope John XXII in 1329. The censors of the time saw in them "theological errors". I would prefer to think it was a matter of the irruption of an experience which realized identity, of the Plotinian type, but not recognized as such, within the schemes of the Christian faith. This "speculative mysticism" describes the experience as an identification in the order of "essences". But it would be more correct, in my opinion, to speak here not of essence but of substance. For it is the substantial act of existing (*esse*) of the soul, or of the Self some would say, which is attained, as being at once beyond all intelligibility and anterior to it. I do not think that this experience, taken alone, suffices to explain Master Eckart. But it is this element, and the conceptual interpretation which he gives of it, which was to exercise in the future a real attraction. We have already encountered the utilization, in the philosophical order properly understood, that Hegel made of it. More directly, it inspired the mystical gnosis of Jacob Boehme, the poetic outbursts of Angelus Silesius, and many others. It is, besides,

interesting to recall the parallel established by Rudolf Otto between Sankara and Master Eckart.

Heidegger

One of the principal examples of Eckart's influence, in the contemporary world, is, may be, that of Heidegger. He cannot be called a disciple, but the resurgence of Eckartian themes manifested by his writings is all the more remarkable. Heidegger was the pupil and successor of Husserl, and it was the failure of the latter to rediscover, by means of intramental intentionality, the "thing itself", which led Heidegger to make use of phenomenology as a method, but also to go beyond it, and even to abolish it in the mystery of language and of the poetic word. The experience of Master Eckart tended towards the Deity beyond God, and to the Abyss beyond the Deity; but his faith, clearly maintained, caused him to situate this experience in a climate of divine grace. Heidegger, on the other hand, does not pose the question of God. "One does not put God in question," he says. For him, what is called God is a supreme Existant (*Seiende*), a manifestation of Being (*Sein*) no doubt, but also that which hides it. He is not "atheist", as he has said several times, but his categories are not those which concern God either affirmatively or negatively. And, as he says elsewhere, the thought which wishes to think "the truth of being", since it experiments "the lack of God", can be no more theistic than atheistic.

The way towards the Absolute which he intends to mark out, is the way towards *Sein*, Being. And *Sein* is the groundless Ground, at once *ab-grund*, *ur-grund* and *un-grund*, a notion very close to the "secret Ground which has neither past nor future" of which Eckart spoke. Heidegger, in spite of his disclaimers, is a philosopher, and a highly experienced one. But his philosophical discourse does not tend towards an intelligible apprehension, by means of abstractive intuition, of what exists. He solicits the hearer or reader to reformulate inwardly those acts of repetition which clear the way, then those acts consisting in a "bound" (*Satz*) which are meant to lead to what is beyond the Existant, until the mysterious sphere of Being is reached, sphere open to thought but inaccessible to reason. For "reason is the most implacable enemy of thought". The philosophical discourse is here at once like a road with many meanders, and like a mask which hides and indicates an experience of an absolute as yet out of reach.

I am not saying that Heidegger has personally lived the fullness of the realizing experience of a Plotinus, Ibn 'Arabi or Master Eckart. I don't know; for nothing in his writings allows us to form a judgement with any certainty. It seems that he came close to this experience by a series of successive approaches, but perhaps without really attaining to it. The attempt to find something beyond discourse by means of

language itself, even if it be poetic language—that language which Heidegger called "the enclosure of Being"—, is not without danger. Heidegger opposes reason and thought, but he hardly seems to have lived the final turning-point — I mean the *minous* of Plotinus, the *fanâ'-baqâ'* of Ibn 'Arabi, or the "irruption" of Eckart. Nevertheless it is the fact that he had at once the nostalgia and the aperception of this ultimate experience, and the fact that he endowed his *Sein* with the very attributes of Eckart's Abyss, which no doubt explains the attraction of Heidegger's "philosophy" (I put the word "philosophy" deliberately in brackets) for so many of our contemporaries.

Throughout these different cultural and religious settings, in the Hellenistic world, in Islam, in Christianity and in modern Western thought, we thus find a family group of thinkers who see in philosophical research the preparation for an experiential apprehension of the absolute, always attained negatively, and as the groundless ground of the act of existence. I have presented the clearest cases, those which witness to a lived experience. Needless to say we find the influence of this experience, but in degraded forms, in the writings of many other thinkers, for example in those of Father Teilhard de Chardin. I speak of "degraded forms", for it is most often a matter of interpretations attached to symbols of the phenomenal sciences, while the experience itself and the lived apophysis which they imply remains unknown.

III

The third type of relationship: hierarchical distinction

In spite of the richness of that vein of thought which runs through Plotinus, Ibn 'Arabi and Eckart, it is far from exhausting the problem of the relationship between philosophy and mysticism such as it has been posed and discussed in the West. Certainly it has produced works of great value and unmistakable authenticity, which are today regarded with renewed favour or at least interest. But it must be recognized that it is not the dominating line in Christianity, and that Muslim mysticism offers us, in the first centuries of the Hegir, another mode of experience and another type of conceptualization.

The answer of Christian thought

The Christian answer can only be understood in a monotheistic context where faith in God is adherence to the Word of God who reveals himself as Creator and Saviour. The term Creator should be taken in a strict sense, as implying a freely-willed creation, and not as a necessary emanation. The creature is not a "shadow of God", but has a veritable existence in its own right in virtue of the gift of being which is gratuitously communicated to it. There is no ontological re-absorption of the universe in God; for God remains infinitely

transcendent in his nature of Deity. But this infinite and absolute transcendence is the source of immanence since God maintains his creature in being. The dialectic immanence-transcendence has always informed Christian thought. (I can only indicate in passing the points of contact, as also the radical differences, between this deliberately realistic faith and the line of *Bhakti-yoga*).

Such are the bases of what could be called a Christian philosophy. This vision of things has traversed the centuries, with a variety of tendencies and schools, founded on the values of faith and thus on theology. It remains a living tradition, and is in no way like an acquisition of the past which could be studied by a purely historical investigation. Today as before it progresses organically, and is largely renewing its problematic.

We have here a double relationship: on the one hand, that of philosophy and theology; on the other, that of philosophy, theology and mysticism. This creationist philosophy of Christianity cannot but refer to the history of salvation according to the teaching of faith, which affirms a progressive revelation of God until the fullness of time, and the coming of Christ, Word of God and Redeemer. Although the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation and of the Redemption belong to theology and not to philosophy, they remain nonetheless as regulating principles of philosophical research. For they shed light on those fundamental problems, inherent in all human inquiry, of the person in his subsistent identity, of evil and of liberty, and of the destiny of the world and of man.

How, in this climate of thought, will the witness of the mystics be accepted? And what place will be given to mysticism? It is only exceptionally that it has been refused, as for example in certain tendencies of the protestant Reform, and that in the name of the transcendence of the revelation. It can be said on the contrary that the Catholic Church and the autocephalous Eastern Churches have always considered the fact of an authentic mystical life as their purest jewel.

But the experience envisaged is not an experience realizing an ontological identity beyond all distinction. It is an experience of union with the God of faith, supreme (but not unique) Reality, Creator and Saviour. The formal means is no longer the void of all intelligibility, but the nescience of the act of love which tends towards the Other, and is thus united to the Other as He is. It could be called a union of identity; the vocabulary, however, may lead to confusion, for this identity is no longer substantial but intentional, according to the extramental intentionality of the acts of faith and theological charity. This intentional union, operating by connaturality through the nescience of love, is indeed situated in the sphere of apophasis, beyond all discourse. It does not however destroy the act of conceptual apprehension, but it has no recourse to it.

Now since the Creator is transcendent, this entry by experimental affective nescience into the depths of God and the ensuing transformation of the soul in and by the love of God, is essentially beyond the powers of any creature. Theological love, which penetrates the mystery of God as He is in Himself, can only come, in the heart of the mystic, from the initiative and favour of God. It supposes what Christian theology calls the state of grace, a gift doubly gratuitous (the gift of being is already gratuitous), and it supposes, at the root of the soul's faculties, divine motions which transform the purely human mode of action into a mode that is at once human and divine.

Saint John of the Cross, and the "three wisdoms"

I have just resumed, very briefly, the central data of Christian mystical theology. It has its roots in numerous texts of the Jewish-Christian revelation. "God is Love", says John the Apostle: "he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him". It has been lived and formulated by the mystics themselves. It is consonant with the teaching of a long line of Church Fathers, both Greek and Latin, and of the Desert Fathers, which passes through John Climacus, Gregory of Nyssa (and Augustin), and which finds a more explicit expression in Maximus the Confessor. It continues in the Middle Ages with Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Sienna, and many others. At the beginning of the Modern Period, it gives rise to the remarkable analyses of spiritual psychology on the part of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross. And it continues up till the present time through the witness of the life and writings of a tradition of saints.

