

Types of Absolutism—A Revisitation

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I take this opportunity of drawing your attention to an unexplored facet of Professor T. R. V. Murti's thinking. His contribution to interpretation of Buddhist Philosophy is known and acclaimed the world over. Despite his sojourn in Buddhist territory for some time he came back to his natural spiritual home, viz. Advaita Vedānta, which remained the Philosophy closest to his heart. Though not fully spelt out in his writings, his deep Advaitic learning is well known through his extensive lectures on the important texts. But that he also interested HIMSELF IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF Caitanya might be something of a surprise to many. He did not write anything on the subject, but discussed it with some of his students. Now the question is how the Philosophy of Caitanya served to fill a gap in Professor Murti's thinking.

In his Amalner days, he wrote two seminal papers on the Philosophy of Absolutism. Absolutism and its types had been a life-long preoccupation with Professor Murti. Professor K.C. Bhattacharya had already explored the possibility of alternative forms of Absolutism, but his delineation of its different types as truth, freedom, etc. had been very abstract, not situated in any historical setting. Following his inspiring lead, Professor Murti continued the analysis and identified the different forms of Absolutism with different schools of Indian thought. Both Professor K.C. Bhattacharya and Professor T.R.V. Murti based their analysis on the three-fold distinction of subjective functions, viz. knowing, feeling and willing. This division of the functions of the mind is the well-known Faculty Psychology, so long prevalent in Western thought. It has a hoary ancestry, going back to Plato who distinguished between the appetitive, spirited and rational faculties of the soul. It was the dominant Psychology of the Middle Ages, Kant based his three critiques on the same division, which was adopted by both Professor Bhattacharya and Professor Murti in their Philosophy of Absolutism. But they made an important modification, while Faculty of Psychology had made a tripartite division of the mind, the latter thinkers rather thought of knowing etc. as different attitudes mind could adopt towards what is given to it. They took the subject-object duality as the basic epistemological relation, which could be construed in three mutually exclusive ways. It could be one of knowing in which the only function of the subject is to reveal the object as presented to it, or one of willing in which the subject creates its own object, or again one of feeling in which the subject and its object are evenly balanced neither dominating over the other. Each

of these three attitudes, when pressed to its logical culmination, yields a type of Absolutism. The three functions, as empirically available, are all mixed up, and this confusion of subjective functions, the result of *ajñāna*, produces illusion. When ignorance is dispelled, and each function is disentangled from the rest and is obtained in its purity, it is the Absolute.

Professor Murti, in his Amalner days, identified them with Advaita Vedānta, the Mādhyamika and the Vijñānavāda respectively. But later, when he came to Varanasi, he discussed with his students the entire problem threadbare, and revised his scheme of identification. He still thought that Advaita Vedānta represented the knowledge standpoint in its approach to the Absolute but radically modified his views regarding the two systems of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Vijñānavāda was now construed as upholding the doctrine of pure consciousness as creative will, while the Mādhyamika was reassessed as not to be coordinated with any other speculative system. Being a neutral non-positional analysis of all conceptual views, it could not itself be understood as being at par with the views analyzed.

In the new architectonic of the types of Absolutism, the slot for the Absolute as Feeling remained vacant. Very fortunately, however an entire set of works dealing with the Philosophy of Caitanya was made accessible to Professor Murti, and he could see his way to make good the lacunae that had long made itself felt in his Philosophy of Absolutism. He became convinced that the philosophy of Caitanya represented the approach to Ultimate Reality though and as feeling.

With the skeleton of Professor T.R.V. Murti's Philosophy of Absolutism being more or less delineable, it is time to add a little flesh to the different types.

