

THE LIVING TEACHING OF VEDANTA

THE LIVING TEACHING OF VEDANTA

OR

What is living and what is dead in vedantic Thought

The criterion of what is living and what is dead has been one of the most vital concerns of mankind, and in ancient thought all over the world, the criterion is that if a man knows the real and the true, he lives, and if he does not know this, he is, as it were, dead (jivat-sava). This criterion is sufficiently all-embracing for our purpose. But what does this criterion essentially mean? In other words, the problem is of deciding as to what is real and what unreal. That reality and living are bound together in an inseparable unity, this certainly is the criterion, and it only means that living-ness is the essential characteristic of reality. A dynamic life based on knowledge is the real life, and because reality is dynamic, it lives. To separate these two as some philosophers are to do, would be not to know the truth. To live is to be real. This ought to be the general approach to the problem of Indian thought, and in this essay, it is applied to the three

schools of Vedanta. The Vedantic theory is peculiarly placed in India. It had absorbed the very best of all the systems, and is fairly synthetic in its comprehensive adaptation of these systems. Vedanta began, as all thinkers of India excepting the scholastic world-builders and word-splitters started, with the solution of the problem of individual unhappiness and suffering.¹ They rightly held that once the individual knows

I Athato Brahma Jijnasa, I, i, 1, may be interpreted in this manner.

the truth of his existence, he would become immortal, and absolutely happy. To refer this to a metaphysical approach would be in the highest degree utterly insufficient explanation of Indian thought. At the outset, therefore, the problem of Indian thought was individual and practical, and not merely metaphysical. Metaphysics had to enter in, and when it did, it meant that it was more or less an obtrusion, an inevitable theorising. The ancients had early enough recognised that there can be no ultimate perfection in the universe, unless each individual in the universe attained self-realisation, and was perfect in his knowledge, and complete in his happiness. Since most types of metaphysics ended in different conceptions of Reality, it was insisted by the ancients that the world at least should be maintained in

an orderly manner, for which purpose schemes of laws and restrictions were drawn up and run¹. Thus, in Indian thought, one can think as one likes, but one cannot disobey the social regulations, *achara*. But such schemes of state-organisation are bound to be temporary expedients till the final realisation of harmony on the basis of the self-realisation of all individuals. Really, therefore, the question was not what the total whole was like, but what the individual was like, 'knowing which one may be said to know all.' To know the Atman was to know the Brahman, and though the lure of the All was greater than the discovery of each, finally, the latter became the most important factor in spiritual realisation. Thus the main problem for Advaita, Visishtadvaita, and Dvaita thinkers was the discovery of the nature of each individual in his relation to the total All, through the realisation of the individual of himself. The Advaitic, or the absolute monistic view in its most characteristic phase is seen in the earliest exponent of that system, Mandukya¹, which undertakes the investigation into the nature of consciousness. The life of every person reveals three states of consciousness (*avasthatraya*), namely *jagrat*, the waking, *svapna*, the dreaming, and *sushupti* the deep sleeping. By these three states, our entire life is rounded. We are all wheeled from one state of consciousness to another in a continuous series. This is

the cycle of samsara, from which we are unable to get out. This is bondage, because the states of consciousness not only do not give us truth of experience, but also do not allow us to get out of them. In other words, they are irrational. The waking and the dream consciousness taken individually as such, are irrational. They mislead us in our activities and cause confusion and illusion. The deep sleep state is neither a state of knowledge nor a state of action. It is the state of quiescence. Behind all these three states, or rather over and above all these three states, is the real consciousness which functions for its own purposes of existence and sustains these three. The something of the real that we know and are aware of even in these three states we owe to the functioning of the highest consciousness, the *turiya*, the fourth of our nature. It is truth, reality and bliss. It is the Atman-consciousness, and is quite unlike the other three in that it does not divide itself into waking, dreaming and sleeping. It is continuous and integral, of which the three are parts. But the *turiya* does not even accept these distinctions as its parts, constituents or effects. The Atman, the *turiya*, does not recognise the trichotomy of its nature. It is the whole self, integral and therefore complete in its reality. This is the Advaita-consciousness. This is the Atman beyond which nothing exists either as of the nature of the states or as

something of which this is an effect. It has neither a cause, nor does it cause any of these states. Between the three states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping, there is the possibility of predicating causality, because they seem to succeed each other. The waking and the dreaming states of individual life reveal this mutual dependence, the former being as it were a consequence of the latter. Without imagination one cannot even grasp the knowledge of objects. It is only at a later state of man's life the dream becomes predominantly the subjective after-effect of the objective waking existence. The waking becomes more important than the dreaming, which is the imaginative effort to know objective reality. Imagination instead of becoming knowledge becomes memory, and more and more a 'reaction - a compensatory mechanism in its function. The third state, *sushupti*, is the state of rest for the self. This state is considered by some thinkers to be the causal state, *karana, Prakriti*, the beginning of the subjective and the objective duality¹. This state of rest then is interpreted by them to be a restive state instead of a state of rest. Goudapada calls this state, the state of unsettledness or indeterminateness *aniscaya*. The three states reveal no coherency with each other, nor could they be considered to give knowledge directly as the channels through which one can get at reality. They are not the self, for a

self must be capable of coherent existence, must be capable of *initiating* living. The waking and the dream states are receptors of experience in the sense that the waking life of a person is a reactive and responsive existence to stimuli coming from the objective world, and the dream is merely the ideational reflex of waking life, and, therefore, also a reaction dependent upon the environment. A self, on the other hand, being a creative existence tries to bring about harmony and coherence and perfection of individual expression. Therefore, it is necessary to recognise that there is a self because we are creative in spite of being more and more reactive. The self functions for the most part through the three, or rather two, states of waking and dream. The self alone is what functions, for it alone can function, and we are selves more and more when we function integrally and not when we live merely the reactive experience of the three states which are irrational and uncreative of true harmony and freedom.

1Samkhya Karika 3. Goudapada points out the similarity in the subjective sphere what Kapila had done in the objective, by using similar appellations. Cf. Goudapada Karika on the Mandukya. 1.11-13.

