

VIDYARANYA ON METHOD, OBJECT AND LIMIT OF PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION

Writing on Wittgenstein, Lazerowitz observes that Wittgenstein is one of the most original Philosophers of this century because of his perceptions into the nature of philosophical problems. These perceptions, according to Lazerowitz, would radically and permanently change the course of philosophy in the future.¹ His account on Wittgenstein conveys the impression that Wittgenstein perceived, for the first time, that the nature of philosophy is logico-linguistic. The philosophy appears to be concerned with things factual, but all that he is concerned with is language and meaning. He appears to be talking about things mystical and transcendental, but all that he does is to explore the forms of linguistic expressions and their meanings. According to Wittgenstein, the philosopher dupes his reader by this factual mode of speech and in turn he himself is duped. The purpose of the present paper is to introduce to the readers an Indian Philosopher of the fourteenth century who declares most clearly and unambiguously that the method of philosophical enquiry is the logico-linguistic analysis of all intelligible discourse and its object is also logico-linguistic. He is Vidyaranya Muni, the author of *Vivarana Prameya Samgraha*, a treatise in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta.

In the first section, I shall try to explain, how according to Vidyaranya Philosophical knowledge and its method is altogether different from empirical knowledge and its method. They have no point of contact at all. In the second section, I shall try to dwell upon what can be known by this philosophical method. Here I shall try to clarify some of the most persistent illusions about the nature of the Absolute or the *Brahman*. In the third section, I shall deal with some points about the doctrine of *Ātman* and about the human individual. *Ātman* is ordinarily interpreted as the self and the human individual is generally understood as a compound of two elements — the real self and the illusory body. I shall show that these are misleading interpretations. In the

fourth and the final section, I shall bring together the findings of my studies on Vidyaranya.

I : The Philosophical Method

The method of an enquiry and the object of the enquiry can, by no means, be different. If the object of an enquiry is empirical, its method must be empirical. Similarly, if the method of philosophy is logico-linguistic, all that it can lead to cannot be other than the ultimate and necessary condition of all intelligible discourse. Understanding whose outer form is organised discourse must have necessary form without which intelligent comprehension will be impossible. There would necessarily ensue intellectual blindness. This necessary form of the understanding will also be impossible. There would necessarily ensue intellectual blindness. This necessary form of the understanding will also be the necessary form of the intelligible world. Thus, the necessary form of the understanding and the intelligible world which is comprehended by it must be identical. The form of the one will be imparted to and thereby become the form of the other. Here truth and reality will be identical.

This structural identity of the world with the ultimate form of understanding can be called either the ontological form of the world or the ultimate truth about the reality. Thus ontological truth has no direct contact with empirical truth. Philosophical knowledge does not complete the incomplete character of empirical knowledge. They have their complete independence in their own domains. One cannot contradict or enrich the other at all. Empirical disciplines like Agriculture, Commerce, Economics and Engineering have nothing in common with Philosophy. According to Vidyaranya, empirical disciplines do stand firmly in their own fields without depending upon the borrowed strength from the other. Empirical disciplines do not look upon Philosophy for the fulfilment of their objective. Similarly, Philosophy is completely different from Religion. The *Brahman* which is worshipped in religion is different from the *Brahman* of philosophy. The aim of philosophy is knowledge, but that of religion is happiness in another world.

Empirical methods of knowledge like perception, inference, etc., inform us as to how we ought to conduct ourselves in the

presence of different objects. But, on the other hand, the philosophical method of logico-linguistic analysis or the method that leads us to know the structure of the depth-grammar of our discourse (*Āgama*, *Śabda* or *Śṛiti*) reveals to us why the world is taken by us in the way in which we do take it. The former kind of knowledge is called practical knowledge (*vyāvahārika*) whereas the latter is called ontological (*pāramārthika*) being based upon the ultimate and the necessary conditions of all meaningful discourse. The philosophical truth gives us knowledge *par excellence* revealing the ultimate structure of the world as it were. It does not concern itself with knowledge which is meant for guiding us in the practical commerce of life.

According to Vidyaranya, *āgama*, *Śabda* or *śṛiti* is the proper method of philosophy. There can be no other method useful in the area of philosophical knowledge. Quoting from *Mānava Purāna*, he points out that *śṛiti pramāna* consists of three parts, namely (a) *śravaṇa*, (b) *manana* and (c) *nididhyāsana*.