I. Knowing

To know an object is to reveal it as it is, without adding anything to it or distorting it in any manner. In knowing, the subject is constrained by what is presented to it (*vastutantra*), and has no freedom in the matter (not *puruṣabuddhyapekṣa*). The role of the subject is severely confined to bare revelation. That being so, all knowledge is by definition veridical, ruling out the very possibility of any knowledge being erroneous. If the object is always known as it is, it cannot be mistaken for something else (*sarve dharminī abhrāntam prakāre tu viparyayaḥ*). This idyllic situation is not, however, empirically available. Cases of mistaken apprehension unfortunately do occur, pointing to some non-knowledge factor supervening on what is presented in knowledge. This intrusion of subjective elements in every knowledge makes for its falsity. The thing given is as it is, but in the process of being known it is overlaid by a large amount of subjectivity. Its known-ness, therefore, constitutes its illusoriness (*drśyatvarimithyā*).

If we analyze the complex texture of a case of illusion, we may disentangle its various strands, all combining together so as to produce a specious unitary experience. These elements are (1) *adhiṣṭhāna*, (2) *āvaraṇa*, (3) *vikṣepa*, and (4) *adhyāsa*. Even to be mistaken, a thing must be there, without the presence of which the mistake could not have occurred. There is no groundless illusion (*niradhiṣṭhānakhyāti*). The illusory, not having any reality of its own, can appear only as founded on what there is. But were the real to be known as it is, again there would be no illusion. Hence, its reality should be suppressed as it were, must be shrouded in darkness. Apart from this factor of obscuration, something else must be projected instead, but for which the given would simply remain hidden or unknown, but would not appear otherwise. And lastly, what is projected does not appear as another reality, but is identified with what is really out there.

The real need not be known. Whether known or not, it retains its immediacy, which is not suppressed by its unknown-ness. It is this immediacy (*idantā* or *sattā*) that makes illusion possible. The illusory stands out, masquerading as a 'this', but it is a borrowed 'thisness', having none of its own (*pratibhāsamātraśarīra*). Being is prior to being known. The criterion of Reality is to be supremely indifferent to the adventitious fact of being known. The Real could as well exist as unknown, or as known otherwise. Even prior to being known, it had an intrinsic existence of its own. This unknown existence (*ajñātasattā*) constitutes its depth or substantiality. That which has no unknown existence, which is entirely exhausted in merely appearing, must be illusory which lacks any depth.

But how do we know that the object had enjoyed an unknown existence prior to its being known? One might as well suppose that the object is instantaneously precipitated in the very act of knowing. So there must be a way of knowing the object in its unknown condition a sort of known unknown-ness. There must be found a kind of non-empirical Consciousness which is aware of the object, both as known and also as unknown, and also the illusory appearance. This is *sākṣicaitanya* to which is presented everything, whether as known, or as unknown, or again as known otherwise (*sarvaṁ vastu jñātatayājñātayā vā sākṣicaitanyasya viśaya eva*). Unknown-ness is a kind of positive covering by piercing through which alone does knowledge take place (*āvaraṇābhībhava*).

Of the four above-mentioned factors constituting an illusory experience, only the first, viz. the ground could be known, according to the strict definition of the term. All the other factors are subjective interpretations, opening the door wide open for all sorts of misconstructions, constituting falsification of pure knowing. The spiritual demand is to know the Real in itself, and not through subjective aberrations. The

demand is to be so lost in bare contemplation of the given as to lose the separate identity of the knowing subject. This is the absolute form of knowing in which the known and its knowing coalesce. Knowing is so attenuated, so pure and diaphanous, that the distance between knowing and the known is annulled. It is this distance knowing a thing from outside as it were that makes room for subjective distortions. To know a thing in the ultimate sense is to be it (*Brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*). It is knowing by being.

II. Willing

A. In willing the roles of the subject and the object are radically reversed. Willing consciousness is autonomous and self-legislating, the object being its own creation. Consciousness *wills* its own content to come into existence, as the latter has no intrinsic existence of its own. It exists, or rather subsists, only as being willed, only as being sustained through the act of willing. Its *esse* is its *percipi*. Consciousness brings forth its variegated contents through its own inner resources, precipitating the objects as it flows along, which are nothing in themselves apart from their being thus created and projected (*viññaptimātram evaitad asadarthābhāsanāt*). They are known only as known that is a truism; unknown existence is a contradiction in terms. The 'blue' and the consciousness of 'blue' are one and the same (*sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoḥ*).