Mysticism in Christianity, and the formulation of mystical theology, has a long history. I cannot, for lack of time, insist on the point, nor even enumerate the different schools and tendencies. Certainly one of the most elaborated expressions is that of Saint John of the Cross. Some have wished to make him a disciple of Plotinus, or at least of the Flemish School. That would be, in my opinion, to fall into the trap of simple verbal coincidences. For if certain descriptions are similar, the radical divergence of approach is soon apparent. For Plotinus (and for Eckart), it is a matter of quitting the empirical self in order to find the original Self which is the One. For John of the Cross it is a matter of quitting self, of losing oneself, that God, personal and transcendent, Unity and Trinity, may invade the soul with His love. The void, that "nothing" (*nada*) which the mystic experiments, is not to be situated on the natural ontological level. It is the way which passes through the Cross of Christ and which leads to that union which conforms the human will to the divine Will. The soul and God, in the words of John of the Cross, "are then one by transformation of love". And because it is a union in love, this kind of mystical

experience cannot be an isolated solitude in God. For to enter by Christ's Cross into the depths of God is to love God and men with the same love, with the very love of Christ. It means being ready to give all for the love of men as for the love of God. This aspect of Christian mysticism was particularly to strike Bergson (of *Les Deux Sources*).

We have here then a clear distinction between philosophy and mysticism, but this distinction in no way implies opposition. The mystic may or may not be a philosopher, as the philosopher may or may not be a mystic. Philosophy is the search of truth by the natural light of the intelligence, given by God to each of his spiritual creatures in His act of creation. Mysticism is the entry by connaturality of love into the depths of God such as He has revealed Himself to be, and is the fruit and ultimate fulfilment of the supernatural gift of grace. A true Christian philosophy cannot but recognize the profound specificity and the incomparable value of this wisdom of the saints. It must be capable of recognizing and situating both theological wisdom and mystical wisdom, those wisdoms which transcend, but also confirm from above, its own proper wisdom.

Let me add that the philosophy which is most in accordance with the Christian view of the world is that which could be called the philosophy of being. It is not a mysticism. It strives to know what exists by means of the abstractive intuitiveness of the intelligence, this knowledge implying a vital assimilation of being and a meditation on its intelligible content. It thus comes to exercise, at its summit, an act of contemplation, in no way mystical but philosophical. Nonetheless this act symbolizes, analogically, on the natural and abstractive level, that recollection of the soul which marks the entry into every kind of mystical way. Its role is to situate as it were, in relationship at once to itself and to theology, but without the slightest confusion being in question, the worth and value (the highest which exists on earth) of mystical wisdom. One of the most sure explanations of these distinctions without opposition is that to be found in the writings of a great contemporary philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who is no doubt the greatest living servant of the philosophy of being. I am thinking in particular of the chapters in his book "The Degrees of Knowledge" on "mystical experience and philosophy" and on Saint John of the Cross.

Two types of experience

Christian philosophy and theology have thus always recognized the significance of mystical experience by an intentional union of love, fulfilment on earth of the life of grace. But have they recognized as authentic an experience of what is absolute by way of immanence and identity, such as we have found in Plotinus and those influenced by

him? It must be admitted that the specificity of this experience was formerly ignored (we have only to recall the condemnation of Master Eckart). But today a deeper knowledge of different religious backgrounds, Christian and non-Christian alike, has brought to light the effectuating reality, in and by the void of all intelligible distinction, of the experience of the absolute that man is by nature in the ultimate depths of his being. Certain contemporary theologians have wanted to find there either an incomplete formulation or the initial stage of an entry into the depths of God. It should be added that some Oriental masters, reversing the terms of this solution, often tend to consider affective union with God, Creator and Saviour as an approaching image or first step of the experience of identity. However these two replies are in contradiction, and cannot both be true at the same time.

The philosophy of being, on the contrary, admits the specificity and value of both of these experimental lines, each on its own level. Allow me again to refer to Jacques Maritain (chapter III of his *Quatre Essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle*), and to the various studies of our friend Olivier Lacombe. I will only add certain precisions which I have proposed in connection with Muslim mysticism. The experience of identity by way of immanence does not lead of itself to God as known by revelation and faith. But it is truly a fruitful apprehension of that absolute which is the act of existence taken in all its plenitude, and is therefore truly mystical experience. The entry into God's depths by faith and theological love supposes, to be fully authentic, that God Creator and Saviour exists in reality in his transcendent Mystery, and that He is capable of elevating by grace his spiritual creatures over and above their natural being and activity. Thus to distinguish two types of mystical experience is in no way to minimize either the one or the other. It is rather to recognize for the one as for the other its specificity and universal significance, taking account of the way and of the term that is proper to each of them.

In Islam

I will conclude this third and last part of my paper by a few additional references to Islam. The problem was there posed otherwise than in Christianity. For Islam God reveals his Word, but does not reveal his inaccessible Mystery. Numerous, however, were the mystics and that from the beginning of the Hegir, who thirsted to penetrate this Mystery; but in doing so they advanced beyond their explicit faith, and their experience was to become its own criterion. This was no doubt the deepest reason for the opposition of official Islam, in the III and IV centuries of the Hegir, towards those sufis who made the love of God and the life of God in the faithful soul the way and term of an experience of total union. Paradoxically, at least

in appearance, the *şûfis* of the Unicity of Being and of the experience of identity — Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Sabīn 'Abd al-Karīm Jīlī for example — were less violently combated. They were certainly an object of dispute, and were sometimes vigorously attacked, but they had also their supporters. And it can be said that their great literary works have freedom of city in the Muslim culture.

The Islamic faith is thus centred on the monolithic affirmation of the One God, the Most-High, inaccessible in his Mystery "without fissure" (*şamad*). At first sight, the Unicity of Being (*wahdat al wujūd*) seems hardly consonant with these affirmations of faith. But in fact this experience realizing identity and this annihilation of all created nature in the absolute subsistence which alone continues to exist, is, indirectly, in harmony with the strictest (and for a long time the most accepted) teaching of Muslim theology: in face of the absence of ontological density in the creature, God, it is said, is the unique Being and the unique Agent. It is thus understandable that the rigours of official teaching were primarily directed against those *sufis* of the first centuries, and certain of their successors, who affirmed and researched union with God in and by the love of God, and not an experience of identity. Love supposes concordance, said theologians and jurists, and no concordance is possible between the creature and the Creator.

Before the explicitation of the *wahdat al-Wujūd*, some great *sufis* followed a line called *wahdat al-shuhūd*, "Unicity of testimonial Presence". This line culminates, in the III-IV century of the Hegir, with the life and death of Ibn Maṣṣū' al-Ḥallāj. To be united to God is to become one (*ittiḥād*) with Him, not by substance or essence, but by love, by that love "which causes one to find" a supreme "I", in which the dialogue without being destroyed is consummated in unity. We are here close to the mystical experience of Christianity as lived and formulated by Theresa of Avila or John of the Cross.

Ḥallāj preached in the *Sūq* of Baghdād that the "Essence of the essence of God is love", and that it is by way of suffering and love that man is united with Him. The condemnation of Ḥallāj by the authorities of his time is well-known, as is his arrest, his long trial and his sentence to death which he had foretold: "It is in the religion of the gallows that I will die", he had proclaimed. This great figure has not ceased to be an object of dispute in Islam. He remains, to take over an expression of Louis Massignon, like a question unceasingly posed to the heart of the Muslim Community.

"I am He whom I love and He whom I love has become I,
We are two natures without fusion in a single body,"

Ḥallāj had said. The greatest mystics of the Unicity of Being, particularly Ibn 'Arabī, were to hold him in veneration, but reproa-

ched him this maintaining of duality, obstacle to the consummation of identity. But perhaps they failed to recognize that it was a matter of an experiential approach different from their own. A reference to Christian parallels is here perhaps instructive. The couplet of Ḥallāj which I have just quoted is indeed very little in accordance with the Flemish *Wesensmystik*. But is it not, in a quite different cultural and religious climate, an expression close to that intentional union of love, gift of divine grace, which Saint John of the Cross defines as "two natures in one spirit and love of God"?

IV

To conclude this survey, at once too long and too rapid, of mystical experiences in the West and of their philosophical-theological interpretations, I would like to propose five remarks.

1. The accident of modern philosophies of praxis, of "self-constituting" truth, and the success which they obtain today, should not allow us to forget other lines of philosophical research which insist on the apprehension of what exists by the abstractive intuitiveness of the mind, in the service of extramental truth. The philosophies of being bring thus into play a profoundly contemplative attitude which the human intelligence cannot refuse without denying its own nature. This is no doubt the most obvious reason for their comprehension of, and respect for, mystical experience as such.

2. An attentive study of different religious climates leads in my opinion to the recognition of the specificity of two types of experience. In the first case the mystic is engaged on the way of immanence and of a drastic turning-back beyond all distinct intelligible apprehension towards "the silence of the origins", and the absolute of the first act of existence. In the second case, he tends, by love for Another loved more than self, towards union with the God of revelation and faith "known as unknown".

3. The consequence of this is that the expressions "mysticism", "experience", and "mystical knowledge" should be understood analogically. The terms employed — knowledge and nescience, spirit, recollection, void and apophysis, union and identity, grace and so on — are thus capable of signifying very different objects, according to the different contexts and points of view envisaged.