It is because the three states of our experience are considered to be the whole of our existence, and we do

not recognise that there is a self, dynamic in its character, sustaining the three states of existence, we are constantly prone to commit error and are ignorant of our true life as creative individuals. We are unhappy because we have a house divided against itself- a waking consciousness which interferes with the dream or imagination, or an imagination simulating the waking and the actual. The deep sleep is a period of cessation of these rivalries, an armistice born out of fatigue, peace, call it what you will. The fourth, which is the self and not a state of consciousness, recognises none of these states but simply is. It is the most simple because it is integral. The waking vanishes in it in the sense that there is then the expressing of the self, the dream equally vanishes in it because between creating and imagining there can be no division. The ideal and the actual lose their meaning. There is no sleep because there is no need for an armistice between the two counteracting states of existence. The self is therefore neither the cause nor the effect nor is it in any doubt as to what it shall be or create. This is the central doctrine of the Mandukya Upanishad as seen in the highly illustrative example of the fusion of the three sounds AUM into one completely integrated sound OM. Just as the three separately, recognisable sounds A, U, M, are rounded in the single integral OM losing their separate character, or have so

completely and intimately coalesced within this unity of OM, so also the three states of our consciousness are also intimately related or rather fused in the self which is the real unit of Spirit. To say that these three are partials of the total Self, or that they are states of the whole, would be false description. It will only lead to illogical ways of thought. This does not mean that one cannot view them by separating them, but to view them in such a manner is not conducive to maintaining its integral essence, will be intellectualisation, to use a much abused word of modern times. In fact, it will mean an effective way by which one can forget and finally annihilate the whole, the self. Therefore the perspective of the self cannot be available through anyone of the states of consciousness for they cannot intimate, much less interpret, the real quality of the whole which is the Self. The whole is a different pattern. A new quality reveals itself. It is the absolute, individual, simple Self. The parts, or states, have no capacity to reveal the self. They are false in so far as they do not reveal the self, and its character of creative initiation of action. But in so far as they are integrated with the whole self in a unique and legitimate way they are real. A careful and intelligent reading of the Mandukya Upanishad along with the brilliant commentary of Goudapada will reveal that the Advaita of the Upanishads is not identical with Mayavada. In fact

Goudapada criticises the view of Mayavada by using the arguments of Mayavadic writers against them. If it is said that the objects of consciousness have a beginning and therefore an end and as such unreal, it equally follows that having an end involves a beginning ‘- maya also¹. The rule that everything

1. Cf. Goudapada Karika 17-18. The 17m has to be taken as Purvapaksha and the 18th as the Siddhanta of Goudapada who pleads for non-creationism(ajativada).

that has a beginning has an end is an entirely reversible relation. The self has neither beginning nor end, has neither a cause nor an effect. It is untouched by anything because it is simple, complete and whole. Maya is a cognisable psychological fact of confusion which perpetuates the dissociation of the whole by fixing one’s attention on the states instead of the whole, on the parts as in themselves not as related to the whole. Goudapada condemned any dychotomising of experience, and equally abhorred yielding to causal explanations of consciousness and of the states. He wanted the integral explanation of the self which contains every state, within which there is no confusion, no parts as such. To him between the expression and the expressor, there is possible no causal explanation, since there can be -no disintegration of consciousness. The states of

consciousness become patent only when there is doubt and unsettledness as to expression, when there is 'lag' of spontaneity or the flow of life. This 'lag' occurs when there is abstraction from the expressing, when one clings to the expression or identifies oneself with one's expression. When this identification of the individual with his expression takes place or rather when one tries to eat upon his past and contemplate it, there arises later on the problems of causal explanation as to whether the dream or deep sleep or the waking is the causal prius of individual life. Goudapada answers this by putting a return query, which shall be born first, the seed or the tree? One cannot dismiss this argument as infinite regress, and, therefore, as false- an error into which idealists fumble constantly. It is a fact that seeds produce trees and trees produce seeds¹. The way of looking at these things is not, therefore, through the distressingly faulty apparatus of intellectual dialectic, but through an appeal to the fact that there is a whole within which these functions are carried on. This final argument is not a refutation of either philosophic realism or idealism, both of which are content to be abstractionistic or sensationally abstractionistic. They are content to deal with the dead exudation of experience. It is an argument for an integral individual life, which means a life of intense expression of the Self, completely, perfectly, and

spontaneously. When there is this free functioning of consciousness which is integral or Self, there is no division within. One is at peace within oneself. One is simply happy. This dynamic poise of being which is intelligence and creation, when it functions within the waking and the dream with reference to the objects contained therein, does not divide itself. It functions in both of them with thoroughness and enjoys them fully without impediment. Mandukya mentions the triumphs of the spirit² in the three states of its consciousness, the three planes or levels of individual life. That is the promise held out to those who become selves. It is the fulfilment of the journey. It is the annihilation of contradiction, bheda, within and without. Thus the affirmation of the integral self is the truth of Advaita. Such a self alone can be truth, bliss and dynamic existence. That alone can stand without confusion and division as the

1. Goudapada Karika, Alatasanti Prakarana, 13-20.
2. Mandukya Upanishad, x-xi. Cf. Invention and the Unconscious, Montmasson, pp. 216-17.

master of Maya. That alone can be really happy for it does not derive its enjoyment from another. It is not

lonely even when alone. That alone can effectively negate suffering, since it does not know evolution or purpose, does not know diminution or destruction of itself. For how can a whole evolve into something that is not a whole? A whole only can express itself, being a unity. It cannot be a product of another, cannot be a step to another. It is perfect awareness. Advaita in its purest form and highest aspiration is concerned, thus, with the individual integral consciousness. It describes this as an integral spirit which functions and sustains and transforms the three states which constitute its expressing (*dharma*) into one continuous stream of its own expressing completely and” When it is sensible, it unites itself with objects in the external world; when it is aesthetic it becomes disinterested or playful contemplation: When it is affective, it is painful or joyous; when it is moral, it becomes our personal work, we devote ourselves to it; when it is mystical it is the deviation of the profound meaning.....” perfectly, without any confusion or interference¹. It pleads that no individual should cling to anyone of the states (forms, rupam) as that would begin the circle of ignorance again. But once an individual recognises his unitary nature, there can be no falling away from integrality. Every person, therefore, must realise that he is a whole, and not a series of states, nor even a series of functions nor