Here again the confusion of subjective functions takes place, so that will-consciousness is not attained in its purity. Will retains its sovereignty over its content only while willing it. Once willed, the content is already an accomplished fact, and Consciousness remains will only so long as the content willed is not realized. As soon as it comes into being, no amount of will can undo its being. It can now only be *known*. Thus will is repelled by the actualized content, which constitutes a limitation or negation of it. In the very act of willing the content, consciousness ceases to be will. Hence, here the spiritual demand is to realize a content-less will, willing nothing. Pure will is the Absolute in which all dualism of act of willing and the content willed is done away with. No empirical will is pure, but is ever overpowered by knowledge, making its content independent of consciousness. This is the defilement of will, the work of *avidyā*. What is really *willed* is taken to be *known*.

Forms are created in Consciousness because of the mistaken notion of there being a real object before it. Objectification is the function of this primary illusion. Consciousness is never objectified of its own accord. When the illusory form of objectivity falls away from it, its subject-function too lapses (*grāhyābhāve tad agrahāt*). The subject acquires all its significance because of its relation to the object, without the latter it ceases to be the subject even. Externality and otherness, albeit

only a mistaken one, is necessary in order to sustain the internal diversity of the Consciousness. The will Consciousness as Absolute is untainted by the subject object duality. The object is so identical with Consciousness that it cannot be distinguished from the latter even as its form. The forms of Consciousness are there merely because of the illusory reflection of the object that is not. With the sublation of the latter, the forms are so merged in Consciousness as not to be distinguishable even as its forms. When the 'blue' is sublated, even the Consciousness of 'blue' lapses. Subjective forms are sustained by the fact of their being projected. Ceasing to be projected they cease to be. There is nothing to stand against Consciousness, so that Consciousness cannot serve as the subject even; *citta* becomes *acitta*.

B. Consciousness as creative is accepted in many other schools of thought too. The Sautrāntika, Advaita Vedānta and Kant, all maintain that there is a large measure of subjectivity entering into empirical experience. There is something given, and there is also something constructed which is imposed on that given. In all these schools subjectivity is not the sole factor constituting empirical experience, and they can only be described as different versions of 'critical realism'. For the Sautrāntika the ultimate particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are directly perceived, but that is not the cognition of empirical objects which must carry a huge epistemic load (*pratyakṣaprṣṭhabhāvivikalpa*). In Kant too, the bare given, as obtained through pure sensibility, remain 'blind' unless they are refracted through the various forms of understanding. This emphasis on the irreducibility of the given prevents these systems from being absolutistic. Absolutism culminates in a non-dual experience, while for the Sautrāntika and Kant the basic epistemological dualism is not sought to be transcended. Kant indeed gives a tantalizing glimpse of the beyond, by hinting at the possibility of the objective thing in itself and the 'I' standing behind the 'transcendental unity of apperception' being essentially identical, but the hint remains only an idle conjecture which is severely precluded by the exigencies of his rigorous dualistic system. Advaita Vedānta too starts an analysis of experience which apparently is very much like that of the critical realist. Thisness' (*sanmātra*) is immediately given in all experience (*savapratyayavedya*) but, overlaid with subjective constructions as it is, it is not known in terms of empirical experience (*avedya*). This apparent dualism here is not, however, insurmountable. Subjectivity is not another coordinate order of reality, but it is only falsification of the given, and is sublated by correct apprehension (*jñānanivartya*). Advaita Vedānta culminates, therefore, in an absolute non-dual experience in which knowing is entirely merged in being, an experience that is not accessible to the other critical realists. But Advaitic Absolute is not, however, the Will Absolute.