4. Philosophical wisdom is by nature contemplative, at the summit of discourse (and this is by no means exclusive of investigations in the domain of action). If then it is faithful to its true nature, its activity and that of mysticism will be in harmony. In this respect Western thought, including both the Christian and Muslim traditions, presents us with two distinct answers. Philosophy and mysticism can, on the one hand, become confounded, or at least the first can be taken as a preparation for mystical nescience. This happens when the

absolute which man thirsts to attain is the ultimate reality of his existence, that which Plotinus calls the One, Eckart "the secret Ground", and Heidegger the *Sein*. Whatever may be the passing influence of a call to transcendence, it is above all by way of immanence that such an experience proceeds. On the other hand, philosophy and mysticism are considered as distinct, but without opposition or exclusion. And this is so when the Absolute sought after is God, Creator and Saviour, at once transcendent and immanent, radically Other than the creature. It is in this case by an intentional and supernatural union of love that the mystic is enabled to experience and taste the divine Mystery.

5. Certain philosophies have failed fully to admit either one or the other of these two experiential approaches. It is the philosophy of being which alone up till now has come to recognize them both, and has striven to distinguish their respective characteristics. Both in any case are found beyond any limit in time or space. I am convinced that the investigation here presented will be singularly enriched by the contributions of Oriental thought.

These distinctions are in need of being considerably developed, and should certainly be the object of discussion and elaboration. Incomplete and imperfect as they are, they at least seem to me to make a worthwhile contribution to the East-West dialogue, given that it should, as we all hope, be pursued in depth.

Theory and Practice in The University

J. F. Staal

Since what goes on in the university is largely based upon views defended by philosophers in the past, the topic of this paper may not be out of place in a seminar devoted to theory and practice in philosophy. In fact, the university may be said to embody some of the practices which are the outcome of philosophical theories.

The Greek term *theoria* characterizes an ideal, that at the same time provides an answer to the question, what is the relevance of knowledge and of the university. This ideal of *theoria* or "contemplation" was first adopted by the leisured aristocracy of ancient Greece. In contemporary universities, the related ideal is that rational knowledge and pure research, like contemplation, are ends in themselves and good for their own sake. They satisfy curiosity. Among contemporary academics this has become the most widespread point of view. It has in fact assumed the character of an ideology, because it is held on to even when it is clearly inconsistent with current university practice. Like all ideologies, it causes a certain blindness. For example, it effectively prevents academics from noticing all kinds of connections between the university and society, which have nothing to do with pure contemplation.

According to this point of view, then, the aim of knowledge does not lie outside knowledge, and knowledge should be sought for its own sake. Similarly, the university should only serve such pure knowledge. I shall refer to this function of the university as the *pure function*.

Before introducing a point of view that is quite different, let me remark that this Aristotelian ideal of pure theoretical knowledge is not universal in the history of mankind. Let me confine myself to two examples. In ancient India, philosophy was studied, in the words of Max Mueller, "not for the sake of knowledge but for the highest purpose that man can strive after in this life." (quoted in Hiriyanna, 1964, 18). Advocating this ideal did not imply that pure knowledge was regarded as less important than practical activity, but that it was regarded as secondary to spiritual freedom. The *Bhagavad Gita*, for example, says (12. 12) :

śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsān jñānāddhyanān viśiṣyate |

jñānātkarmaphalatyaḡas-tyāḡācchāntiranantaram ||

For knowledge is better than practice,

Meditation is superior to knowledge,

Abandonment of the fruits of action better than meditation;
From abandonment comes peace immediately.

The Indian ideal, that knowledge is subordinate to the highest good of spiritual realization, was also ideological in nature. It is stressed even in texts where in fact a purely theoretical analysis is given. For example, the oldest preserved manual of classical Indian logic, the *Nyāyasūtra*, begins with an enumeration of categories, a matter of pure knowledge. But it is immediately emphasized that knowledge of the real essence (*tattvajñāna*) of these categories is what leads to the attainment of the highest good (*niḥśreyasādhigamaḥ*).

In Confucian China an ideal was espoused that was quite different from the Indian, but equally different from the Aristotelian Western ideal. According to Fung Yu-Lan, Confucius' aim in teaching was "to nurture and develop a person so that he might become someone who would be useful to his state, rather than to produce a scholar belonging to any one philosophic school" (Fung Yu-Lan 1952, I, 47). Of course, it may be noted here that many philosophers in the West, from Plato on, often had similar aims for philosophy.

Both ideals — that of the welfare of the individual and that of the welfare of the community, as illustrated respectively by the Indian and Chinese examples — are also sometimes invoked in our modern universities. It is worth noting, however, that they have no direct connection with, and are not easily justified in terms of, the ideal of pure research.

Universities which perform only the pure function — real ivory towers — have perhaps never existed. Universities have in fact increasingly come to depend on society. After all, the universities, ever becoming more expensive, are financed by the surrounding society, which expected in turn some kind of useful service. Some authorities even consider this the main task of the university. According to Clark Kerr, a former President of the University of California, for example, the university is "a service station for corporations and the government". I shall refer to this function of the university as the *service function*.

In the West, the service function of the universities began to become important during the middle ages. The king of Aragon interfered directly with the autonomy of the universities in 1272, when he required the medical faculty at Montpellier to provide surgeons with a *licencia operandi*. This requirement had become necessary because of the large number of quacks, often women, who practised surgery with disastrous consequences. The historian Stephen d'Irsay comments on this by saying that it constitutes one of the first instances of the state intervening in purely academic matters. "Cette intervention, en ce cas très justifiée, ne cessera plus, et la médecine des

universités, dans laquelle l'enseignement et l'exercice sont savamment liés, remplira une fonction sociale par excellence" (d'Irsay 1933, I, 164: This intervention, fully justified in the case under consideration, would never cease, and medical studies in the university, combining teaching and practice in a scientific manner, would eminently fulfil a social function).

Professional education in the universities developed gradually. By the eighteenth century three new subjects were taught in the university: engineering, economics, and diplomacy (d'Irsay 1935, II, 134). Professional and practical subjects have been added ever since. This led to many reactions and criticisms, as for instance in Max Weber's lecture of 1919., "Wissenschaft als Beruf" (Science as a Vocation), in which scholars, especially in the social sciences, are recommended not only to steer clear of all political commitment, but also of all practical involvement.

This century-long development has, of course, not come to an end. The modern university obviously does not confine itself to pure research and to the exercise of the pure function, while at the same time modern society is more interested in knowledge that it considers to be useful than in purely theoretical knowledge. By and large the universities have also accepted this service function. Scholars take it for granted that it is easier to get money to appoint a tenth professor of physics than a first lecturer in Old Egyptian. Were it not because of usefulness, one would have to explain this by assuming that elementary particles are intrinsically more interesting than hieroglyphs. In brief, the ideal of the pure function of the university and of *theoria* is accepted in universities in principle, but in practice only to a certain extent. Society, though it does not often say so explicitly, tolerates the university teaching its usual useless stuff, as long as it turns out smart young people to serve more pressing needs.

One consequence of this state of affairs is that we are in general unevenly informed about the world that surrounds us and about reality in general. Another consequence is that universities are forced to pay attention not only to subjects that are really useful to society, but to subjects which society thinks are useful. Universities are therefore also dependent on popular prejudices. Hence, professional training takes up a disproportionately large amount of the attention and resources of universities. Similarly, the natural sciences are tremendously overrated at the expense of the humanities. This much is indeed widely known. But prejudices concerning what is "useful" upset the academic balance also in a myriad other ways. Let me give one example. At the peak of European colonialism it was thought in many colonial countries that Asian and Oriental Studies were useful. At that time many important traditions of Asian and Oriental scholarship were founded. Now that the classical colonial era is over (though not the

era of imperialism), these subjects are beginning to be neglected, though they are probably more relevant to the balance of the world than ever before. Thus, a valuable tradition of scholarship is interrupted. But usefulness is almost the only criterion figuring in discussions on these matters. The purely academic value of these subjects is not even mentioned.

All of this implies not only that, for example, the script of Harappa would have been deciphered long ago if as much attention had been given to it as to the study of, say, clouds. It also implies, and more importantly, that we would know a great deal more about man if we could pay a little more attention to him as a topic of scientific investigation. This would not merely be useful in the sense of adding to someone's prosperity. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the most serious problems facing the world may only be resolved successfully when we get to know man more precisely. Man will certainly not survive if we don't even try to study him adequately.

The fashionable demand for relevance has to be interpreted within this perspective. While usefulness is different from relevance in that it is concerned with limited, practical advantage, both are different from the ideal of knowledge for its own sake. Both the pure and the service function of the university have therefore failed to produce enough of the kind of knowledge that humanity really needs and will in all likelihood need increasingly.

Some irrationalist philosophers, e.g., Henri Bergson, have claimed that our mental organization directs us to the study of what is useful for our practical activities, and prevents us forever from knowing anything that is not useful in this way. But such a view seems unconvincing if the Aristotelian *theoria* is possible at all. And that this is possible seems likely; it would at least offer a good explanation for the fact that we have amassed enormous quantities of useless knowledge. It seems more probable that the present distribution of our scientific and scholarly attention and activities, and the present allocations in our budgets of higher education, can only be explained by a long emphasis on subjects that society has considered useful.