faculties as the *Alayavijnana* theory and the modern behaviorists

1. Goudapada Karika on Mandukya iv,98.

describe him to be. The individual in his unitary or self-character is an exponent or creator of beauty, truth and harmony which is bliss. This is the truth about all selves. This is the living teaching of Advaita, eternally valuable to thought and living. Such a truth about the integral individual may be extended to express the reality and integrality of the total whole, the Universal All. But the chief danger of such an extension lies in the absolutely unrecognisable abstraction to which it lends itself. The followers of Advaita following the lines of Samkhya, which really developed its metaphysics from the subjective consciousness, wanted to show that the transcendental contact between the self and Prakriti may be identified with the beginning of Avidya or ignorance through the over-laying of Maya (conceived as illusion) on the individual or the universal Brahman so as to bring about this world of unmeaning falsity. They used the Samkhyan analysis of evolution for the description of the external world of objects, but finally connected this to a psychological loss of equilibrium on the part of Brahman. This adaptation of Samkhyan psychology and metaphysics was certainly facilitated by Goudapada's

brief but significant commentary on the Samkhya Karika². Maya becoming identical with the universal Prakriti, next became a universal defect. What was a psychological fact became a qualitative metaphysical fiction.

2. Goudapada's commentary on the Samkhya is considered to be of doubtful authenticity. But is significant that Sarvadarsana Samgraha places Samkhya nearest to Advaita.

We may affirm that between integrality and metaphysics there can be no common ground. A metaphysic which asks for wholeness, a complete geographical planning of reality as if it were a continent or a planet is asking for something that is not real at all. Again it insists (and it may not know it) upon a spatio-temporal explanation which can never be done with a being that has no concern with it - or even refutes. it - for an integral reality is a whole existence, an entire action, which is the very stem of spatio-temporal being. Therefore it follows that they belong to it as its past or history. They belong to the created than to the creating, which is the self. It would be meaningless to ask then about the integral whether it is a *Universal* reality or a particular existence, whether it is the total reality of finite parts. It would be more right to say that such considerations are of

absolutely no worth to integral existence which is truth, which is individual. Buddha's answer to metaphysicians is mainly this. In Advaita the existence of gods or Isvara is a matter of utter inconsequence - fictions which may be true or false. Indian seers were more concerned with the living rather than the dead. History was never their main business. It meant to them only the contemplation of the dead from which significant inferences may be drawn, or a moral derived. The reality of the self involves a complete refutation of all metaphysical speculation qua speculation, all historical retrospect which is a delving into the past. On the other hand, it affirms the existence of freedom jivanmukti which is the creative life of spirit, *liIa*. In so far, then, a self is prepared to be a unitary existence, it cannot but be of universal significance. The attainment of selfness, *svarupa avadharana* is the essence of true religious experience. This is dynamic existence not Samkhyan passivity, which is but a thinly-veiled abstract existence of isolation, *kevalatva*. Later Vedanta of the Advaita-type has brought much more of the samkhyan futilities to the forefront of its thought than the germ of spiritual living. As we have shown, Maya really means the power of expressing. But it was meant to mean the erroneous functioning of an individual in anyone of the states by clinging to it as if it were the prop of existence. That is, it

is represented to mean the activity of the individual, who clings to his creations instead of being the unfettered free actor or expressor of his integral perfection as a self. In other words, Maya is the tendency to live in the created, to possess and to live in its shadow. This tendency to live in the forms created previously generates a kind of release from consciousness, and makes one more and more unconscious, or mechanical. In order to get rid of this tendency, seriously it has been suggested that all expressing should stop, and that one should cease to perform action. The real manner by which one could get over the defect, namely, the tendency to live in the created is to be constantly aware of oneself without falling into either *agrahana*, non-receptivity, or *anyathagrahana*, perverse receptivity. These are the causes of fall from the integral spirituality. Plato similarly holds that the two primary causes for a man's fall from his perfection of integral selfness are ignorance (*amathia*) and indolence (*rhathymia*). Indolence is the effeminate slackness of the soul itself, which falls away from complete awareness of its archetypal existence at every moment of its life. Alas, the forms which we have created, physically and psychically, become our destroyers when we become their slaves, though they are expressions of our creative activity! Advaita as representing the integral realisation

of the individual, does not mean static identity or evolutionary illusionism, but dynamic integrality and creative realism. It is not mere unity but integral unit, simple, undivided, consummate intelligence, which can tolerate no distinctions. To divide consciousness is to kill it, to make it static is to petrify it, and to abstract it from its integral nature is to benumb it. It is an unquestionable principle that consciousness is in constant peril of becoming unconscious, and this peril can only be overcome when the individual creatively expresses himself always, rather than responsively and reactively adjusts himself to the environment. This is the highest responsibility of the self. This is its truth. This is the intensification of individual life. This is true morality. In other words, this is the starting-point of all definitive action which is the revelation of perfection.

II

To achieve the integral consciousness, the self, which is perfect harmony of the three avasthas, waking, dreaming, and sleep, in terms of the whole which is the self, is to recognise the fulness of spiritual life. But man is not spirit alone, but a spirit with a body that he utilises for his own purposes of action and enjoyment. The body is dependent on just one self, whose presence within it gives it the status of a body. From the recognition of the

body, it follows that not only the three states of consciousness need to be integralised in the self, but also the body with its entire series of functions. The body has been functioning through ages in terms of the divided experience of the states of consciousness, that it is now ill-adapted to true living. In its efforts to adapt itself to changing conditions, it had created or brought into being compensatory mechanisms, psychograms, and neurograms. To abolish many of these formations and to restore the true status of the body, it would be necessary once again to assume the integral nature of body-soul and act. Ramanuja's greatest contribution lies in the efficient manner he uses adhyatma yoga for this purpose.¹It would be valuable at this stage to mention one problem of absolute importance. Why are the selves many? Could selves be born at all? The second and the last questions are specially intriguing, because we have

1 The school of yoga paid more attention to the synthesis of the levels by the control of the lower levels. Hatha, and Raja Yoga try to control the pranic, the physical, and the intellectual levels.

already denied any casual relation with regard to selves. But these three questions are in fact one only. In a metaphysical sense we may affirm with the sutra 'janmadyasya yatah' that the souls also originate from