Śravaṇa does not mean hearing repeatedly the scriptural text or the Vedas. It signifies ascertainment of the meaning of philosophical assertions contained not in the ritualistic part of the Vedas but in the philosophical part, namely, the Vedantic text. In the Vedantic part, there are such assertions as, "O The Reader, Know the *Ātman* (the ultimate form of existence)." One who knows the *Ātman* escapes from the bondage of wrong knowledge (*Ātmanānaṁ mokṣasya hetuh*). The knower of the *Ātman* escapes from the sorrows and sufferings (*Ātmavit tarati śokam*). This *Ātman* being known, everything else becomes known (*Ātmani śrute mate vijñāte sarvam vijñātam*). The reader who is struck by such assertions of the Vedānt asks, "What is that thing which being known everything becomes known?" What is this *Ātman* which is being referred to in these statements? Is there a method of knowing it? One who is worried with such questions is advised to read the Upaniṣadic text in which the meaning of these assertions is explained and the way or the method of obtaining this knowledge has been spelled out. Vidyaranya defines *śravaṇa* as "*Vedāntavākya tātparya nirṇaya upakramādbihih satlingaih*." This means ascertainment of the meaning of the Vedantic assertions with the help of the six signs, *viz.*, introduction and conclusion, etc., reading I.P.Q...6

only the Upaniṣadic text and nothing else because philosophical enquiry cannot get any guidance from any other kind of knowledge. It has its unique character and unique method elaborated in philosophical treatises alone. Then the reader has to take the help of such clues as what is repeatedly being said again and again. He will also be helped by such clues as illustrative examples like the one clay assuming different forms and names and thereby appearing as many objects. Similarly, he may also be guided by what is said to have been proved.

The second part of the method which is called *manana* is not concerned with any kind of fixing the mind on the meaning of the scriptural text. In Vedānta philosophy, it signifies understanding the arguments which are used to establish these metaphysical assertions. "*Mananam tu Vedānta vākya grāhaka nyāya anuśīlanam.*" Thus Vedānta philosophy does not completely exclude or condemn the employment of arguments; rather, they recommend that such arguments which elaborate and bring to light the depth grammar of our language or the ultimate principle of meaning must be followed. Arguments which follow the tracks of logic of language are the only ones helpful in philosophical enquiry. All other kinds of arguments, such as, inferring a transcendental creator from the orderly character of the world, are completely invalid and have no place in philosophical investigation. By means of the hypothetical deductive method of induction, we can argue from observed worldly events to other worldly events but never to a transcendental cause or creator. So, the traditional interpretation that Vedānta ultimately depends upon mystic intuition of the sages for philosophical knowledge is completely mistaken. Such arguments which show the role of negation in propositional context, the unstable and corrigible character of the predicate in all proposition as contrasted with the steady and unchanging character of the subject, are surely arguments which follow the logical tracks of our languages. Without such arguments Vedānta philosophy cannot move an inch towards unravelling the unconditional condition of all meaningful discourse.

The third part of the philosophical method consists of *nididhyāsana*. *Nididhyāsana* does not mean meditation or concentration which prepares the way for divine illumination in the finite

soul. It means giving a clear idea of what one is going to investigate so that mind may not be confused with other objects. Further, without such a clear idea we may talk things which are opposite of what we intend to talk. If the object of enquiry is not clearly held before the mind, our investigation is likely to go astray. So our clear statement of the hypothesis at the beginning stage of our enquiry should not be ambiguous and self-contradictory. This condition must be conformed to even by Gods if they are investigating anything intelligible (*lakṣaṇā sambhāvanā purvikā bhavati*). Thus, according to Vidyaranya, every enquiry must be with a clear definition and it must be a possible object of enquiry and it should not be self-contradictory. These are the objective conditions of a valid hypothesis for investigation. These two quotations emphatically declare that the hypothesis should be possible, should not be self-contradictory and should not get confused with the opposite. For attaining these objectives a clear statement of the hypothesis must be given at the beginning.

Of these three stages of the method, the last two are called the external instruments (*bahirangasāadhanā*) and the first one is called the internal instrument (*antarangasāadhanā*). Even though *śravaṇa* or ascertaining the meaning is the first stage of the enquirer, this only helps him to form an idea about the object of enquiry. Therefore, in the order of acquiring knowledge, statement of the object or *nididhyāsana* is the first step, following the arguments aiming to establish it is the second and the realisation of the truth is the last stage. This is the method of logico-linguistic analysis which is followed by Vidyaranya throughout his work, *Vivaraṇa Prameya Saṃgraha* and how he applies it will be made clear in all the sections of this paper.

The Advaitins including Vidyaranya give some objective qualifications of the philosophical enquirer. They lay down four qualifications. The first one is the capacity to distinguish between the eternal and the non-eternal (*nityānitya-vastu viveka*). This condition implies the capacity to withdraw from the changing subject matter of an assertion to its eternal unchanging logical form. Every proposition has a content and a form. Different propositions may have different contents but have the same form. To withdraw from the contents and concentrate on the form is the first

requisite. Take for example, the following propositions, "This is black" and "That is a table". The first proposition talks about the colour of the thing before the speaker whereas the second one speaks of the class or the kind to which the object at a distance belongs. But in these sentences a universal is tied to a particular; a predicate is asserted of a subject, a "that" and a "what". In all these, something is asserted of something else. Thus they have the same form though their subject matter differs.