The pure and service functions together do not exhaust the tasks universities have performed in the past and should perform in the future. With increasing awareness of the universities' partial responsibility for the present state of humanity and for many of the calamities which strike the world, there have been vices, e.g., among radical students and among the philosophers of the Frankfurter School of dialectics, advocating that the university should be an independent and critical university. I shall refer to this function of the university as the *critical function*. It is in fact through applying this function, that we obtain the insight that most contemporary universities adhere in theory to the pure function, but in practice very largely to

the service function. The critical function itself has been much neglected in recent times, partly because of the apathy of academics, and partly because it is by definition not pleasing to the society which finances the university.

There is, however, a fourth and last function of the university which I shall call the *leadership function*, and which is equally neglected in recent times and for similar reasons. Universities in the past were generally expected to provide intellectual and moral leadership. Nowadays many intellectuals are outside the universities, which themselves contain merely "experts". But there is at present a particular need for such intellectual and moral leadership to be provided by universities, especially as large segments of society lose their faith in the capacity of other institutions (e.g., government or religious institutions) to provide such leadership. It is the main task of academics nowadays to breathe new life into this leadership function. The democratization of European universities and the reconstitution of American universities, which have been urged especially after Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, can play a part in such a new lease of life, but they do not directly contribute to that goal.

Whoever has attended a faculty or senate meeting may well ask whether a group of quarrelling and procrastinating professors is at all capable of, let alone is the appropriate body for, providing intellectual and moral leadership. But, first, the actual social responsibility of professors in their capacities as professors is so limited, that meetings of professors generally deal with trivialities and inanities. Secondly, students are also part of a university, and their sense of social responsibility has in recent years been very much greater than that of most of their professors, who have painstakingly adhered to their professional ideology of neutrality. I believe that actually students have the most important part to play in the exercise of the leadership function of the university.

It is instructive at this point to adopt a wider perspective and to disregard for a moment the present qualification, or lack of qualification, of professors and students for providing leadership. The history of the universities clearly shows that the prestige and influence of universities in the past has been immense. The medieval universities of Bologna, Salamanca, Paris, and Oxford, to mention just a few, provided great intellectual and moral leadership. In China the same was true of the university of Peking; in India of the universities of Taxila, Nalanda, and Banaras; in the world of Islam of the Al-Azhar at Cairo. While the purely scientific influence exercised by universities is nowadays much larger, their intellectual and moral influence is almost null in comparison. This development can be explained by a variety of causes. One is widespread anti-intellectualism in contemporary society. Another is that society does not like

to be offered guidance or leadership, just as it does not like criticism. A third is that society emphasizes the service function of the university, reminding academics and administrators of the fact that society finances the university; and that universities repeat the same slogans, hoping thereby to obtain more money. Fourthly, the small influence of the universities is due to internal causes, such as the ideology of neutrality and value-free science, not to mention general apathy. And there are other causes. But given the present state of the world, and the fact that the leadership of governments and religious institutions is increasingly questioned, it becomes imperative that universities regain their leadership.

That universities should provide leadership may seem especially strange to those who are used to see scholars go out of their way to deny the capacity for such leadership. Examples are not difficult to find. Robert Lynd, for instance, quotes and criticizes the following description by W. C. Mitchell of the task of the National Bureau of Economic Research: "In determining the facts on these heads as accurately as the materials permit, the National Bureau of Economic Research is following the policy of providing men of all shades of opinion with objective knowledge of the conditions which confront them. As in all our work, so here: we confine ourselves to stating the facts as we find them. With opinions about the promise or the danger to American life from the growth of trade unions we have no concern as an organization of investigators." Lynd comments on this quite rightly that therefore the scientist "is staying his hand at the point at which the culture is most in need of his help" (Lynd 1939, 199 note, 185).

The question naturally arises how universities will be able to provide leadership where everyone else has failed. The performance of such a task need at any rate not require the foundation of new universities. The existing universities, provided the entire academic community is taken into account, contain already at least the qualified manpower required for the exercise of leadership. Realizing such plans, however, requires a radical re-orientation of existing universities, starting with a re-distribution of tasks and responsibilities so that students play a role, not as subjects of reform but as participants. Apart from a host of other difficulties, it is obvious that this will cost money.

At this point, it could very well be argued that there is enough money. Good students already have or ought to have fellowships. And only good students can perform these tasks. All that seems to be required, therefore, is a re-channelling of these funds by which they are transferred from the fellowship budget to that section of the university budget from which salaries are paid. Of course, the need for space and other university facilities will also arise. But

most universities need a lot more of these anyway.

But whoever argues along these lines fails to appreciate the real problem. The question is not whether there is enough money, but where the money comes from. Universities are generally financed by governments who act or claim to act on behalf of the taxpayers, and by private enterprise, sometimes via the intermediary of foundations. These methods of funding have often created a certain dependence. At the moment, this dependence is gradually increasing. Chomsky felt, in 1968, that in the United States, science, unlike technology, would continue to develop along lines which are set by internal dynamics and which are not determined by the demands of the government or of the industries, (quoted in Staal 1968, 14-15). At the moment, the picture appears to be somewhat more gloomy. It is at any rate clear that the financial dependence of the universities will always lead to an emphasis on the service function of the university and to a corresponding neglect of the critical and leadership functions. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that these latter functions can be performed adequately if universities continue to be financed in this manner. Society which provides the funds is not often interested in criticism, guidance, or leadership, especially not if these are to be partly provided by students. Despite appearances, moreover, most of society's aims are short-ranging aims, whereas the universities can afford to look further ahead. Von Humboldt rightly emphasized that the state should leave the universities free and should "von ihnen nicht fordern, was sich unmittelbar und geradezu auf ihn bezieht, sondern die innere Überzeugung hegen, dass, wenn sie ihren Endzweck erreichen, sie auch seine Zwecke und zwar von einem viel höheren Gesichtspunkte aus erfüllen, von einem, von dem sich viel mehr zusammenfassen lässt und ganz andere Kräfte und Hebel angebracht werden können, als er in Bewegung zu setzen vermag" (von Humboldt 1964, 304: demand nothing of them which directly concerns itself or its own operations, but must hold fast to the inner conviction that if the higher institutions of learning reach their ultimate aim, its own aim, too, will be thereby fulfilled, and from a much loftier point of view than any that could have been arranged directly by the state itself).

These considerations irrevocably lead to the conclusion that universities which perform all the required functions adequately should also in financial respect be entirely independent of national governments as well as of so-called free-enterprise. Such a requirement is only natural if one of the most important tasks of the university is to guide and serve the interests of humanity, and not that of particular countries, groups or ideologies. This means that the university should become international. Such internationalization can only be realized gradually. But ultimately it will reach the stage where the universities are

financed from central sources which are in turn financed by the higher education budgets of those countries that are willing to participate in the plan. There are many intermediate stages which may, for instance, be reached in collaboration with some of the existing international scientific institutions. To win the interests of governments will be difficult, especially in the beginning. There is little chance, at the moment, that the large American or Russian state universities will be interested in such internationalization. But some universities in smaller countries and perhaps also private universities, for example, in the United States, will discover that such a development is in the interests of all.

Contacts will have to be built up from the ground and not be organized from the top by super-organizations such as UNESCO. Science has been international for a long time and contacts between scholars, and more recently also between students are more really international than any other contacts. Once the internationalization of universities has taken root, it will no longer be possible to arrest it, for the international universities will gradually attract the best teachers and the best students. Universities that have remained national will gradually realize that they can only maintain their standards if they participate in the process of internationalization. Governments will similarly discover that the services performed by the national universities will slowly deteriorate, so that it will become necessary also for them to support the international universities.

The present situation of national and relatively dependent universities, which most people nowadays accept as a matter of course, is in fact of relatively recent origin. Of course, universities continue to be regarded as strongholds of independence and freedom. But this is largely flag-waving and advertisement. Despite great varieties in dress and style, especially among students, university communities are in fact becoming increasingly conformist. The freedom they exhibit appears especially great to those who are of least independent mind. In the past the freedom of the universities was much greater and more effective. Nowadays, university freedom depends on general political freedom. In the past, even when political freedom was in peril, it was attempted to preserve freedom in the universities. Universities were in fact established or re-established in order to safeguard such freedom. During the Renaissance, for example, the university of Bologna suffered badly during the wars with Florence. But it was restored by Lorenzo il Magnifico *ad solatium veteris amissae libertatis* ("as compensation for the old freedom that was lost": Burckhardt 1960, 125, note 54).

That the great universities of the past were generally independent and international is clear from the facts of their history. I shall confine myself here to a few examples taken from the history of higher education in India.

The oldest institution of higher learning in India were forest

schools. They began to flourish during the first half of the last millenium before Christ, and originated outside the village communities which constituted the centres of established society. This is related to a general bi-partition of Indian culture that can be traced throughout Indian history and shows two separate but interdependent traditions with differing philosophical, social and religious ideals (see, e. g., Dumont 1959). There was, on the one hand, traditional society, where life was regulated by ritual ceremonies and family and caste obligations. This society, based in the villages and later in towns and cities, became increasingly rigid and conservative. It had as its ideal the Brahmins who as ritual experts played a prominent role in the village community. On the other hand, there were the individuals who, leaving family, caste and ritual, renounced society in order to isolate themselves in the jungle and devote themselves to meditation and to metaphysical and cosmological speculation. They had for their ideal the *saṃnyāsins* who, as hermits, ascetics, sages and teachers, maintained the individuality and independence which tended to disappear in the village communities. The *saṃnyāsins*, often unintentionally, attracted students and this led to the foundations of sects and religions (e. g. Jainism and Buddhism), to new ideas in research and education, and to the establishment of the forest schools. These communities were small, decentralized and self-dependent. The students collected firewood and food for their teachers. Some of these forests, the Naimiṣa forest, for example, were famous on account of the many sages and teachers that lived there in relative isolation.