C. The theme of creativity of consciousness is pursued by some subsequent

schools of thought. The language school, led by Bhartṛhari, discovers several strata of language, from the grossest to the noumenal. The quintessence of language, standing far beyond its external manifestations, is equated with pure consciousness and is termed *parā vāk* (*śabdabrahman*), alternatively also called *nādabrahman* in the theory of music. Bhartṛhari apparently did not recognize the distinction between *parā* and *paśyantī*. This distinction was introduced later, perhaps by Somānanda, though Kaiyaṭa and Nāgeśa, referring to the Vedic passage '*catvāri śṛṅgā* etc., think that it implies *parā*. Be that as it may, four stages in the evolution of language are traditionally standardized, viz. *parā*, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*. *Parā* is language in its absolute sense. It is creative consciousness, essentially containing the entire universe, constituted by words and their referents, all existing in its womb in an indissoluble unity. Words and meanings all emerge out of it, but are as yet absolutely undifferentiated. With the first stirring of its creative impulse, the very faintest differentiation between word and its object takes place, but both are still in a pure undifferentiated state. As to how this faint flutter in pure undifferentiated consciousness comes about remains inexplicable, in the absence of a fully worked-out theory of *avidyā*. There is just the impulse to create, and the process of evolution gets started. The undifferentiated pure objectivity in the *paśyantī* stage is comparable to bare objectivity (*aparicchinnākāra bhājana*) confronting *ālayavijñāna* in Vijñānavāda. It is mere 'otherness' not differentiated into determinate objects. The first moment of creativity of *parā vāk* is similarly only a faint ripple in consciousness, leading to further determination, but yet not determinate. At *madhyamā* stage the distinction between words and meanings has become explicit, but language is not articulated into phonemes and morphemes, which is completed in the grossest stage of language, viz. *vaikharī*. The close parallelism between the stages of evolution of *parā vāk* and that of *vijñaptimātratā* in Vijñānavāda is remarkable indeed.

D. Subjective creativity is also a recurrent theme in the various Tāntric systems. The ultimate reality is non-dual consciousness (*parā saṁvit*). But two important modifications are made. First Will, the matrix of all creation, is personalized. And secondly, the will to create is a self-conscious desire on the part of the Absolute, for whatever esoteric reasons. This desire for self-differentiation is an innate power (*śakti*) of *parā saṁvit*, because of which an imaginary 'otherness' is created and projected leading to grosser and grosser stages in the evolution of consciousness. The world of duality exists only in imagination (*ābhāsa*) of *parā saṁvit*, and as such is real. Everything exists only in consciousness, but is projected and externalized as things objectively given. This aspect of *parā saṁvit* is known as *Śṛṅgikālī*. As *Raktakālī*, it then assumes the role of the knower, there being objects to be known. But it can, at will, take everything back and dissolve them into itself. It is

then called *Rudrakālī* or *Bhadrakālī* and it rests in itself as pure consciousness. It assumes many other forms, but they are more or less of scholastic interest only. Here one might find an echo of *Vijñānavāda*, but whether the latter directly inspired the later Tāntric systems is a moot question. The Tāntric lineage, it might be mentioned incidentally, re-emerges powerfully in the speculative constructions of Sri Aurobindo.

E. In different versions of Vaisnavism too, one comes across *pariṇāmavāda* (*Brahmapariṇāma*), as against *adhyāsavāda* of Śaṅkara. In the latter system we find, as already seen, the knowledge approach to the Absolute, so that the Vaiṣṇava theories of creation might appear to endorse the Will-standpoint. But the ultimate reality does not undergo transformation in its entirety. Even when one talks of *Brahmapariṇāma*, the creative aspect of *Brahman* is confined only to a part, or a specific power, or one of the aspects of the multifaceted Absolute (*vṛkṣa iti ekatvam, śākhā iti nānātvam*). So creative consciousness represents in these systems only a partial or fragmentary activity of willing, and does not lead to the notion of the Absolute as pure Will or pure Act.

III. Feeling

The feeling attitude of the subject towards its object is one of non-determination by either of the other. No term in this duality dominated over the other, and the two are finely balanced in their reciprocity. The feeling attitude may be generated between the subject and an inanimate object, like a work of art. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever but the question whether that beauty is intrinsic to the thing itself, or it lies merely in the eyes of the beholder, is a fruitless one, since the subject and the object enter into aesthetic experience in all mutuality. Consequently, aesthetic enjoyment culminates in a non-dual experience, in which the two terms cannot be isolated. It does not lead to Absolutism however, being only a transitory reflection of the Absolute (*Brahmānandasahodara*). It is enjoyed for while it lasts, and is then lost.