The second qualification for the seeker of philosophical truth is *viśayavairāgya*, disinterestedness in the content of the judgment. The same judgmental form may be used on different occasions according to the need and interest of the life but the form of the judgment is the same. It is unchanging. The content changes but form remains unchanged. In the matter of communication in the common transaction of life, I may desire to communicate to my listener, the different things for different purposes. If I tell a child, "That is fire", I am warning him not to touch it as otherwise he will get his fingers burnt. On another occasion, I might warn a passer-by saying, "The water is deep", just to warn him not to enter it at that point. But all these judgments has the form of asserting something of something else, a *viśaya* of a *viśayi*, a "what" of a "that". All cognitive judgments, therefore, apart from their changing subject matter, have a constant form. Now philosophical reflection can be made and analysis can be applied on this form. We will show in a subsequent section that there is a significant difference between these two parts and that perhaps our attention to one of them, *viz.*, the *viśayi*, will lead us to the knowledge of the ontological structure of the world.

The third condition is the characteristic of mental calm, self-discipline, etc., which are the characteristics of any seeker of truth whatsoever but particularly necessary in an abstract pursuit like philosophy.

The fourth and the most important condition is the burning desire to be liberated from the bondage of false knowledge and to be aware of the ultimate truth (*mumukṣutva*).

We can now give further consideration which is offered by Vidyanāya in this context. According to him, this logico-linguis-

tic analysis is applied to the propositional forms of the ordinary language of daily use. These he calls the *samarpaka vacanas* or preferred sentential forms. The resulting philosophical assertions are extracted forms and as such are called the *grāhaka vacanas*.

Dharmaraja, a close disciple of Vidyaranya has attempted a clear exposition of this philosophy in its technical aspect in the book called *Vedāntaparibhasa*. There he defines *āgama pramāna* as follows : "When we consider the relation of meaning elements of a sentence in such a manner that the knowledge gained thereby cannot be contradicted by any of the empirical methods, then our considerations lead to philosophical knowledge and its method is called *āgama*. *Āgama* means what comes to light when we examine the depth grammar of our language, *yasya vākyasya tātparyā vis-yibhuta samsarga mānāntarena na bādhyate tad vākyaṃ pramānam*.

While trying to illustrate how logical analysis can be a distinctive method or source of philosophical knowledge, Dharmaraja gives the following examples. Take for example the following two sentences, "I am pious" and "I am happy" in the first person declarative mood. According to grammar, these two sentences are of the same type. But logical analysis reveals an enormous difference between the two. An assertion by the first sentence will require evidence or proof. One has to show that one gives alms to the poor, plants trees by the road-side for the benefit of the travellers. So, this statement cannot be accepted without being substantiated. This he calls knowledge established by the four mental processes of the claimer of the assertion who must be endowed with memory as otherwise he cannot remember the meaning of the word "religious" and apply it to the present case. He must also remove the doubts by supplying supporting evidence as shown before. Such knowledge is called exclusively dependent upon mental processes. There can be doubt and removal of the doubt by supplying evidence by the claimer endowed with memory. But the assertion made by the use of the second sentence, viz., "I am happy" does not stand in the need of any such substantiation since it cannot be doubted or denied. If I am happy, then I am happy. Nobody can doubt and ask me whether I am sure that I am happy, whether mine is state of depression which I wrongly identify as happiness. Such knowledge is called 'excluded' from but standing on the brink

of intellectual operations as outlined in the other case. This is called *antahkārana-upahitacaitanya*. What the Vedantins mean by *āgama* or *Śruti pramāna* or method of logico-linguistic analysis and what kind of knowledge can be obtained from it is clearly stated by these authors.

II : The Logical Theory

The meaning of a class word, according to Vidyaranya, is a universal. A universal is an abstract entity; it does not carry the implication of its existence in the world. Learning the meaning of the word "cow" from my elders by means of ostensive definition, I do not get stuck up in the particular instances. I learn the general conditions of its applicability. Class words are unlike proper names or demonstrative pronouns. In fact, this abstract character of these class words account for their efficiency in communication. If all words in language were proper names or referring expressions, that language would be the poorest of the kind. One may doubt whether such a language would be possible at all. General words have a descriptive role rather than a referring role. In a meaningful sentence like "This is a cow," or "That is black," there is a coupling of two elements, a referring expression which points at and a descriptive expression which is asserted of that to which the referring points. If there will be just two referring expressions coupled like "This is this" ("*Tat tat*"), there will be no meaning expressed. Similarly, if two classificatory expressions like "cow" and "horse" are coupled together in the form, "A cow is a horse", there will be no meaning expressed. Every meaningful sentence, therefore, shall be of the form "This is a cow", "That is a horse" or "That is black". But of these two expressions, the first or the subject remains steady. The second alone can be replaced, negated, corrected, conjoined or disjoined. So, every meaningful sentence is due to the coupling of two elements with opposite characters.