Though the sages of the forest created almost all the leading ideas of Indian civilization, most of which were in due course incorporated in the village traditions, we are much better informed about the village life of orthodox society than about these wandering scholars. The few descriptions that remain illustrate that they adopted various styles of living. Our much more extensive information about the later sects of Hinduism confirms this variety.

A striking picture of some of these ancient sages occurs in a poem from the Ṛgveda, the oldest collection of poetry in Sanskrit and indeed in any Indo-European language (Ṛgveda 10 : 136) :

*keśya'gnim kaśi viṣam keśi bibharti rodasī
keśi viśvam svardṣe keśidam jyotirucyate ||
munayo vātaraśanāḥ piśaṅgā vasate mattā
vātasyānu dhrājim yanti yaddevāso avikṣata ||
unmaditā mauneyena vātām ā tashimā vayam
śariredasmākaṁ yūyam martāso abhi paśyatha ||
antarikṣeṇa patati viśvā rūpāvacākaśat
munirdevasya devasya saukṛtyāya sakhām hitaḥ ||*

vātasyāśvo vāyoḥ sakhātho deveṣito munih
 ubhau samudrāvā kṣeti yaśca pūrvaṁ utāparaḥ ||
 apsarasāṁ gandharvāṅām mṛgāṅām caraṇe caran
 keśi ketasya vidvānsakhā svādurmadintamaḥ ||
 vāyurasmā upāmanyatpinaṣṭi smā kunaṁnamā
 keśi viśasya pātreṇa yadrudreṇāpibatsaha ||

Long-hair holds fire, holds the drug, holds heaven and earth.

Long-hair opens everything under the sun. Long-hair declares it light.

These sages, swathed in wind, put dirty red tatters on.

When gods get in them, they ride with the rush of the wind.

“Crazy with wisdom, we have lifted ourselves to the wind.

Our bodies are all you merely mortals can see.”

He sails through the air, seeing appearances spread out below.

The sage, this god and that his friend, friendly to all that's well-done.

The stallion of wind, companion of gales, and lashed on by gods—the sage.

He is home by two seas, the waters east and those of the west.

He moves in the motion of heavenly girls and youths, of beasts in the woods.

Long-hair, reading their minds, is their sweet and most pleasing companion.

The wind has stirred it, Kunaṁnamā prepared it for him,

Long-hair drinks from the cup; sharing the drug with Rudra.

Two features of this poem, which may have been composed around 1,000 B.C., deserve comment. One of the ceremonies of the village ritual was the “first tonsure,” to which all boys were subjected between the ages of three and five, depending on caste. This was followed by ritual shaving at the age of sixteen or later. At many larger rituals and sacrifices, the sacrificers had to have their hair and beard cut. There also was a ceremonial hair-cutting festival (*keśa-vapanīya*), which formed part of the ritual of royal consecration. The forest sages gave expression to their renouncement by letting their hair and beard grow; hence the term *keśin* (long-hair). Some famous sages adopted this description as their actual name, e.g., Keśin Dārbhya. Among the gods, Śiva the ascetic, the successor to the Vedic Rudra mentioned in the last line of the poem, is pictured with long hair. Kṛṣṇa, too, is called Keśava.

The other feature of the poem that deserves comment is that the sages wandered and moved around, and were at home in very different regions. They were typically independent, and as international as one could be three thousand years ago. This also remains a characteristic of the later *saṁnyāsins*, who were called, for example, *parivrajaka* (wandering person) or *paramahaṁsa* (highest goose). Also the Buddha's *Dammaṇḍa* (13:9) speaks of geese going in the path of the sun, and (hinting at levitation) of accomplished ascetics going through the sky.

The oldest forest schools survive only in the religious ashrams, hermitages and convent schools. But the cities of Banaras, and to a smaller extent of Allahabad and Ayodhya, provide even at present the kind of decentralized education that in the past could only be obtained in the jungle. In the center of these cities numerous independent pandits (traditional scholars) live and teach the traditional sciences. These scholars often stand ready to answer whatever questions are put by visitors or passers-by. The authors of a report of the Indian Government of 1958 stated: “...the Holy Cities of Varanasi, Prayaga and Ayodhya are practically open University Towns, if we may say so” (*Report of the Sanskrit Commission, 1958, 27*).

Universities of the campus variety originated much later. The University of Taxila (Takṣaśilā), founded around the fourth century B.C., was independent of the state and was in its entirety financed by students who came from all parts of India and from all castes. A prince of Banaras (Kāśī) enrolled, gave a thousand coins to his teacher, and kept only a pair of sandals and a sunshade of leaves. When by mistake, in the dark of the night, he collided with a brahman and broke his begging bowl, he said: “I can't reimburse you but I am Prince Junha, son of the king of Kāśī, and as soon as I am back in my kingdom, you may come to be reimbursed.” (Most of this and the following information on Indian universities is taken from Mookerji, 1947).

In Taxila advanced students were appointed as teaching assistants (*piṭṭhyācāriya*). A teacher who went on leave to Banaras appointed his best pupil, saying: “My son, I am leaving. During my absence you are to teach these students.” According to a legend, the grammarian Pāṇini had been a student at Taxila.

Taxila lost much of its influence and fame when it came under Hellenistic influence. The older academies in Greece had been relatively small and independent of the state. But during the Hellenistic period this changed. Ptolemy (I) Soter (367-283 B.C.) regarded the academies as bastions of freedom, and hence as hotbeds of revolution and dangerous for the state. He therefore founded large, royal universities. These were accommodated in buildings adjoining the royal palace. They were well subsidized and provided with numerous

facilities. But after Taxila had been re-organized in this fashion, the most famous teachers and many of the students left, and it lost its fame.

The Buddhist university of Nālandā, founded in the second or third century A.D., was financed from the revenue of a bequest which, according to legend, originated in a sum donated to the Buddha by 500 merchants. An idea of the size and dimension of this university can be gathered from the fact that the university library consisted of three buildings, one having nine floors. The students, whose number fluctuated between 3,000 and 10,000 through the centuries, came from the entire Buddhist world, i.e., from India, Ceylon, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Korea. It is not surprising that it is reported that there were many "travelling students" (*caraka*). The curriculum consisted not only of religious subjects, Hindu as well as Buddhist, but also of secular subjects, in particular grammar and logic. Grammar and logic were in fact the main stumbling blocks, which sometimes caused more than 80% of the students to fail at the admission tests. The students were provided with free clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. Special guests from abroad received particular attention. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang (602-664) describes how he received daily 120 Jambira fruits, 20 betel nuts, 20 muscat nuts, an ounce of camphor, one measure of the best rice (make Mahāśāli); and once a month, three measures of oil.

The administration of Nālandā was in the hands of the students. They distributed the rooms at the beginning of the rainy season, giving priority to teachers and advanced students. They punished, sometimes with expulsion, students who had transgressed the university regulations or who had in any way harmed the university community.

In medieval India universities and colleges (*vidyāsthāna*) were generally founded by kings, who provided the revenue from villages as a permanent endowment. The administration was left in the hands of the college officials and there were no strings attached. One of the earliest of such grants is that of the South Indian ruler Nīpatuṅga-varman, a Pallava king of the ninth century, who provided the revenue from three villages for a college at Vāgūr (Kane, 1941, 369).

Much of what holds for these Indian forest schools and universities also holds for the large medieval universities of the West, whether Christian or Muslim (like Al-Azhar in Cairo). All these great institutions of higher learning flourished in societies that may in general terms be described as traditionalistic and religious. But to say that the universities were, therefore, often religious does not mean that they did not exercise intellectual and moral leadership. On the contrary, it means that such leadership, like all intellectual and moral leadership in premodern societies, was verily largely spiritual and religious in nature. A very similar kind of leadership will be required

from the international universities of the future.

The internationalization of universities is not a panacea. But it seems unlikely that without such internationalization it will even be possible to save in the future both science and mankind. Even if adopted as a workable idea, however, such internationalization could not be achieved within a few years. It is a long-term project, in which conscious growth will play a larger part than organization. If only because of this, many will regard the idea as utopian. It is still easier to be cynical about it. But the world is not so perfect that it can do without utopias. And if philosophers at an international seminar on world philosophy will not contemplate utopias, who will?¹

¹ The leading ideas of this paper have been taken from a forthcoming book entitled "The Academic Nowhere".

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Louis Gardet

The subject chosen by Dr. J. F. Staal is much discussed in the contemporary society. Throughout the world since 1967-68, the status of universities, the function of students and their role in society both present and future, are on the agenda. It is indeed a legitimate desire that these questions be examined and solved. They have been at the origin of so many revolts and strikes which were more than once mixed up and poorly guided. But this should not make us to overlook what was sound in the many anxieties that they expressed.