Feeling par excellence emerges only in an interpersonal relationship, and its most exquisite form appears in loving and being loved, ideally realized in the persons of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The Supreme Reality (*paramabrahman*) is the ground of everything. Being Supreme It has an infinite number of powers, and each of which is Infinite in itself. The principal powers (*śaktis*) are *svarūpaśakti*, *māyāśakti* and *jīvaśakti*. With the help of *māyāśakti* the Lord creates the material world, while with that of *jīvaśakti*, He appears in the form of finite or atomic selves, which are self-forgetful of their ground, their real nature being shrouded by *yogamāyā*. These two *śaktis* are, however, *bahiraṅga*, not constituting the Lord's substance or essence.

Divine essence is His *svarūpaśakti*, which is identical with His real nature. It is, therefore, described as *antaraṅgaśakti*. *Paramabrahman* is of the nature of *sat* (Being), *cit* (Consciousness) and *ānanda* (Bliss), which are non-different from His essential reality. His *svarūpaśakti*, therefore, appears in three aspects, viz. *sandhinī*, *saṁvit* and *hlādinī*. Hitherto philosophers have been laying stress on the first two, while the Bliss aspect of the Divine is underplayed and appears in a relatively low profile, the *madhurāṣṭka* notwithstanding.

The devotee can approach his object of adoration in two different ways. The Lord may appear to him in His aspect of majesty and grandeur (*aiśvarya*), evoking awe and reverence, but only from a distance. The other attitude is to relish His *mādhurya*, when God appears as the source of infinite delight. Kṛṣṇa etymologically means 'one who attracts', i.e., the supreme attractor. *Sat* and *cit* refer to His *aiśvarya* aspect, while *ānanda*, to His *mādhurya*. (It may be mentioned parenthetically that different languages are appropriate to these two aspects of the Divine. In order to express Divine grandeur, we require the use of classical and archaic languages with sonorous periods, and it is not necessary to grasp their meaning completely, so that a respectful distance is maintained between the worshipper and the worshipped. For relishing His *mādhurya*, however, our everyday language suffices to express the little nothings of love).

The Lord's capacity to evoke love and delight is His *hlādinīśakti*, personified as Rādhā. *Ānanda* is His essence, and Rādhā is inseparably and eternally associated with that *ānanda*. Love may take different forms that are not all of the same degree of intensity. We have *dāsya* (loving God as His servant), *sakhya* (loving Him as a playmate) and *vātsalya* (having parental affection for the Lord appearing as an adorable child, but full of mischief nevertheless). But love is developed in its fullest degree only in *kāntābhāva*, which Rādhā has, who loves God as her eternal and inseparable beloved. There is no room for carnal pleasure (*kāma*) here, as that implies subjugation and exploitation. Real love is born as *rati*, and develops through different stages of preman, sneha, etc., till it reaches the ultimate perfection, called *mahābhāva*. The highest peak of *mahābhāva* is called *mādana* (maddening delight) which Rādhā alone has. It must be remembered that Kṛṣṇa is only the object of Rādhā's love, but not a subject. Rādhā alone relishes His sweetness to the fullest extent, and in Her alone does love find its most perfect expression. Kṛṣṇa's desire for relishing His own sweetness remains unfulfilled. This is said to be made good in Caitanya who is a two-faceted incarnation of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In Caitanya's personality, subject and object are combined, but the subjective aspect predominates.

Rādhā, as already seen, is the *svarūpaśakti* of the Lord, being His very essence.