When I correct myself in a particular situation after realising my mistake that what I asserted to be a snake is but a rope, I cannot directly jump to my second assertion. I must first negate my earlier assertion and then pass to my correcting assertion. The assertions, in this case, are "This is a snake", then "This is not a snake" and subsequently "This is a rope". If I do not go through the middle stage, *viz.* the act of negating, there will be only two

assertions. The second assertion will be the correcting one only if the first one is cancelled. But in cancelling the first one, only the predicate has been removed and not the subject. If the subject does not continue in both the assertions, as the same, the second assertion would not be a correction of the first. So one of the basic principles of communication is that negation cannot be absolute. By simply negating the predicate, the entire proposition is negated and the predicate place becomes open for all other predicates, as it were. Any predicate competes with other predicates (*pratiyogi*) so far as any particular assertion is concerned. Thus in a significant sentence, the subject is incorrigible and unchangeable whereas the predicate is corrigible, changeable and replaceable. Besides, the subject is also self-explained, self-existent and self-complete. Whereas the predicate is other-dependent, other-expressive and incomplete. The predicate, "is a cow", 'is black' cannot explain any meaning except as conjoined with what is signified in the subject. It is thus incomplete and express its meaning with the help of the subject. But the subject expresses its meaning without the assistance of the predicates. It exists, as already shown, even when the predicate is attached to it or detached away from it. It is thus self-complete. Addition or removal of predicates does not affect it in any manner. This is explained by saying that from the self complete, if you take away everything, it shall remain ever-full (*Purṇaśya Purṇamadāya Purṇameva avashisyate*). Now such a sentential form with contrasting elements cannot be the form of any reality and cannot be the true measure of the real as it couples together what can not be so coupled. Such a form is called the form of error and not of truth. At best, it is the form of truth so far as it goes in the practical commerce of life. But it is not the form of reality as it is in itself or truth *par excellence* independent of human purposes and interest. It involves a distortion in that a universal like cow, an abstract entity, is used to characterise what belongs to the real world. This kind of logical error due to the logical coupling of a "that" and a "what" is called by Vidyaranya *arthādhyāsa* or distortion in meaning, an abstract universal meaning is paraded before us as a part of the world, a non-existent is paraded as existent. It might be clear by now that what Vidyaranya calls a proposition is not an actual assertion, but an assertion form, a cognitive form which could be used to make true or false statements on different occasions. The truth of an empirical proposition can

be known by verification. But the logical meaning of the sentence which could be used for producing statements is independent of empirical verification. Vidyaranya illustrates the point by the sentence, "There are one thousand elephants in my finger tip." The logical meaning of this sentence is untarnished by the empirical impossibility of the situation where it could be meaningfully employed to make a statement or assert a fact. In fact as we could rule out the empirical possibility of any such fact at all. There is also another distinction to be borne in the mind in this context. When I actually use a sentence to assert a statement on any specific occasion, there is a sense in which the thing and what I assert about it depend on my intention. I select the object of my reference as I intend to speak about it and I assert what I intend to assert about it and what I intend to communicate to my listeners. But the logical meaning of a cognitive sentence is independent of such intentions. Vidyaranya illustrates how logical meaning is independent of intention by pointing out that a stupid Brahmin may recite a reputed stanza from the Vedas without understanding its meaning. He, therefore, cannot be said to intend any meaning to be conveyed to the listeners. He simply mechanically recites or reproduces what he has learnt by rote; but a learned scholar in Vedic text understands the meaning of the recited stanza if he happens to pass by that side. So, the logical meaning cannot be tied down to empirical verifiability or actual use in the context which seems to be the contention of the Mimāṃsakas. So, it is a necessary condition of our intelligible discourse to make the subject of our discourse fixed and unchanging. It cannot be cancelled and cannot be allowed to be suffering a total change. The logic of intelligible discourse makes it imperative on our part to take the world as consisting of things which do not change but whose states, conditions and qualities only change. The ontological world is a world of substantially identical things suffering change but not changing in themselves. The law of identity is not an empirical law. It is inherent in intelligible discourse as its basic foundation; it is what lies in the depth of understanding itself without being conditioned by anything else. It is an absolute and metaphysical truth about the world.

According to the Advaitin, the Absolute or the *Brahman* is the basic foundation of intelligible discourse. This Absolute or