I readily agree with Dr. Staal on what he calls the four functions of the University: theoretical function (pure function), service function, critical function, leadership function. I shall however stress this point: these functions are not opposed to each other, or they do not supersede each other. I might be mistaken, but I have a feeling that Dr. Staal's paper takes each of them in a rather exclusive perspective. It is true that, as centuries went on, one or the other might have been prevailing according to the socio-cultural and political surroundings. But whenever the theoretical function loses itself in a quest of refinements and in gratuitous plays of the Intellect, it becomes an "ivory tower" and betrays itself. What the theoretical function should instigate in the students is the search after and love of truth. If truth were not loved for its own sake, could the leadership function be fruitfully exercised? Whenever the service function is subdued by vested interests or by political passions, it betrays itself. And moreover, is not leadership principally and in the noblest sense of the term, a service, viz. the service of men for higher moral, social and economic justice? I would add that both these theoretical and service functions are complementary in respects with various disciplines. Suffice it to allude for instance to the relations between pure mathematics and pure physics on one hand, and applied physics on the other hand.

As to the critical function, it may be because it has been too neglected in the past that now it bursts off in strikes and revolts. The critical function is indeed a necessary one. It is the mark of the freedom of the spirit. But if it is nurtured in a confined system, for the sake of the seeming constructive value of destruction as such, it betrays itself. It should be freely exercised along positive directions set forth by the end to be reached.

Now, is not that end first of all the harmonious formation of man in all his dimensions? Here, the disinterested quest of truth, the

will to serve men and society and the enlightened and positively constructive criticism, should unite in restored harmony. This is what Dr. Staal calls "leadership function".

I share in Dr. Staal's hope that such will be and can be, if God wills, the University of to-morrow. And how not to wish with him that internationalisation advocated by him which, alone, could ensure financial independence and real freedom from class and national interests.

The past gives us instances of that internationalisation. In the thirteenth century, Finnish, German, and Lombard, professors were teaching at "la Sorbonne" in Paris, in Italy or in Britain. Muslim universities have always been open to all Muslims wherever they come from: not only *al Azhar*, in Cairo, rightly mentioned several times by Dr. Staal, but also the many *madrasa* in the Maghreb and in the East. To-day, International Universities should be organised in function of different and wider requirements. One of their best fruits will probably be that mutual respect and understanding between the diverse cultures and that mutual enlightenment which have been hindered for too long by cultural isolation and by cultural imperialisms (the worst of all, in a way!).

Very suggestive indeed is the evocation made by Dr. Staal of the classical forms of Indian education, particularly of the "forest schools". These forest schools could be compared with the Christian and Muslim Universities of the Middle-Age, and with the then contemporary Christian monasteries. For, in both cases, the issue at stake was not merely "instruction", but spiritual as well as intellectual "education". The past could certainly not be revived nor imitated. Different are the conditionings and requirements of to-day's life. But, it is, in my mind, a mark of freedom and creativity to be able to draw inspiration, in real independence, from the trans-temporal value which were at work in the great traditions of the past.

Theory and practice should stop opposing each other at the University. Let us say that, in like manner as philosophy, the University has a function at once theoretical and practical. The complexity of contemporary problems makes its working more difficult than ever. We can but wish that many professors and students may become aware of this, that adequate means may be given to them to pursue that task, and that they may know how to use them in the pursuit of the end rightly seen (theory) and effectively pursued (practice).

by Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan

Director of the Seminar.

My first task — a very pleasant one — is to thank all of you for your magnificent contribution to the success of this International Seminar. That it is a Seminar, no one perhaps will deny. We have shared with one another, these last ten days, the seed-concepts centring round the theme set for the Seminar, which is: Philosophy — Theory and Practice. The international character of the Seminar, again, may not be questioned. Even in the well-known inter-national organizations, all the nations are not represented. That in a philosophy-meet, philosophers belonging to not less than ten countries are participating undoubtedly lends to the meeting at least an international flavour. With the limited resources available, it was not possible to make the Seminar more international, either in depth or in extent. In regard to the expression 'World Philosophy', an objection was raised by one participant in the course of a discussion, and the answer was given by another participant. The objection was that there is no one-world in philosophy, that there are many worlds such as the Australian, the Peruvian, etc. The answer that was given to this objection was that philosophy is transpersonal and transcultural, and so cuts across national and other barriers. Probably it is true that there are not only as many philosophies as there are nations and cultures, but that each human being may be said to have his own philosophical perspective — including Shakespeare's shepherd. But as in the case of religion, so in the case of philosophy, individualisation implies universalisation, so that it may not be unreasonable to talk — not of a world philosophy — but of world philosophy.

Fortunately, no exception has been taken to the Seminar theme itself. This is, probably, because it can accommodate a variety of views in regard to theory and practice *vis-a-vis* philosophy. The caption 'Theory and Practice' appears in some papers with some qualifying or additional phrase: Theory and Practice, in Evagrius Ponticus, in Confucianism, in Integralism and Intentionalism, in Buddhist Philosophy, in the Evolution of Western Thought, in the University, in Human Dimension. Expressions equivalent or related to the theme-title or one or the other of the three words constituting it occur in the descriptions of several other papers: being philosophical, philosophy, thought, essential thinking, ideology, practice, praxis, not-theory, action, inaction, *karman*, morality, way of life, spirituality, experience, wisdom, self-realization. The titles of two papers signify East-West comparisons, and in about four papers, applications are

made of the main concepts to specific problems. This analysis of the titles of papers I have made, in order to show how closely the participants have adhered to the Seminar theme.

The answer to the question whether philosophy is theory and/or practice will depend upon the definition of philosophy itself, and also on what are meant by 'theory' and 'practice'. Quite a few participants have sought to define philosophy in the papers they have presented. There is an array of definitions or near-definitions attempted; they range from the ones which make out that philosophy is predominantly a theoretical quest to those which reduce it to a thoroughly practical concern—secular or non-secular, individual or collective. But, most of the definitions refuse to be classified simply as belonging either to the "theory" group or to the "practice" group. Let me reproduce a few definitions at random. (1) Philosophy is, primarily, "a study, and as study it has usually been as systematic as possible, employing, wherever needed, the methods of analysis, deduction...and induction, jointly or simply". "Formal study — call it linguistic analysis or not — is undoubtedly a methodological necessity for any good philosophy and even the *ancient* philosophers did that, but this does not mean that it is all that philosophy should be." "Theoretical attitude (that amounts to knowledge) pre-supposes that there *are* reals which are under investigation, and...although action is another side of man, rules of action proceed from theories. It means that in the realm of being theory precedes rules of action. But in the history of philosophy we often come across another line of thinking purporting to show that it is rather the rules of action which place us in proper perspectives in order that we may discover reality appropriately." (Kalidas Bhattacharyya). (2) "Philosophy is...concerned with truth and only truth. And yet it is not a truth 'about' something" "...philosophy ... does not present itself either as deduction or [as] induction but as discovery, as thought moving into what was unknown realms, as insight into what has been obscure". "The philosopher's questions are not about states of affairs which remain unmoved whatever the consequences of the enquiry. They proceed from the philosopher as a whole person, and as a total existence." "Philosophy is the source of both theory and practice, without being either." (Sprung). (3) "'Philosophy', it seems, means whatever men who are called philosophers choose to say, to think, to do. And any description of what is common to all philosophers and philosophies would amount ... to very little. Let us then frankly acknowledge that when we ask what philosophy is we are really asking what, in its essence, it is for me and, by implication, what it should be for you." "If I had to have a single statement for philosophy I would say that it is *insight reflected upon with discipline*. The purpose of philosophy, as I see it, is *to achieve insight and understanding for the sake of greater freedom of consciousness*." "Philoso-

phy, I believe, is a kind of *wu wei*, 'actionless action'; it is an activity, a contemplation, that is carried out as *niṣkāmakarma*, action for its own sake—which is to say for the sake of freedom." Philosophy is "a discovery of the limitless potentiality of being". As recognition, philosophy "is not a detached, dispassionate *theoria*, but an immediate, involved, existential act". (Deutsch). (4) "Philosophy...should not be conceived as merely a rational or intellectual quest, but a spiritual endeavour of the whole of 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." "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." (Saksena). (5) "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 art, and that theory too may be called philosophy but only in a derivative sense." (Sibajiban Bhattacharyya). (6) "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 attempt to work out his inner life so as to be in harmony with the world around him." "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." (Venkata Ramanan).