Brahman. But spirit can never be born. The tantric theory mentions that Brahman became focal, bindu, before He manifested himself. Brahman tending towards expression of himself, being spirit, became infinitely many and assumed the focal existence of himself in many ways.* The focal points of Brahman are the Atmans or jivas. Thus the Atman or the jiva is Brahman in expression. It is a recognised fact in psychology that focalisation of consciousness is attention, which is the beginning of either thought or action. It is the beginning of all integral activity. It is the necessary preliminary to creative activity. To become focal then is the prime necessity on the part of Brahman the vast and the infinite Being. Being infinitely perfect and possessing infinite perfections, he is focal in as many ways as there are perfections. Each perfection of his focalises itself as a self or Atman completely spiritual

* Sri Aurobindo holds that the Divine one is an eternally manyness. Leibniz held that the total is a system of monads so interrelated interiorly, or intensively as to be capable of being, in each ideally, which presence makes for the internal appetite towards cleaner and cleaner perception of the Total, mirror without confusion and ignorance. This eternally many represented in infinite perspectives of the whole which

includes the perceiving monad as well as the perceived whole of monads comes nearer the focalisation of the Infinite One in many. Each then is an embodiment of the whole, within which the whole uniquely seeks clarity and is at the same moment in the whole. Evolution too there is but it is, an evolution in knowledge from confused to clear perception. All progress is thus from unclear and confused to Perfect Vision.

Cf. Nadabindu Up. *Kashmirian saivism*: Chatterjee. Philosophy of Bhedabheda: P.N.Srinivasacharya.

and absolutely integral. Just as in the theory of vyuhas in pancaratra*, the absolute Brahman fulgurates as Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, who are but his perfect qualities, in an identical manner it will be necessary to treat every soul, Atman, as a focalisation of a perfection of Brahman, an amsa of the All-perfect, as a *vibhuti*. It may be suggested that there is creation of the soul here¹. But the apparent creationism of the soul is not really creationism, except in metaphysical sense. Brahman being dynamic eternally, cannot but be focal eternally. His infinity of perfections entails his being eternally many. His spiritual dynamic nature as also his infinite perfections determine his eternal multiplicity. The immortality of Brahman guarantees the immortality of the souls as also their uncreated character. The

*ikshati*², the desire to be many on the part of Brahman is an eternal desire to express Himself, to enjoy Himself in expression, and to manifest His perfections which are the souls. Thus is He the supreme *Antaryamin*. The *ikshati* is the eternal desire. Thus from the very beginning souls existed, and the body manifests itself for each self according to the perfection each soul has to express or fulfill. In the foregoing it does not mean that Brahman is finite, it only means that the infinite is the stem of the finite, and exists and expresses itself as the finites.

* Pancaratra is the consummate doctrine of the five scriptures too, veda, vedanta, samkhya, yoga and purana

1 Vedanta sutras ILii.40-43

2 Vedanta Sutras I.i.4

The desire to manifest expresses itself first as the ego, with the vibrant (*spandana*) movement. This vibratory movement becomes gradually the movement of sound, of touch, of form or sight, of taste and of smell. The gamut of movement thus finds its differentiations. Interpreting this description in psychological terms, with which alone we are pre-eminently concerned here, the spirit or self, becomes the centred existence flowing into action, and as it progresses it fashions the etheric, the pranic, the neural, the endocrinic, and the muscular

and bone structures of the body.* Thus the entire development of the body is expressed in terms of the expression of the self, and the consciousness that fashions this body is the integral focal consciousness which now utilises this for its own purposes. But the price paid by the integral consciousness in its attempt at formation of the physical body has been the loss of consciousness due to automatism of functions, due to the tendency of the self to live in its creations. This latter feature had also made some souls not to try to get out of their prior creations, thus confining them to instinctive and mechanical or tropistic actions for ever. Thus we find that once there is spirit, that is dynamic intelligence, it cannot but become monadic, because its main thrust is towards its own expression (action), and, therefore, the body becomes the one inevitable formation for the purposes of expression of its perfection. The body is the perfect instrument of the spirit, and has a perfect right to be, and we cannot conceive of any spirit without being in action. And thus it follows that all selves are psychophysical organisms and not mere psyches. The world of Prakriti (matter) could be likewise conceived as the body of Brahman.

III

It is exactly at this point that Ramanuja's theory comes

in. Brought up in the lore of *pancaratra* he had accepted the usefulness of the body for the purpose of the Divine. He maintains without accepting the creationism of the body by the individual self, that the body ab *initio* is completely subservient to the self, and functions for the purposes of the self absolutely, and is in fact an ornament rather than an impediment. But he also affirms that such an absolute case of body is only for the Divine Universal Being or God. Our bodies are only in a lesser degree absolutely ours because we are not aware of our true self, our archetypal existence. We have not got complete truth-consciousness. In order to arrive at that truth-consciousness, which is the constant awareness of being, Ramanuja asks us to surrender ourselves to God, whose consciousness is auspicious and integral. He affirms that Divine Consciousness would lead us on to absolute perfection, and happiness. Vedanta Desika, the most brilliant expounder of Ramanuja's thought, in his last and greatest work, *Rahasyatrayasara* expounds the attainment of the Divine Consciousness by the individual soul through Bhara-nyasa-yoga (offering of all impediments of body, action, etc.,

* Cf. Garbha Up. and other physiological Upanishads.

1. Specially in Svanishtabhyadi karana.

to God). When this offering happens intelligently and constantly, the body becomes more and more a creative instrument of the Divine Integral Consciousness, more and more aware of its integral character with the self, and not a source of misery and limitation. Such then is the goal of the body, which becomes the perfect medium of the individual self, and the instrument of integral consciousness, the Divine All. Thus it happens that Ramanuja has already brought into his thought the Universal Being, the turiyatita which Goudapada and Mandukya thoroughly refrained from speaking about. Mandukya is being supplemented by the *Isavasyopanishad*.² Ramanuja does not enter into discussions concerning the existence of parallelism or interactionism,- those profoundly modern problems-between the body and the soul. He does not bother himself with the epistemological questions of representative perception, or how knowledge of the objects or the body takes place-at least not with the purposiveness of modern philosophers. He merely accepts the common-sense position, an entirely unsatisfactory position according to some thinkers, and says that the fact that the self knows is there, and the fact that the self has a body to be an effective existence is

also there. The function of the body is to display the perfect workings of the Divine Consciousness, and not to be an impediment to the spirit.*

2. It is interesting to note (that Sri Vedanta Desika commented only on one Upanishad and that is significantly the Isa Up.