Brahman is not an entity at all like universal soul or universal consciousness or what lies beyond and supports our empirical world. He is not the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, the object of worship of religion, has nothing to do with the object of philosophical enquiry. To talk about "the object of philosophical enquiry" is only to use a metaphor. Philosophy tries to know unconditional truth, unconditioned in the sense of not being concerned with human purposes and human interest. In the empirical enquiry we are concerned with how many tables are there in my lumber room which require urgent repairs, why the market condition fluctuates and prices rise during certain part of the year and how to control it, under what conditions plants give maximum yields or what elements must be combined to produce water. But in philosophy, we ask, "Is there any necessary reason as to why we must take the world as we do as consisting of things with qualities?" "Why we do not allow changes in the identity of the thing and declare that changes occur in the thing but the thing itself does not change?" "Why we must take the world as constituting of things with qualities and not as consisting of changing events or states of affairs?" That the world must consist of things is a synthetic-necessary truth about the world but that there is drought and failure of crop this year in many parts of the world is an empirical truth. Drought has, in fact, occurred this year but it might not have occurred as well like in many other years. But it is not simply accidental that we take the world as consisting of things with the qualities. It is a necessary condition of intelligible discourse and intelligible understanding. Without it there will be cessation of understanding and failure of communication. Thus the *Brahman* of Advaita and, for that matter, of that of Vidyaranya, is not the soul either individual or universal, as tradition has understood it. Vidyaranya repeatedly declares that Vedānta philosophy never teaches that there is a soul which survives the death of the mortal body.

III : The Theory of Knowledge

The elementary cognitive form is a judgment. A judgmental form of knowledge implies a knower; it also involves doubt and removal of doubt, declaring the thing to be of such and such nature by applying a concept and application of the concept involves memory. When I judge the thing before me as a cow, I apply

the concept "cow", I pronounce the judgment that the animal before me is a cow. But how could I do it if I did not learn the use of the concept on previous occasions in the company of elders and did not remember what things are called cows? And why do I declare it to be a cow if there did not exist a doubt either in me or in my listeners? So, a judgment like 'This is a cow' involves memory but it is not a memory-statement like "I saw a cow outside the village last night." So, knowing involves doubting, deciding with the help of a concept supplied on the basis of memory by a knower who claims the knowledge and pronounces the judgment. The meaning of these four mental forms determine the logical geography of the term "cognitive mind" and word "mind" in the comprehensive sense involving cognition, conation and affection ranges over the logical boundaries of the meanings of the mental words like knowledge, desire, affection, disaffection, fear, pleasure, etc., Mind is not referring expression but a descriptive expression. In fact, in Vedānta epistemology only referring expressions *par excellence* like "This", "That", "I", etc., are capable of designating the subject of knowledge and all other expressions are applied to characterise the subject. There are methods of empirical knowledge like perception, inference, etc. But these methods of knowledge are valid as far as practical commerce of life is concerned (*vyāvahārika tattvavedakatā*). They inform about the facts of the empirical world under human condition for the furtherance of human interest. This kind of knowledge is conditional in character. The water feels hot to the human hand in all standard cases when its temperature is higher than that of the hand. But knowledge *par excellence* which is unconditionally true cannot be looked for in this direction (*pāramārthika tattvavedakatā*). For that kind of knowledge, one has to march inward along the tracks of philosophical logic towards the inner structure of understanding itself. In the matters of empirical knowledge, our mind goes outward to take note of things presented to us. But in philosophical knowledge understanding is turned upon itself to see what its most inalienable character is. If understanding *par excellence* has a necessary form in which it shapes and presents things to the mind, then that necessary form will be the form of the world in its ultimate character.

Now, let us see how *āgama pramāna* or analysis of depth-grammar is applied. Every cognition has the form of an assertion,

'this is a so and so' or 'this is such and such.' Here, a "so and so" and "such and such" are universals of sortal and characterising type, a *visaya* or *tad dharma*. Even wrong knowledge where an idea of the mind is objectified in the outer world as in the case of 'This is a snake', there is judgement or a cognitive assertion. Memory objects of the mind, as the Buddhists and other philosophers contend, do not simply get uprooted from the internal world and get entrenched in the outside world in the case of wrong knowledge. Whatever memory might have done or might not have done, I apply a wrong concept like the "snake" to what is present before me. This knowledge is called erroneous in the practical sense for the practical commerce of life. I am not affected by it as I should had it been a snake. So, I reject it. But, from the standpoint of philosophical logic, both the judgements "This is a snake" and "This is not a snake but a rope" are equally unsteady. Both involve memory which is fallible and both is an attempt to know the concrete by means of the abstract, the existent by means of the non-existent, a real by means of an unreal. So, the empirically false and the empirically true differ in the sense that one is and the other is not serviceable in life. But both of them are equally unfit to reveal the nature of things as they are. Here, the so-called true proposition, "This is a rope", is regarded to be true because it fulfils our expectations and does not betray them. I can pick it up and tie up the packet on my carrier at the back.

When I reject the false proposition, "This is not a snake", I am not rejecting knowledge or cognition as such. I am only rejecting from my cognition the snakish character of the object. Here also, in the matters of cognition, there is no complete rejection as such. When I say, "I was mistaken" and "I did not know", it appears as if the whole of knowledge is cancelled. But what I have actually is I have cancelled only that part which was ascribed and imposed upon cognition itself. Thus all empirical cognitive assertions have a misleading form. There cannot be a complete annihilation of knowledge in an instance even when I am saying, "I am ignorant, I do not know anything". All that I am saying is to withdraw my claim with respect to certain objects which are all very important for me and which I should have known. So, there is either less knowledge or more knowledge but never complete absence of knowledge. In fact, cognitive life is necessarily

a conscious life. There cannot be denial of knowledge in the absolute sense whereas the form of empirical assertion creates the illusion of complete annihilation of knowledge.