From the sample definitions given above, it will be seen that the task of philosophy is conceived not as consisting in mere speculation or theorizing about reality or the world, but as involving a change, a mutation or transformation — through practice — either of the inner state of consciousness or of the outer world. One of the participants (Daya Krishna) observes: "The ultra abstract, ratiocinative, argumentative character of philosophy has always aroused suspicion amongst those who value the achievement of a deepened state of inner awareness or of the improvement of the socio-political situation of man." All philosophy, in a way, may be said to affect or depend upon practice. Western philosophy, even in its so-called speculative phase, does not seem to be an exception to the rule. One of the

participants (Sengupta) maintains that this is not so, and that the only "practice"-centred philosophy in the West is Marxism. He observes: "Marx in conformity with the dialectic speaks of the unity of theory and practice but in practice he admits the primacy of the latter. The basic question which moves Marx is essentially practical, viz., what needs to be done to bring about liberation. Marx throughout considers the task of pursuing knowledge for its own sake as fruitless. It is a luxury which [only] a bourgeois can afford. Marx's classical utterance is 'The philosophers have interpreted the world; the point now is to change it'. The liberation [however] that is sought [here] is material in character." (Sengupta). That Marxism is a practical philosophy is not denied here. But, what is worthy of discernment is that much of Western philosophy has a bearing on practice. For instance, the same participant says with reference to Heidegger: "There is much in [his] insight into essentially theoretical character of philosophy... He refers to the risk of the adoption of the use-attitude to the knowledge of being... But this does not mean that the knowledge concerned cannot have practical implication."

That 'theory' and 'practice' cannot be separated from each other is recognized by many of the participants. The etymological meanings of these two words have been discussed in more than one paper. "The Greek terms 'theoria' and 'praxis' indicated the difference between speculation (Gr. *theoros* = spectator) and action (from the root *prasso* = do, cf. *pragma* = deed). The spectator sees and the actor does — a distinction originating from the drama." (Margaret Chatterjee). And again, "Action derives from the Latin [word] 'agere' [which] literally [means] to move or put in motion: in Greek [the word] 'atein', [means] to conduct, to push, to direct. That evokes an idea of propulsion. But in spite of being derived from such transitive verbs, acting is an intransitive one, like swimming, flying or travelling. Action also may disregard the object, because it comprehends the causes as well as the consequences. In a sense, the verb 'to act' is even an absolute one, intrinsically sufficient to itself." (Burgi). A distinction has been sought to be made between the loose and accepted usages of the two words 'theory' and 'practice'. "'Theory' in its loose usage means conjecture or hypothesis. ... 'Theory' in its accepted usage means a systematic statement of the principles of an object of enquiry. That is, we have a theory when there is a systematic or an organised account of what is enquired into. ... 'Practice' in its loose usage means any interest in life or in what concerns life... 'Practice' in its accepted sense denotes action and as such it, unlike theory, naturally relates itself to the function or the operation of the will. The practical attitude *vis-a-vis* the theoretical one is one of bringing into existence what is not there." (Sengupta). We have already seen that 'practice' and 'action' are used interchangeably.

For the other term 'theory' some other expressions are also employed — contemplation, thought, knowledge, etc. According to one participant, whereas the root terms for theory and practice are apparently secular, "the history of the word 'contemplation' shows a progressive internalization of the concept, the connotation of meditation on spiritual things, regarding thoughtfully, looking upon mentally, regarding with detachment — being variously acquired." (Margaret Chatterjee). In the view of one participant, the contrast between theory and practice is neither useful nor relevant. Thought, according to him, is a form of action; it is related to action as a species to its genus (N. V. Banerjee). Another participant cites a passage from Yang-ming which says: "Thought is the beginning of action; action is the completion of thought." (Wei-ming Tu). Another Chinese saying quoted is: "Where one knows in most authentic and real sense, there is acting; where one acts in most perceptive and discerning way, there is knowing. The cultivation of knowing and acting cannot originally be separated." (Chung-ying Cheng).

We now turn to the problem of identifying the Western and Eastern philosophies with the 'theory' and 'practice' attitudes respectively. While some endorse this view, others there are who dispute it. After defining *philosophy* in India as *sādhana*, a comprehensive discipline designed to accomplish the full development of man, Troy Organ says that to try to fit Indian philosophy into the moulds appropriate to Western philosophy is to misunderstand it. Sengupta observes: "Generally, philosophy in the West can be characterized as theoretical while philosophy in India can be called practical. ... It is no exaggeration to state that it is on the basis of the issue over theory and practice that we can profitably draw a distinction between Western philosophy and Indian philosophy." Disagreeing with this view, N.V. Banerjee characterizes it as a form of misunderstanding of the difference between Indian and Western philosophy, and says: "In this regard it is most important to note that no discipline can be said to be practical merely on the ground that it happens to concern itself, among other things, with a problem or problems of practical importance such as the problem of liberation or that of government. Strictly speaking, to be practical it should be able to produce tangible results, whether good, bad or indifferent. Judged from this point of view, technology, medicine, agriculture, etc., are unquestionably practical, whereas the practical importance of Indian philosophy may be seriously called in question on the ground that its treatment of the problem of liberation is, after all, doctrinaire. Western philosophy, on the other hand, it is important to observe, has an advantage over Indian philosophy in so far as its practical importance in some of its aspects seems to be beyond question." Similarly, Margaret Chatterjee expresses herself against "any facile equivalence of the Western

outlook with a theoretical approach ... or of the Indian outlook with the cultivation of practice".

Defining metaphysical wisdom as contemplative, its first step being to establish itself in the intuition of being, which is grasped at the heart of the judgement of existence, Lacombe deplors the tendency among certain modern philosophers to take no interest in the traditional notion of wisdom, and points out that "in the East as well as the West, there are still some philosophers for whom the subject of wisdom retains its full value, both in the theoretical and the practical spheres". Lacombe, then, seeks to outline the main features of wisdom as they are to be found depicted in the Vedānta, on the one hand, and in the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, on the other: these, he says, are not to be regarded as systems of the past, but as being still alive today. While noting that the history of the relation between theory and practice in the West has been the history of a gradual dissociation, Brunner points out that theory and practice stand in close relation in the Platonic tradition. For Plato, theory and practice are one. This phenomenon may be observed in the doctrine of the Greek Fathers and even in that of St. Augustine; and most surely in the teachings of Meister Eckhart. Brunner concludes by saying, "It would be regrettable if India, where doctrines analogous to Pagan or Christian Platonism still survive, were to lose them through contact with the West or were to encourage an intellectual evolution similar to that of Europe."

In some of the papers, there are parallels drawn between selected philosophers or mystics belonging to the Western and Eastern traditions, as also between certain similar trends. Conio gives a study of the teachings of Evagrius Ponticus, the Greek Father who lived in the fourth century A.D. Evagrius, according to her, is one of those Western teachers who come closest to the Eastern spirit. In demonstration of this, she compares some of the texts from Evagrius with some passages of the Upaniṣads in order "to show how the two sets of texts can go hand in hand even though they were conceived and written so independently one from the other both in time and space". Defining mystical experience as the fruitive experience of an absolute, either by way of pure immanence, or through an intentional union of love with another, Gardet illustrates by giving examples of philosophers sometimes, and of mystics more often, in the Hellenistic thought, in Islam, in Christianity, and finally in the modern world. Among the moderns, he finds in Heidegger the influence of Eckhart. Another participant, Chang Chung-yuan, institutes a comparison between Heidegger's essential thinking and Ch'an thought: in his comparative analysis, he says, the basic elements of Heidegger's essential thinking and Ch'an thought are seen to come together, and adds: we might say that Heidegger's recent approach of essential or meditative thinking may

serve as one of the bridges that will bring the philosophies of the East and the West together. Maria Burgi, in her paper, compares the French philosopher Blondel's view with that of the *Bhagavadgītā* and finds that there is no unbridgeable gulf between the two. To cite one more instance of comparison: Nietmann compares the Intentionalism of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty with the Integralism of Sri Aurobindo. In the philosophy of the French thinker, he observes a likeness to typical Eastern thought, in so far as it is non-dualistic without being monistic.

Nasr warns against hasty comparisons, since he is convinced that the "common language of wisdom having been lost, there exists no common ground to make any meaningful communication possible, especially between the modern world and the traditions of the East." Since, in the West, philosophy has become nearly synonymous with logic and its application, Nasr feels that "to speak of rationalistic philosophy and Chinese or Hindu philosophy in the same breath is a contradiction in terms, unless we use the word philosophy in two different senses: the one as a wisdom that is wed to spiritual experience, and the other as a mental construct completely cut off from it." But, Nasr admits that there can be meaningful comparisons in the fields of religion and mysticism. What he is against are shallow comparisons in East-West philosophy. Here, again, he recognizes that in certain limited fields such as logic or the "philosophy of nature" legitimate comparisons can be made. Beyond this limit, comparisons may become indiscriminate "without regard to the real nature of the ideas involved and their meaning within the total context of things." There is no gainsaying the fact that facile and surface comparisons are dangerous: in any comparative study, the differences as well as the similarities should be taken into account. As Nasr pertinently points out, "a comparative study in depth of Eastern doctrines and Western schools can help achieve an understanding between East and West based not on the shifting sands of human nature which cover the more profound permanent nature within man, or some form of humanism, but on immutable truths, whose attainment is made possible by the spiritual experience that is accessible to qualified men, whether of East or West."

Having attempted the admittedly difficult task of stringing together the leading ideas presented in the seminar papers, let me proceed to discuss the bearing that Indian philosophy in general, and Advaita Vedānta in particular have on our present theme.