* Yasya chetanasya yad dravyam, sarvaatmana svartha niyantam, dharayitum ca sakyam, yacchesataika svarupam ca tat tasya sariram iti sarira lakshanam.

Just as Goudapada had shown that the three stages of consciousness veil the fourth, or rather feed on the fourth without allowing it to function effectively, and instead of expressing the fourth, impede its expression by distorting its functioning, and finally forget that there is such a thing as the fourth, the self or Atman, so also by constant pampering the body seems to, and, in fact, does, become the only prominent experience, and the self a mere epiphenomenon. The main intention of Goudapada was to make the integral consciousness, Atman, the real centre of individual life, Ramanuja's was to make the Atman a real being, not merely a body with a soul but a soul with a body. His intention to remove the primacy which the body had usurped, thanks to carvakas, is the first step in establishing spirit in the core of our psycho-physical life. But whilst Goudapada felt that the integral consciousness

knew no distinction between its individual and universal character, to Ramanuja it became very important. He felt that the Universal integral consciousness has a more satisfactory authority and assurance from the Upanishads, which because it is universal can be considered to have more power and perfection than the individual finite self. He related, therefore, the individual soul and its body to the divine Universal God in the same manner as the body is related to it. Not only is the body to be made an instrument of the individual consciousness, but also it must in turn surrender itself to the Highest Universal Being. There is one continuous action of the Divine thus established. Thus it comes to this, that the individual soul becomes an absolute servant of the Universal Being, the integral self becomes an exponent of the universal purpose: it firmly establishes its connection with the totality of the perfection of God. It begins to act as the servant of the Divine Consciousness, *dasa*, in order that it may act in consonance with the world-purpose of the creative action of the Supreme Brahman. Ramanuja thus brought to the forefront the purpose of the Divine expression or manifestation, the *Lila*, the *vibhuti*. The social-character of the individual Self is here brought out clearly. The existence of other selves makes it clear that the individual integral self is not the final destiny. It is not

enough to recognize the individual, it is necessary to meet to recognize the *lila-vibhuti*, the world of souls and this recognition forces one to surrender to the Universal All because that is the only link with which one can truly relate oneself with another.¹ Now one may ask whether the transformation with the help of the total All is not better than the mere transformation of the individual as a first step, and then link with the world of souls. Such a question is legitimate, but one must possess the consciousness of oneself as self* and not merely as a series of states or functions, or merely as a body with functions of volition, intellection, emotion, and motion, which are all reactions. One cannot

¹ Brih. Up., II.iv .5. The turiyatita conception plays a very important role in the minor yoga and mystic Upanishads. There the integral individual self is the turiya and the Universal All is the turiyatita.

* Rahasyatraya sara Ch.x upayavibhagadhikara which mentions that atmasaksatkara precedes Brahmasaksatkara.

be aware of the All unless one is aware of oneself as a self, as the ultimate unit of existence. Units alone can be, can act and integrate, and till the unity of individual existence is known or gained, there can possibly be no relation at all in the real sense of the term. Secondly,

Ramanuja's view tends, though it does not intend, to place the Universal a little more distant than the self itself. Intuitive Consciousness, which is self-consciousness, is the first recognition of integrality. It makes the several levels of our life spontaneous. Ramanuja's main intention is to make the individual organic with the Universal. He makes the body of the individual and the individual himself the temple of the Divine All. The intuitive consciousness is the perfect divine consciousness working in the individual as its self, a focus of the Divine, and as such is the universal consciousness itself. The question does not arise whether it is the All-the Universal God - that functions, or the individual self.* We have implicated the Universal in the individuals, and the individuals are now the body of the Universal Spirit; the two are related to each other as soul and body, as spirit and its focus, as *prakari* and *prakara*. The value of Ramanuja's thesis consists in - his insi tence that the Divine consciousness, with whom all selves s are eternally integrated is also their inmost con sciousness and self. It could be expressed fully and com pletely by the conscious invitation on the part of the indi viduals by their

* Lord in the Gita mentions that five are the ingredients of a Cause in each action- and the fifth is Daivam-

daivam tu panchamam.

surrender to the Universal Spirit. This Universal Spirit is capable of becoming immanent in a more powerful way than what is usually thought of. That is, he not only pervades and possesses, but can be made actually to express himself in the self in completeness. But Ramanuja's weakness for placing the Divine outward manifests itself strongly when he creates or rather accepts another world- the ideal world of Vaikuntha*- where he places God always, and tries to reconcile His existence within us (*antaryamin*) by the theory of pervasion of power. These tendency to construct another world of perfect peace (though the construction of another perfect world was not any more his than others' special vocation), also made him place the Divine Integral Consciousness both outside the individual as God, and inside as Antaryamin and more prominently the former, made him also disembody man in order to make him free in Heaven (*videhamukti*). If the world is lila, a perfect manifestation of the perfections, infinite and auspicious of the Divine, and if the individual body of man is capable of being a perfect instrument of the Divine Consciousness as

* Madam Blavatsky: Isis Unveiled II .p.287 “ The fourth degree of the Buddhist dhyana, the fruit of

samadhi which leads to the utmost perfection to Viconddham, a term correctly rendered by Bourunkwouf in the verb perfected ..”

1. It is not Ramanuja only that created the heaven and described it so as to have ‘a hand in the making of it’ or personally assisted at the origination of the world (ct. S.Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy Voll.p720). Descriptions of heaven are found to be a fascination hobby of almost all seers. Plato had his archetypal world of benches and chairs and truths, which are ‘mirrored’ in this world of phantoms. Dante had also his medieval heaven.