Let us look at the matter from another standpoint. I pronounce the judgment, "This is a snake". Later on, I realise my mistake and give the correcting judgment, "This is not a snake but a rope". Similarly, in another case, I may assert, "This is a cloth", and correcting myself I can say, "This is not a cloth but a very fine type of paper folded in a particular manner". Now, in all these cases, what is negated, corrected and replaced is the predicate. But the subject remains unchanged. Not only the subject remains unchanged but there is a necessary reason also why it must remain so. Supposing we negate the subject also. If the "this" is cancelled, then there is no scope for me to assert the correcting sentence. The two sentences, "This is a snake" and "This is a rope" will remain unconnected and independent; there will be no bridge between the two for my mind to move from the one to the other. There will be no scope for closer observation, learning from experience and growth of knowledge. There will be complete mental stagnation. The organised body of assertions which we call knowledge will not be possible. There will be, to quote the words of Vidyaranya, "intellectual blindness" (*jagādāndhatva prasajyete*). This also incidentally explains the logical and cognitive importance of negation in knowledge, its unity and growth. This also shows why we cannot directly pass from mistaken knowledge to correcting knowledge without previously cancelling the mistaken knowledge. Without cancelling the first, the two will remain side by side and opposing each other and the mind will stand confused and bewildered. Instead of there being two cognitions, there will be no cognition at all.

Moreover, 'I know' is a form of cognition which is never absent at any time at all. To assert that 'this is a table' is to assert that 'I know that this is a table'. You cannot assert that this is a table and say at the same time that you do not know it. One is a necessary part of the other. The former is always present whenever the latter is present. Even in the case of erroneous cognition like "This is a snake", the other part, "I know that", is present. So, "I know" is uniformly present both in the case of right as well

as in the erroneous form of knowledge. This is equally present in both the cases and is, therefore, called witness consciousness (*sākṣi caitanya*). It is ever-present and witnesses equally the right as well as the wrong judgment. Kant noticed this formal condition of knowledge but rejected it outright declaring that a thing which is always present leaving all things as they are could have been always absent equally as well. But in Vedānta philosophy, which is trying to discover the very form or the ultimate structure of the cognitive apparatus, this formal condition cannot be overlooked. "I know" is a necessary cognition but not analytically necessary. There is no contradiction in saying, "I did not know that to be so and so". So, "I know" is not tautologically or analytically necessary. Any significant proposition about matters of fact can be denied without self-contradiction. But "I know" is a formal condition which cannot be denied anywhere, even though its denial will not involve any self-contradiction. So, it is both synthetic and necessary in character. It is synthetic because its denial does not involve self-contradiction. But it is necessary because nowhere it can be removed leaving the rest part of our cognition unaffected. Even in the case of deep sleep, it is present even though you were not cognising anything at all and your capacity of the cognising activity is at the lowest ebb to be resumed after waking in full vigour. If this witness consciousness were not present, you could certify after waking, "I slept well; I did not know anything". When you assert this after waking, your witness consciousness certifies it in the form "I know I slept well". How this witness consciousness now certifies this if it were not present during deep sleep? And because of its presence during deep sleep, you resume your cognitive activity recognising the object as before as the same and world before and after your deep sleep as one continuous world. Identity of the world is the same even if you do not know it and identity of the object as the same in spite of changes are the necessary conditions of all cognitive activity and witness consciousness guarantees and certifies it and it never stops to doubt or deny it. Since you are not conscious of your own existence during deep sleep, this witness consciousness is called *Iśvarasākṣi* or unbounded witness. This also explains why the idea of the individual or the I-sense belongs to the conceptual system and does not belong to the periphery or the formal conditions. Hence, there is nothing like pure soul or disembodied spirit. Identity of the world with the reidentified

objects in it whose qualities change but which themselves do not change are ontological truths about the world. They are necessary conditions of all knowledge. They constitute the form of the understanding and, therefore, they form the structure of the intelligible world. These are ontological truths about the world. These are the ultimate truths that can be known (*prameya*) by critical philosophy which embarks upon a detailed examination of the conceptual apparatus. Hence, Vidyaranya titles his book as *Vivaranaprameyasamgraha*.