For the term 'philosophy', I would suggest as the Sanskrit equivalent *jijñāsā* which means 'love of knowledge, longing for wisdom'. Since 'love' or 'longing' cannot be undertaken, the word *jijñāsā* means by implication 'inquiry', *vicāra*. Every system of Indian thought does philosophy by inquiring. Even *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*,

which is thoroughly action-centred, recognizes the need for inquiry. The first of Jaimini's sūtras reads: "Then, therefore, the inquiry into dharma." Śābara, in his commentary on the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā-sūtra*, makes it clear that, since *dharma* is understood in a variety of ways, unless the meaning is determined by proper inquiry, one will not come to good by acting in regard to *dharma*, and that, on the contrary, one will reap what is evil. I wish to place due emphasis on *jijñāsā*, because the cognitive element in Indian philosophy is sought to be played down, sometimes, both by Indian exponents and by Western critics. In almost the same terms as used by Śābara, Śaṅkara stresses the imperative need for persistent inquiry, in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*. The ascertainment of truth is the aim of inquiry. Until truth comes to be ascertained, one should relentlessly inquire.

Now, what is the place of 'theory' in inquiry? For the term 'theory' I would suggest the expression *vāda* as the equivalent in Sanskrit. *Vāda* which is 'discussion with a view to achieving final ascertainment' should be distinguished from *jalpa*, debating maneuver, and *vitaṇḍa*, destructive criticism. The two latter may, in rare cases, lead to the attainment of valid knowledge; but their primary aim is 'victory over the opponent'. By contrast, *vāda* has as its main purpose the attainment of valid knowledge: and, the discussion between a competent preceptor and his qualified pupil is regarded as *vāda par excellence*.

Ratiocination, especially in its form as hypothetical reasoning (*tarka*) is quite helpful in the procedure for ascertaining truth. Reasoning or argument by hypothesis (*tarka*) is a form of deliberation (*ūha*) for determining the specific nature of an object whose real nature is yet to be known (*avijñātatatve arthe*) by pointing out the real grounds for it. *Tarka*, thus, is not itself *pramāṇa*, an instrument of knowledge, but is an accessory to *pramāṇa*. It cannot conclusively prove the truth. Where there are alternatives, it cannot by itself establish one of them definitely as the truth. But, by asserting the grounds in favour of the correct alternative, it strengthens the efficacy of the instrument of valid knowledge, wherefrom valid knowledge results.

Thus, mere 'theory' cannot lead us to knowledge which is the goal of philosophy. But theory can become a valuable aid. In theorizing, one has necessarily to follow the rules of the game, and there should be no confusion of levels or spheres of knowledge. What is non-sensical cannot be true; what, again, conveys the contrary sense cannot be true. It is true that in regard to what has been called the overnatural in one of the Seminar papers — from another standpoint it may be the truly natural—*śruti*, inadequately translated as 'revelation', 'scripture', is the *pramāṇa*. But, if *śruti* were to declare something obviously absurd, such as 'pot is cloth', one has not to accept that

declaration as saying what is true. As Vācaspati Mīśra puts it: "Only purportful scripture is stronger than perception, not scripture as such" *tātparyavatī hi śrutih pratyakṣād balavatī, na śruti-matram*. In this context, it may be noted that there is an important difference between the attitudes of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta towards scripture. For believing in topics that Mīmāṃsā talks about, viz. heaven, the efficacy of ritual to achieve for its performer heavenly happiness, etc., the only authority is scripture. Not so in regard to the reality — the Self — which forms the subject-matter of Vedānta. Says Śaṅkara in his *Sūtra-bhāṣya*:

"In the inquiry into religious duty (*dharma*), scripture, etc., alone are authoritative; not thus in the case of the inquiry into *Brahman*. Scripture, etc., and experience, etc., are authorities here, as they become possible; for, *Brahman*-knowledge has experience as its culmination, and has the existent reality as its content."

*na dharma-jijñāsāyām iva śrutyādayaḥ eva pramāṇaḥ
brahma-jijñāsāyām. kimtu śrutyādayaḥ anubhavādayaśca
yathōsamābhavam iha pramāṇam, anubhavāvāsānatvāt bhūta-
vastu-viśayavācca brahma-jñānasya.*

Thus, it will be seen that critical reflection has a rightful place in Vedāntic inquiry. Revelation, *śruti*, is no doubt the principal *pramāṇa* in regard to the overnatural — a borrowed term we have already used. But what is revealed by scripture has to be mediated in thought before it could get matured into one's own experience. *Śruti* is what is helped; *yukti* or *tarka* is what helps. As an aid to revelation, reason is of inestimable value; and it should be regarded as subsidiary to *śruti* and *anubhūti*. So, it is to be noted that the authority of scripture is accepted only as leading to, and is confirmable by, knowledge, experience.

Only mediate knowledge, it is contended by some, is knowledge proper; immediate or intuitive apprehension is not knowledge. But this is to restrict unduly the significance of the term 'knowledge'. It is as unjustified to call only mediate knowledge knowledge, as it is to regard sense-experience alone as experience. Perception is a primary *pramāṇa*, because it yields immediate knowledge. Without perception as its basis, empirical inference cannot function; the term *anumāna* (after-measure) indicates that it is capable of giving knowledge only of the second order.

Can verbal testimony (*śabda*) to which category scripture (*śruti*) belongs give rise to immediate knowledge? This question has been considered very carefully, and the answer given by Sureśvara and the *Vivarana* tradition in Advaita is in the affirmative. In illustration of this, the story of the ten travellers may be cited here. The ten travellers crossed a swollen river, and started counting themselves to

see if all of them were safe. But each time the counter left himself out, and so counted only nine. A passerby took note of the situation, and addressing the group said, 'the tenth man is here'. This, of course, produced only mediate knowledge in the travellers. But, then, he pointed out to the man who counted last and said, 'You are the tenth man.' This surely engendered in that man immediate knowledge of himself. Similarly, when the preceptor instructs the disciple who is ready for receiving the teaching 'That thou art' (*tat tvam asi*), the disciple has the immediate experience of the Self; he has Self-realisation.

Knowledge that is the end is the Self, *Brahman*, according to Advaita: it is the experience that is plenary, total. And, knowledge as the means is inquiry, *vicāra*. Even as the means, it is not to be confused with action.

Let me now discuss what knowledge is, and how it differs from action. In order to understand what knowledge is — that is, in order to have knowledge of knowledge — we should contrast it with action. Although both action and knowledge relate to the mind, action is what the agent does and is dependent on his will, whereas knowledge is what is conditioned by its object. Action is *kartṛtantra*; it depends on the will of the agent. Knowledge is *vastutantra*; it depends on its content. To illustrate: it is within the scope of a man's will to decide to go to a place, or not to go, and if to go how to go there. It is not thus with knowledge. If what is in front of me is a post, and if I mistake it for a person standing, that would not be knowledge. Knowledge should conform to its content. It is the content that discloses itself, as it is, in knowledge.

Knowledge is not opinion or belief. In so far as these latter are conditioned by will, they do not constitute knowledge. Knowledge is not what is structured by an act of will. For the same reason, contemplation or meditation is not knowledge. If one meditates on or worships an Image identifying it with Viṣṇu, for instance, one may obtain the appropriate meritorious result; but this is not a case of knowledge. Acts may precede knowledge such as the act of turning the face in the direction of the object and opening the eyes, etc., in visual perception. But perception itself consists in the revelation of its content. Action may take place before knowledge, but knowledge itself is not an act. In the book entitled *A Threefold Cord*, which is in the form of a dialogue between Viscount Samuel and Professor Herbert Dingle, the latter explains the distinction between experience and voluntary action thus: "By experience I mean that of which we are aware, that which is given to us, so to speak without our having designed it and independently of any wish of our own ... Voluntary action, on the other hand, is what we choose to do and could avoid doing if we would. Of course, the two things are often associated

with one another. I might choose to look at the sky to see the stars, but my choice here is merely that of opening my eyes and turning in a certain direction: what I then experience is not of my contrivance." If this is so even in the matter of the knowledge of empirical objects, it is clear that knowledge of the Self is not of the nature of an act. Action is not the means to knowledge. The result of action is yet to be; the content of knowledge is already there.

Has action or practice, then, no place in philosophical investigation? The answer is 'yes'. The mind can succeed in its endeavour to make metaphysical enquiry only when it has been rendered pure. What make for impurity are passionate desires, egoity, etc. The mind has, therefore, to be disciplined by the practice of cardinal virtues. And, contemplation, meditation, and practice (*dhyāna-upāsana-abhyāsa*) serve to sharpen the mind, and render it one-pointed. It is the mind that has been purified and has gained the trait of concentration that can pursue the path of inquiry and reach the goal of knowledge-wisdom.

This is the answer, then, of Advaita to our present problem, 'Philosophy: Theory and Practice'. Philosophy is inquiry which is directed towards its goal, knowledge. Theorizing which is an aspect of inquiry is a valuable aid, but is itself not philosophy. Philosophy, again, is not practice or action which has value only in so far as it can prepare the ground for fruitful philosophising.

A text of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* declares:

naiṣā tarkeṇa matir-āpaneyā

"This wisdom is not to be gained through mere theorizing in vacuo."

Saṅkara says in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*:

*cittasya śuddhaye karma
nahi vastūpalabdhaye*

"Practice is for the sake of purifying the mind; it cannot by itself give us the vision of Reality."

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