Ramanuja avers, then it is legitimate to expect Ramanuja to accept *jivanmukti* and not merely *videhamukti*, freedom in the body, and not freedom only after death. If the mayavadic fault had been compared with the general’s march up the hill in order to march down again, the Visishtadvaitic fault can well be compared to the same, for it places God inside the individual in order to place Him outside again. Man gets a body in order to get rid of it as soon as possible and hasten to heaven to get a better one, since he cannot but have a body of some kind. To have attempted the problem of transmutation or transfiguration elsewhere is a way of escaping from the stress of life, and to abandon life even in the imperfect

manner that we know it, is to reach an abstraction however speciously it may be called the most real and true. Spinoza, the pantheist, was perfectly right when he affirmed that there is only one whole with all its distinctions, within which everything lives and moves and has its being. To seek evolution here or purpose or end, is a frailty of the human mind which wants to believe that there is a goal somewhere, 'a far-off event to which all creation moves', afar and aloof from the world that we know. If we see the whole with the vision eternal, sub specie *eternitatis*-a vision of the perfect integral consciousness, then every problem of causality, of ends and purposes, vanishes. One simply is. To attain to an absolute somewhere, absolutely transcendent, a happy consciousness or happy world, would be merely delusion and ignorance-a postponement of the problem of living, and pregnant with all the possibilities of eternal recurrence.

To see it here and now with that eternal vision is the goal of human life and personality. Ramanuja's greatest aspiration is the establishment of that supreme spiritual vision, the vision of the whole under the speculum of eternity in the individual. Hence his affirmation of the Universal integrity of Narayana. In the Advaita we have the subjective integrity of the individual affirmed, and to understand the individual as a self, a whole which finds

its consummate existence in itself is freedom. There is no surrender to anything external or transcendental to the self but to the inner integral consciousness that leads to the expression of itself. In Ramanuja, this self is in its turn led to surrender itself to the Universal All which it finds to be its significant source. In both cases is recognized that integral organization, individual or universal, knows no development or purpose, but mere expressing of its eternal essence or perfection. Integral consciousness, individual or universal, is a creator of harmony or establisher of unity, and never of division and separation (*bheda*). The problem raised by Leibniz of the *Civitas Dei* is a fact inherent in the very nature of integral consciousness which is universal. The law of pre-established harmony is the very essence of integral existence of the individuals. They are necessary to each other and cannot be viewed separately. Spinoza recognized that every body which is in an intimate manner related to a self, and that an innate parallelism remains between the organic functions and the psychical functions. But starting as he did with one entire realm of matter as different from mind, he could not but posit parallelism between them. It was due to the metaphysical approach that started with the Cartesian dualism that culminated in the parallelism and its inherent defects of representationalism. It was only by holding to a

psychologism or mentalism that Bosanquet and other idealists could get rid of dualism, but even then, the subjects-objects remained, and remain, as incurable aspects of the mind-body problem, reminding us that though we may run away to altitudes of epistemological mountains, the ground underneath is the same earth everywhere and trees thrive on the ground and are never suspended from the sky. As Dr. MacTaggart* showed we need not trouble ourselves with the world of matter, but should concern ourselves with the individuals (minds) who people the world. Our business is to find a metaphysical basis for their harmony. The world with its prallel movements can be treated as illusion-a concern not of us, because time and space do not enter into us though they may enter into our creations. The problem was in a sense waived, abandoned, or simply raised and left in despair, or finally some felt that they had got over it by converting it into one of different kind as they thought, but which really is the same with a new name.Ramanuja is more right when he linked the mind and body in an inseparable unity as modes, inseparable again from the total Reality or God. One must only remember in this connection that it is not merely a metaphorical

* Some Dogmas of Religion.

description, for the nature of the organism must certainly manifest in quite a different manner from what is available in the human or animal forms. The definition of the body is whatever substance, mind, matter, forms even, which subserves the purpose of spirit for the latter's purposes.** Thus in the relation of master and servant, it may happen that the servant is merely the body, an absolute instrument of his master. It does not degrade the individual when he is acting absolutely as an instrument of an integral consciousness, provided of course the acts are performed with full understanding and intelligence. Thus an integral individual may subserve the purposes of another integral individual or the Supreme Integral Consciousness and be a body without ceasing to be a self. In spite of these living factors in the philosophy of Ramanuja, viz. The stress which it lays upon the dynamic character of reality as contrasted with the staticism to which later Advaita condemned it; secondly, its assurance that the body is a temple of the integral consciousness which can find its fullest expression in it, that, at bottom, it is the creation of spirit in action; thirdly, that this universe of Lila is a world of delight of Brahman - a thought so purely Indian as contrasted with the pessimism of the West¹, when it affirms that this spiritual consciousness as such cannot perfectly act

through the medium of this body, that freedom and creation in the fullest sense are impossible within this body, and must

** Yasya cetanasya yat drayam, sarvatmana svartha niyantum dharayitum ca sakyam, yatccheshataika svaroopam ca tat tasyasariram.

1 Cf. Rabindranath Tagore: E. J. Thompson, p.102. 'The West has never taken this joy into its belief.'

be expected to happen elsewhere,¹ that is nothing short of a contradiction of its own main positions of value. The inevitable explanation of such contradictions and logical pitfalls lies in the scripture, and Ramanuja and his followers do fully utilize the armoury of scripture, just as any one else, to defend their positions. "In spite, therefore, of his comprehensive humanism he forsakes it for the sake of the future he could not contemplate without sacrificing the present which is the meridian of existence. His concept of the other, and better world, the ideal and unchanging world of *Vaikuntha*, recalls strongly the Platonic world, 'the Utopia of ' Ingenuous philosophers outside history ². There, in the other world, each individual has an individuality which marks him out from others.³ But then he finds that when the individuals are away in the world of terrestrial existence some must be attending on the transcendent God. And

therefore, Visishtadvaita postulates the existence of eternal selves (*nityas*) who attend upon the Lord, such as Garuda, Adishesha, etc. The individuals when they reach Vaikuntha identify themselves with those permanent inhabitants and take delight in seeing and enjoying the spectacle of Divine service in the eternal world and are united in Spirit unchanging calm and beatific,

1 Cf. Vedanta Sutra. Jagadvyapara varjam, . . . is intended to mean that man gets all powers except the creation, sustension, and destruction of the entire world of creation after he reaches Vaikuntha.

“Plato was right when he declared that infinite life on this earth for human beings, even if it were possible would not be desirable.

1 Cf. Plato holds that the individual archetypes never make sojourn in this world of shadows, unlike Ramanuja’s *nityas*.