Vidyaranya's famous example, "This is the same Devadatta whom I saw in Pataliputra previously" is an illustration *par excellence*. We recognise Devadatta as the same whatever changes might have taken in Devadatta. Changes in place, age, qualities and states are downgraded and identity of the thing is upheld without which intellectual understanding is impossible. The question of substantial identity is not a question of criteria of identity as Ayer, Wittgenstein and the rest of the contemporary philosophers consider it to be. It is an *a priori* truth about the world not to be discovered by means of empirical criteria. Existence, Consciousness and Infinitude or indivisible consciousness of an ultimately beginningless articulated world is the very necessary condition of all knowledge. The world continues to exist and is known to be so existing beginninglessly. You cannot think of the world as absolutely non-existent at any time. Absolute non-existence is an impossible idea. Knowing anything to be the case without being aware of it is an impossible idea. You cannot assert a world existing without being shaped and conditioned by the necessary conditions of all understanding. The Absolute or the *nirupādhika* in this sense is incomprehensible and indescribable. The substance is not an object in the empirical world; to look for it there as the empiricists do, is to declare a formal concept to be an empirical concept. The form which is everywhere present cannot be found in some and absent in others and cannot be searched in the empirical world as we do search for gold.

Now, if identity of an object is an ontological truth, it cannot be empirical truth at all. Vidyaranya declares that their theory of *Atman* does not propound that anything of an individual human being will survive his death. Man is not a compound being of

an immortal soul and a mortal body. He declares repeatedly and emphatically that a disembodied soul (*dehābhimānantarena*) is a self-contradictory idea. To think of an individual man is to think of him as consisting of the body, sense-organs and the mind. In fact, inanimate and animate bodies are the only constituents of the empirical world. Ontological identity is the very necessary condition of knowing anything about anything. This is an *a priori* condition as space and time are the *a priori* conditions of all understanding. To be aware of an individual as Śaṅkara is to place him in space and time. To regard him as identically the same individual, young or old, born, unborn, living or dead, even when I declare Śaṅkara to have died eleven hundred years ago, I am understanding him as belonging to that part of space and that part of time maintaining the same relations with his contemporary things, geographical conditions, etc. If the intelligible world is not one unified boundless spatio-temporal world with individual objects and living things maintaining the same mutual relations, then there will be cessation of all cognitive activity or knowing and cognising. This is the ground where philosophical scepticism is eliminated and buried completely. Here knowledge is shown to be securely founded though the question of philosophical scepticism has a different career in the West. Philosophical doubt is not an empirical doubt and its emptiness cannot be shown by pointing out the limits of empirical doubt which seems to have been attempted by Wittgenstein and his followers.

The Advaitin is misunderstood by the tradition as declaring that the world of things and beings is unreal, a grand illusion. In fact, no Advaitin ever declares the body, either of a material thing or of a human person as an illusory adjunct. In fact, they all, particularly Vidyaranya, emphatically declare that no human individual can be conceived as a real spiritual part which is immortal and a mortal body which is illusory. To think of a disembodied soul is to enter into the land of meaninglessness. The *Satchidānanda* or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is not an entity which is the locus or support (*adhithāna*) of the empirical world. Rather, these are the end-points and supply the grounds of intelligibility to our entire conceptual system. They are the necessary conditions which cannot be eliminated. *Māyā* and *avidyā* which the Advaitin speaks of do not stand for magical operation of a divine

being, but only signify the conditional character of our empirical knowledge. They negatively signify that the aspiration of knowing a world independent of all its relations to the very necessary conditions of intelligibility is to run after a chimera; to talk of it is to talk of describing the indescribable or comprehend the incomprehensible or to know by means of the mind what is completely unrelated to the mind at all. The doctrine of *adhyāsa* is not a doctrine of universal illusion, but a logico-linguistic doctrine about the nature of our discourse. The concept of liberation is to know the limits and the very conditions of intelligibility and thereby to be aware of the chimeral character of the whole of Absolute knowledge in the transcendental sense and also to be aware about the practical efficiency of our language of daily use and its incompetence to know its own organisational principle. It is competent to give us the practical knowledge of the outer world (*bahirmukhividya*) but completely indifferent to its own organisational principle or what lies at its depth (*antarmukhividya*).

We must note that in Epistemology both Śaṅkara and Vidya-ranya bring in the notion of *visayi* and *visaya* whereas in Logic they bring in the distinction between the subject and the predicate. The term *visayi* signifies that there are no pure particulars to be apprehended in cognition and to be the subject of our judgment. To judge is to particularise but to particularise is to bring it under the conditions of space and time and to apprehend it by some of its characteristics which you are prepared to supply if your listener is to get at your point of reference. To know is to individuate and to individuate is to place it in space and time alongwith other objects in contrast from which to select it as the subject of your discourse. Pure particulars have no place in our cognitive world. So, space and time are the very forms of understanding. According to Vidya-ranya, space, number and endurance in time are the *a priori* features of the intelligible world. This perhaps explains why mathematical truths, though *a priori* in character, are also synthetic.