Being superior to *māyāśakti* and *jīvaśakti*, which depend on it, *svarūpaśakti* is called *parāśakti*. How could this relation between God and His *śakti* be conceptually grasped? The latter is inseparably and eternally associated with Him, and is essentially one with Him. and yet a difference is imported between the subject as Rādhā and the object as Kṛṣṇa. Jīva Goswāmi, the systematic philosopher in the family if we exclude Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja who wrote, however, his *magnum opus* in Bengali offers arguments to prove that both difference and identity are conceptually unintelligible (*acintya*), so far as this transcendental relationship is concerned. Loving is a two-termed relation; there must be the one who does the loving, and there is the one who is loved. One cannot love himself; even in the case of Narcissistic self-love, what is loved must be projected as a pseudo-object, viz. his own reflection. A dualism is necessary to sustain the love-relation. But in the intensity of loving, all difference seems to be obliterated. Kṛṣṇa realizes His *svarūpa* as a spiritual unity in duality of God and His *śakti*, each as other of the other, and yet non-different from the other. *Hlādinī* is a force of inwardization by which not only is the whole apprehended in its integrality as individual unity, and also the whole itself is apprehended in the essential aspect of its being. One has to intuit the two as one, and one as two, and in a true spiritual unity, rigid distinctions and external relations have to be resolved into internal spiritual relations. God's essence or *svarūpa* appears in its intrinsic character as a spiritual unity that integrates and also transcends differences. Oneness and manyness are logical contradictories, and both are unmeaning in the spiritual context which, Janus-like, must make room for analogical healing (*bhinnābhinnatvādivikalpaiścintayitum aśakyah*). Here the loving subject and the object loved are incomprehensibly balanced, and one is not more important than the other. Duality is as it were precariously perched on what is its essential identity. Here feeling as an epistemological attitude reaches its Absoluteness, to be ranked along with the knowing and will Absolutes.

IV. Deconstruction

We have thus three alternative forms of Absolutism, taking our cue from the three different attitudes that the subject might take towards its object in the context of the basic epistemological relation. The question inevitable suggests itself as to whether we could have a unified theory of Absolutism in which its different forms could be situated. The very first thing that strikes us is regarding the point of view from which these forms are visualized and differentiated. We seem to be at a vantage-point from which all forms of Absolutism appear at the same level. This vantage-ground could not be one of knowing etc., since the three subjective attitudes are mutually exclusive. This awareness is a reflection on the theories of the Absolute, and

is therefore, possible only in a higher order Consciousness. If it is a critical insight into how theories are constructed, it must be at a distance from the latter, as it takes up the theories themselves as objects of investigation.

Theory construction will bear a closer scrutiny. Theories might be taken as deductive structures. The starting-point would be the postulation of a set of axioms, basic terms would be strictly defined and certain rules of inference would be laid down. Then the rest of the system would appear as a series of deductions. This accounts for the existence of alternative systems, which would just be differently postulated. A metaphysician would not be, however, satisfied with such a depiction of his work. A metaphysical system lays claim to truth, and truth (if syntactical truth be excluded) cannot accept incompatible formulations. When two theories contradict each other, then one can either appeal to reason, or take the whole issue before the bar of experience. Now reason is neutral with regard to the conflicting systems. Self-consistency is the only criterion of validity, and so long as the rules of inference have been correctly employed, we would have a valid structure, however unpalatable it might be to the opposite camp. One may seek to refute the opponent by convicting him of self-inconsistency, but the latter might well turn round, and do the same to the former. Thus the whole enterprise would appear to be a non sequitur. Mere logic does not decide between alternative, but mutually incompatible, deductive structures. Each is viable so long as it is internally coherent.

The metaphysician might appeal to experience as the final arbiter of theories. It is experience that decides whether a particular system is acceptable. If something is stated that runs counter to our experience, it is to be rejected outright. As **Bhāmatī** puts it, not even hundred *śrutis* could make a pitcher a cloth. Along with reasoning, experience has been a weapon that the metaphysician wields in justification of his statements. Knowledge standpoint, for example, is not all deduction and argumentation. Adopting the approach through the knowing function of the subject, one arrives at the notion of 'isness' (*sattā* or *idantā*) that is the ground of the world appearance. But this notion of Being is not merely an idle speculation, but is literally experiential (*anubhavāvasānatvāt brahmajñānasya*). Being is immediately intuited when illusion is dispelled, and this intuition is the subject matter of Upanisadic revelation (*taṁ tu aupaniṣadam puruṣam prcchāmi*).