2 *Kalki*, Sir Radhakrishnan: p.66. ‘All men are exceptional beings...Uniqueness is a quality which all of us share’.

content to so observe rather than aspire to assume roles of such eternal Beings. The usual *utsavas* (festivals) that are celebrated to the highest Gods are but feeble imitations of the eternal City, and to attend these

festivalsis to partake of the Divine company at least in the shadow as a foretaste of what might happen when men hasten there. It is easy to exaggerate the situation and condemn these as fanciful imagery of the best kind, but still imagery. But at least it does not create a bleak monument of barren minds, the Absolute. The aim of *Lila* is to create a world on the pattern of the Eternal with all its eternal distinctions of functions and purposes which will not collide or 'cast a shadow on the face of others'. Ramanuja in describing the *Vaikuntha* does not any more than Plato sketch a Utopia. In laying stress on the factor of *Lila*, the harmony of existence to which all creation must move, he is pleading in reality for a world of creative adventure. But as in the case of the possible perfection of the body here and now, he surrenders this concept of infinite value to harmonious society no sooner than he has stated it. It appears that the after-life is a more pre-occupying concern of the mind here at least than to affirm and carry out the function of transformation of present existence. Or it may be due to the fact that the minds of the many are so much blind to the truth of existence, that Ramanuja turns away to the distance and hopes, hopes which may, alas, never come true. The perish-ability at least of the body seems to be a dominant reminder of the other world with all its pregnant hopes hustled into darkness and the future.

Whatever the spiritual riches heaped out of the bottom of individual realization, they lit the distant shore and not the undergrowth and the near spaces where one has to walk and work. The kingdom of God is only a promise to be kept in heaven: the kingdom of God on earth unfortunately impossible.

IV

It is at this point we come across the last and the most misunderstood of philosophers, Ananda Tirtha, Purna Prajna, the fully enlightened. The doctrine of Dvaita may be taken to be an affirmation of absolute distinctions. It is the recognition of individual difference and the affirmation of practical experience. We have said that Ramanuja stood for practical action coupled with the Universal consciousness or at one with the universal consciousness which is social in its character involving as it does the many. Since it is the social Utopia of the *Vaikuntha* that is sought to be established in this world of Lila-history, Madhva went one step farther, and insisted that this realization of the social Utopia is entirely grounded on the discovery by each individual of his functions in the total whole. This means that the aspiration of the individuals should not be the assumptions of identities with the total whole or with other individuals, but the maintenance and sustenance of

the distinctions without, however, sacrificing the harmony. of the whole, or rather the maintenance of distinctions should be determined by the harmony of the whole. In Lila which is carried on under the aegis of Spirit it is futile to ask for the return to meaningless homogeneity of the Absolute, which certainly is no better, if not nothing other, than the Void, Sunya. It is the business of individuals to unfold dynamic heterogeneity of Brahman. The recognition of this heterogeneity is the beginning of the creative dynamism which is the society. Later Advaita by its harping cry to the beginning of creation or the abstract homogeneity of the One was trying to frustrate the flow of spiritual life towards the social, which is the terminus of all individual existence. Visishtadvaita tried to affirm the psychological distinctions of the individual and its eternal character, but its pull was again backward, and it resiled on the social side to the primitivity that Advaita counselled, though it hoped to make good this loss in the great society after life. Ananda Tirtha continued the social aspects farther than anyone, and made it the final expression of the Spirit in Lila. Thus the true realism of Madhva consists in his treating the world as real, and as the terminus of existence wherein the significance of the Vaikuntha-the ideal-should be brought: It is not merely the realism of the metaphysical kind that is valuable, but

the truer realism of the living kind that is of supreme value and significance. Madhva affirms that every individual is capable of being happy and free when he fulfils the law of his being, *svadharma*, in the society which is but the reflection of the divine order, the perfect Vaikuntha. If here we miss to see the goal of individual life, which is to become a perfect exponent of the life we have taken here, then, it is highly tragic. This acceptance of life as service of the Divine, the all-sustaining Vishnu, is the beginning of our true life. This acceptance alone can lead to the harmony of our existence with the total whole. This service is freedom of giving our all to the purpose of God. In love, thralldom is as glorious as freedom.' And service is true love. The most important factor that is to be analysed here is the nature of the *svadharma* or the function of the individual in this world. It is possible to view *svadharma* in three ways, which are not alternatives but imply each other.

1. A dharma is one's own function according to one's status, caste, profession, accidental or natural.
2. A dharma is one's own according to one's evolutionary type, such as man, animal, as god, etc.
3. A dharma is one's own when it is the affirmation of one's eternal inseparable character or essence, such as intelligence, activity, unique creative existence, and

integral selfness.

1. The first is a social definition as to functions which each individual has to perform and pursue if he takes upon himself such a vocation or is born into it to fulfil his duties. This being born into a status or caste where the caste has been established as *caturvarnya*, four-caste, is feature that has been determined according to Hindu thought by conduct in previous life. The birth which a man takes is merely a continuation of the previous life-course he has been pursuing (karma), and to be born in a particular caste is to have gained that status which will make the surroundings or environment conducive to the development he has at heart. In one sense, it may be said to be the best possible environment he has fallen into or entered upon, a fact that is determined in a causal manner of determinism or free-will. Or it may happen by the fiat of God. Or else it may be by implication the form that an individual as a perfection of the Divine, as an archetype of His existence, manifests in a definite and individual fashion. Thus the dharma or function that a man ought to perform for the realization of the true order has to be realized.2. The second definition is more individual. Each individual has a specific distinctive form that cannot be taken away from him. Each individual possesses a type of body, of man, animal or

god. The perfection of that type consists in following that type to its fullest expression rather than aspire to be something else, or some other type. In other words, the aspiration of a horse should be not to become a centaur but to become the perfect exponent of the horse-type, since perfection is the splendid exemplification of one's highest-type. Therefore, each individual should become the archetype of his existence. Man should strive to exemplify the perfect Manhood, and not aspire to become the demiurge and God. It is one thing to ask for being more than oneself as one is, to ask for perfection of oneself in one's own line of development, quite another to confuse this aspiration