IV : Conclusion

Now, in concluding this essay, it becomes proper to point out the results obtained so far. In the first place, it must be clear by now that *śabda* or *āgama pramāna* does not signify the method

of knowing from the authority or the scriptures. Authority absolutely has no place in Vedānta philosophy which applies reason to know the nature of reason or understanding itself. *Sabda* means meaningful discourse. *Āgama* means that which is not present before you but which comes when you withdraw from the surface and turn your attention inward to depth grammar of our meaningful discourse. That is why this is called *antarmukhividyā* or knowledge obtained in looking in the inward direction. Further, the philosophical method does not exclude outright logic or argument. It follows the tracks of logic of our language or meaningful discourse. The arguments which lead to the understanding of the philosophical assertions like “*Ātman* being known everything becomes known” are employed in the philosophical investigation (*Vedāntavākya-grāhaka nyāyānusilana*). Philosophical pursuit being an intellectual discipline employs hypothesis which is clearly stated at the beginning. It is shown to be conceivable and not self-contradictory and its clear statement directs the investigation without getting strayed into other fields like religion and science. Vidyaranya does not stop in stating the objective condition of philosophical hypothesis. He also enumerates the subjective conditions of the investigator like capacity to withdraw from the empirical content and to concentrate upon the form which is eternal. For this, self-disciplines and careful circumspection are utmost necessary as in any other intellectual discipline. Accordingly, these characteristics are enumerated as the necessary parts of the subjective condition. Thus, in philosophy there is no scope for authority, dogma and mysticism, intuition and *yogic* meditation.

Māyā or *avidyā* is not the magical display of a transcendental Lord. They only signify knowing the world by means of abstract concept or unreal universals, a “that” by means of a “what”. We believe the world to be consisting of cows, trees and snakes. But the word “cow” signifies only universal (*jāti*), an abstraction. Knowing the concrete and the real as made up of by an abstraction is surely *avidyā* or distorted knowledge. That is why Vidyaranya repeatedly warns us that *avidyā* does not imply absence of knowledge but only distorted knowledge practically helpful but theoretically unacceptable as is revealed by critical examination of our cognitive

apparatus. There is a sense in which knowledge must conform to the nature of the things themselves and not to practical demands of we the humans.

The *Ātman* which constitutes the ultimate nature of all intelligible things is not the goal of religion. It is not a spiritual entity. It is not a proper concept but a formal concept. It always proceeds towards the limits of language. The word "*Ātman*" is derived from the root "*ata*" which signifies "permanently going away". Thus, *Ātman* belongs to the limit or periphery of language and does not remain within significant discourse. It belongs to the logical scaffolding of the world but is not within the world. Similar meaning is also conveyed by the technical term "*pratyagātman*". That which stands apart is not bound by the empirical concept and goes in direction opposite to where the concepts lead. Similarly, *Brahman* means the absolute, the unconditioned condition of all meaningful discourse. It is the *adhsthāna* or the ultimate support of the entire meaningful discourse. Since, the *ātman* the *Brahman* and *Pratyagātman* are not parts of the empirical world, nothing can be said about them. It is indescribable and incomprehensible. It is the wave ahead of the swimmer which the swimmer cannot overcome. *Mokṣa* is not liberation of the mystical soul from the shackles of the body. It is cognitive liberation from the illusion created by knowing the concrete by means of the abstract.

Before closing the paper I feel it my duty to point out that according to Vidyaranya, Philosophy has a double function. It describes and also explains— We discover and describe what pervasive features are there in our language, and we also show that there is a necessary reason why they should be there. We discover that negation cancels the predicate not the subject. Similarly we find the feature that subject is steady and incorrigible whereas the predicate is unsteady and corrigible. Then we find a rational justification for these features to be necessarily there. Had not these features been present, knowledge and its growth would have been impossible. The Kantian method of deduction

of categories seems to be an echo of what Vidyaranya has said in the logical and epistemological theories.

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GANESWAR MISHRA

NOTES

1. 'Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy', in (Ed.) K. T. Fann, Ludwig Wittgenstein : *The Man and His Philosophy*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1978. p. 131.

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Mahatma Gandhi's "*Hind Svaraj*", a revolutionary text embodying the Philosophy of Indian Independence as visualized by Gandhiji in 1909, 75 years ago, has never ceased to awaken us from our recurrent dogmatic slumbers. In 1928, the philosopher Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya gave a lecture in an obscure Bengal college on the theme 'Svaraj in Ideas' the text of which has been unearthed and made available to us by friends, and which in our opinion is no less fundamental in its analysis of Indian bondage and its possible cure than Mahatma Gandhi's tract of 1909. As a tribute of serious response to that analysis, Indian Philosophical Quarterly has great pleasure in announcing its special number '*Svaraj in Ideas*' scheduled for October 1984. The number reproduces the text of K. C. Bhattachayya's pioneering lecture and includes a large number of articles both supportive and critical of his orientation and position. Reviews and a large number of letters on the theme of Svaraj in Ideas are a special feature. It is hoped that this venture of IPQ's will soon precipitate a national seminar on the theme of Svaraj in Ideas, and in the light of the deliberations of such a seminar, a sequel to the present number may become possible.