The difficulty is that, by adopting will point-of-view, one arrives at a radically different formulation of the ultimate reality as creative consciousness, of which objective being is a falsification. By undergoing certain yogic practices (*yoga-ācāra*), reality is immediately intuited as Pure Will or Pure Act, after passing through several *bhūmis* and acquiring different *pāramitās* (*jñānaṁ lokottaraṁ ca yat*). So it seems

that immediate experience also fails as the clincher, but this might be an overstatement. The conjecture might be hazarded that intuitive non-dual experience does not by itself favour any particular theory. Different theories arise when that experience, which has no content of its own, is sought to be articulated according to different metaphysical biases. Experience as theory-laden leads to the differences.

The fault, therefore, lies neither in logic nor in experience, but in the conceptual apparatus that produces theories. Seen in this way the theories themselves operate as coloured glasses, distorting out vision of reality. Reality would thus be seen as transcending all theory-construction (*tattvamācchādya bālānām atattvam khyāti sarvataḥ*), as escaping all speculative approaches (*draṣṭavyaṁ bhūtato bhūtaṁ bhūtadarśi vimucyate*). It is not to be approached from the knowledge standpoint, or from the will standpoint, or from any standpoint whatsoever. The Absolute is not to be identified with pure Being, or again with pure Will or anything to which reason can put a tag on (*buddheragocaram tattvaṁ buddhiḥ sarivṛtir ucyate*). Constructive systems end paradoxically in denying their own initial standpoints. The knowing subject is finally to lose itself, and ceases to be knowing even, when the distance between knowing and being is annulled. The willing subject so absorbs its creations into itself that it ceases to be willing, in as much as it wills nothing. So it is not very logical to burden them with identification marks which they are going to shed any way.

These identification marks come from taking eases of empirical illusion as paradigm cases for explicating the structure of world-appearance. The knowledge point-of-view takes rope-snake illusion as its model where the 'rope' is indifferent to its being known as the 'snake'. The will standpoint finds in dream-experience a more convenient model where subjective creativity reigns supreme, and dream-contents are nothing apart from their being projected. Both the approaches, however, take something in the context of illusion as non-illusory, i.e., the ground that makes illusion possible, whether it is objective 'rope' or the subjective dreaming act. Some factor in the context of illusion is indicative of the nature of ultimate reality. The objectivity of the 'rope' exemplifies the objectivity of Being as such, while dream experience gives a hint with regard to the creativity of Willing consciousness.

But if the illusory is to be rejected totally, when nothing in that context deserves to be salvaged for serving as an identification tag to reality. Everything in the context of illusion is equally illusory (*sarvaśūnyatā*). This point of view sometimes appears in Advaita Vedānta too. The **Saṅkṣepaśārīraka** has a verse stating that only the illusory appears in illusion, and nothing else (*adhyastameva parisphurati bhrameṣu, nānyat kiñcit parisphurati bhrameṣu*), but that is obviously an

overstatement. The orthodox position is that *Brahman* is the ultimate ground of all appearance, albeit as obscured and distorted.

If knowing, willing etc., are all to be discarded in an ultimate non-dual experience (*aparokṣānubhūti* or *lokottara jñāna*), we need not have taken them as our starting point. They simply reveal our metaphysical predilections, leading to alternative construction (*dr̥ṣṭi*). These constructions cloud our vision producing fragmented, and to some extent, imaginary picture that hide the totality of philosophic insight. When all approaches are discarded, that itself is the Absolute as philosophic self-awareness (*prajñāpāramitā jñānamadvayam*). This is also an Absolute non-dual experience, immediately intuited, but which does not carry the spurious identification labels, (*Yadā na bhāvaḥ nābhābaḥ mateḥ santiṣṭhate puraḥ, tadānyagatyabhāvena nirālambā prasāmyati*).

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