1 ICf. Leibniz, 'Perfection is measured by the quantity of essence'.

with the otherness which is not of one's type and to ask for a perfection that belongs to quite another type. If there is confusion (*dharmasankara*) of dharma then there is no progress. This confusion is of the same kind as the initial confusion as to the integral consciousness where the states of consciousness usurp the fundamental functions of the integral self, and do not recognize their limitations. The knowledge of our limitation is the knowledge of our possible perfection. Whilst Plato suggested the truth that there are archetypes of every

existence in the ideal world, and that these archetypes are mirrored on the canvas of the temporal, Ananda Tirtha believing in the doctrine of 1 joy of existence holds that all souls are archetypes themselves who shall manifest their perfection here and now. The question of possibility does not arise. For the spirit nothing is impossible. Thus the consummation of each one of the individuals in the world of Lila is to become actually perfect (not in the ideal heaven though), a distinction which Absolutists exploited on behalf of absolutism. Thus every individual as a mind-body becomes a unit, perfect in his directional strength, and capable of initiation of a course of action uniquely complementing that of rest.³ The third definition of *svadharma* is not either the social or the psychological but it may be identified in

1 Ananda Tirtha holds that some souls are eternally doomed to perdition. Perhaps he means that some souls are the archetypes of the ugly and the sinful. Cf. Croce's criticism of such negative types.

metaphysics with what is called a quality or *guna*, an adjective describing the essence. It is the *dharma* of an individual soul to think, to be integral, to be intelligent, to be active and creative. We may denote these three definitions as the social, the formal, and the

essential descriptions of the *dharma* of an individual. The first two, the social and the formal are usually mixed up. There is a clear-cut distinction between the individual as an integral being seeking his completion and perfection according to his innate tendencies or powers, and the same in relation to the total whole. To sacrifice the individual purpose for the sake of the total whole, or the society for the sake of the individual are the two alternatives proposed by politico-sociological thinkers. Absolutism and liberalism seem to be their only alternatives. But that is not the right kind of alternative at all. The alternatives proposed do not give full value to the perspective of the individual's life which is expressing itself in terms of temporality. The individual is a vehicle of an immortal essence, is a channel of spiritual life moving towards universal harmony. The individuals conceiving their individual goal as an expression of their ideal perfection and dynamically living it, would find that the order is not formed by any outer restraint or edict of caste or birth or vocation but comes into being spontaneously and effortlessly. Then all individuals function in terms of the internal immortal essence whose goal is the Human Society of selves. Then the individuals do not see the

2. Communism and Fascism are developments of the

absolutistic thought in politics

distinctions between the three different levels of their existence, for they are all fused in one spirit of purposive and perfecting expression. Summarizing briefly, the truths or the living factors that have been stressed by the three schools are firstly, the individual is a dynamic existence and not a divided unity with chaos within. In other words, the individual is a self, not a series of states. Secondly, this individual integral self has a wonderful, pliable and perfect instrument as its body. It is not a barren existence, a ghost floating in the void, somehow and sometimes caught within the meshes of body and held in bondage. Thirdly, this individual self-body is a social entity. It has to exemplify a unique function, a function which is a perfection of the Divine, inalienable and thoroughly distinct from every other, being an archetype.¹ It also means that there can be only distinct functions and not superiority or inferiority in functions. To reveal this unique character in all the three levels of life is to have, in some measure fulfilled the universal life purpose of Divine harmony or Lila. Thus does the world exist for the sake of the Lila of God and the freedom of the individuals² From the integral selfhood to the integral selfbody, and then the same in relation to the society which is the nisus of Identity, is

the history of the spirit. Identity of the Universal Brahman manifests itself as the harmony of

1 Sankara, Ramanuja, Ananda Tirtha, and Vedanta Desika held themselves to be incarnations of Siva, Adishesha, Hanuman, and Ghantavatar, the divine bell-avatar. The conclusion that they are archetypes is irresistible.

2 Lokavatlu liIa Kaivalyam. (cf: my paper on this topic in Journal of the Benares Hindu University Vo1.11936)

the manifold. This is the continuous, uninterrupted progress of Advaita to Dvaita understood as the Great Society-the Utopia of political philosophers. The faults of this last position are apparent as in the other two. In trying to insist upon the duties of the station and in the emphasis it places on the ritualistic phase of human life it has by its very seriousness spoiled the individual and the society to which he belongs, at one breath. Rites are the beginnings of creative art. True art is social, and it has a seriousness and a purpose which cannot be described in terms of the seriousness and the purpose of pedants in art and philosophy. There is an inner rhythm and vision, a fluid integral character, a throb of harmony and humanity that reveals the artist that all the formal purposiveness of the unartistic can never reveal. To divine the archetype and to express it uniquely so as to

contribute beauty and radiate joy, is the uniqueness characteristic of each self. It is unfortunate that Madhva's philosophy which is the highest statement of the goal of man, has not been understood by most expounders. The destiny and the unique character of every individual are guaranteed by his theory of eternal distinctions. The distinctions indeed are perfections. But this beautiful theory has been surrendered to unhealthy adoration of false values of conservatism, and ritualism, and prejudice. The one thing which has, more than any other, contributed to the failure of these systems is that the individual personalities have been worshipped beyond all measure much to the detriment of the truth that is behind them. Instead of mutually complementing their labours, they established unhealthy and nauseating rivalries between them and their gods. Instead of an integral spirituality coming to its own on all levels of human experience and unfolding the Unique Society, it has led to the antithesis of spirituality, pure materialism of forms and ritualism and brute mechanism of orthodoxy. **There is a fatality that when thought tries to expand and influence many, it simply shrinks into nothingness. Quantity .and quality refuses to go together.** The doctrine of Reason of Buddha led strangely to the doctrine of licence, indifferentism and nihilism; the doctrine of integral dynamic consciousness

(Advaita) led to a thorough-going staticism and hypocrisy, the doctrine of an integral individual existence continuous with the Universal Divine Life to meaningless unworldliness; and the doctrine of lila, creative Harmony of the Society (Dvaita), to a chaotic mass of superstition and social rigidity parading itself as orthodoxy. But to know their living teaching is to be established in integral consciousness or self (sthitaprajna) which is happiness, action and perfection, that nothing can disturb or annihilate. It is the service of the Universal God-head, with full knowledge, for the sake of the realization of universal Beauty (ananda-rasa). This is true synthetic Yoga, the fulfilment of knowledge and action in devotion, the bhagavata-dharma of Love of God in each and in All which is known as Lila. To the mind that sees warily, truth gleams like a star, but how many. And scanning the sky our time is past, and the Day finds another morning.