THE ABSENT ENTITY IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

THE KNOWLEDGE
OF
THE ABSENT ENTITY IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: What doesn't exist, be it knowledge, the deceased, or an object, is of concern to us. By tracing the position of non-existent things through some of the Śaṅkarite literature, the explanation of their occurrence and acknowledgement is uncovered. Non-existent things in general are seen to be absent. Under this analysis of absence all non-existent things may be subsumed by the character of being-away. Advaita Vedānta explains that absent objects are known by a unique means of knowledge. They are attended to as positive entities by non-apprehension. Ignorance and the solution to problems are known by other means even though they have an equally absent character.

Nāsato vidyate bhāvo
nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ /

Of the non-existent no being is there;
there is no absence of the existent.

-- Bhagavad-Gītā, 2.16

PREFACE

One problem in limiting this thesis is that most things both are and are not. We could discuss almost everything. However, I will attempt to discuss what Advaita Vedānta deems significant about the occurrence and cognition of absence. Thus we are dealing with three principal things: non-existence and absence, how they are encountered and known, and the place of both these things in the Śaṅkarite tradition.

To some extent we are discussing the basis of the mysterious and the meaningless with the ineffable as their ground. Absence is that which at first appalls us. Through the analysis of the occurrence of absence, Advaita shows that it is of several types. Those things which may be or are absent cause pain through our attachment to them. One doesn't desire without having the absence of the desire's fulfilment. Desire as well as expectation thus presupposes absence, for absence is an irreducible element of our experience. Closer analysis reveals that the occasion for the knowledge of absence depends on the continuity of the existence of what is able to know absence.

This thesis will attempt to cope with a problem

essential in our existence which appears frequently but is dealt with rarely. Hopefully thinking about some of the aspects of non-being and non-existence will become easier. By considering the way in which Advaita deals with these things, we may form a basis for comparison with other accounts, while aiding in the understanding of Brahman approached by means of negation (neti-neti).

Five principal texts form the basis of our study: the Bhagavad-Gītā, Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, all with Śaṅkara's commentary, the Vivaraṇaprameyasaṅgraha, a commentary four times removed from Śaṅkara's Bhashya on the Vedānta Sūtras, and the Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, a much later book in the Śaṅkarite tradition. Unfortunately I didn't have access to any other of Śaṅkara's complete commentaries on the Upaniṣads with the exception of the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad. I would have liked to consult the Pañcapādikā-vivaraṇa, Citsukhi, and Advaita-siddhi, but unfortunately they were either unavailable or in Sanskrit too difficult for me.

In his comments on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.2.1, Śaṅkara discusses the four types of absence, but he never mentions anupalabdhi (non-apprehension) in any of his works. In the Vivaraṇaprameyasaṅgraha, anupalabdhi is still tentative and arbitrary as a standard means of knowledge, but is a definite one in the Vedānta-

Paribhāsā. I presume from the introductory passages of the Vedānta-Paribhāsā that there was a strong Navya-Nyāya influence at the time of its writing. Often the idea of anupalabdhi has seemed to me to have arisen from argumentative necessity. Śaṅkara gives full consideration to the phenomenon of absence and non-existence. The way in which it was known, however, seemed to be of secondary importance to him.

Other texts which offered great help as secondary sources were Datta's The Six Ways of Knowing and Sinha's Indian Psychology: Cognition, both of which relied heavily on the Vedānta-Paribhāsā. For other texts, of course, there is the Bibliography. There I have not included many of the Western texts and articles which continually posed and reopened the questions of this essay. With a range from Hamlet's soliloquy ("to be or not to be"), to Sartre's Being and Nothingness, to the article and its bibliography in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy called "Negation", to attempt to be complete would be futile.

Indeed it was these sources which first brought the significance and difficulties of the question of absence to me. It seemed that most of the more meaningful questions are not even asked if what does not exist at the moment doesn't confront us. It also appeared

to me that maintaining the unimportance of being (in part due to the rejection of non-being in ordinary existence) was part of that which was swallowing up our awareness of non-being, which I believed brought us to question. With these thoughts in mind, the long tradition of discussing absence and negation in Vedānta intrigued me. But the approach, contents and consideration of this problem were in most respects so far removed from the modern Western ideas that I haven't tried to forge a resolution or comparison with them from the Vedānta.

I would like to thank those people who opened these sources to me and me to them, my teachers. If it had not been for their example of thoughtful inquiry taken to heart and their indulgence and encouragement of me, I might never have pursued a thought. Dr. Arapura has been of particular importance for this project as he guided and counselled me through it. Another of these teachers, who spent long and plentiful hours working with me, all the while enduring my exacerbations, was my wife, Rebecca.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Wherever "Ś.B." appears next to an abbreviation it means that Śaṅkara's commentary on that work is being referred to.

B.G.	Bhagavad-Gītā
Bri.U.	Brhadāranyaka Upanisad
Ch.U.	Chāndogya Upanisad
Tait.U.	Taittirīya Upanisad
V.P.	Vedānta-Paribhāsā
V.P.S.	Vivaranaprameyasaṅgraha
V.S.	Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana

INTRODUCTION

1. Absence

By understanding the Advaita Vedāntists' analysis of the particular phenomenon of absence and their relationship to it, I hope to discover one way of coming to grips with absence. If what we can think about are those things that we perceive, and those things that we perceive are forms, colors, sounds, etc. (i.e., the things which our senses contact), then how is it that we find things to be lost, missing or non-existent? Part of our fear and dislike of death is that we will cease to be. How do we know this or come to believe it, and what support is there for such a belief?

Continually, I discover the elusiveness of the problem in the difficulty of thinking about absent phenomena. This elusiveness is enhanced by what seems to be the loss of the fundamental problem in the dialectics of later Advaita.[1] When the problem becomes manageable, it appears pointless. The separate discussion of mood from

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[1] In part this was due to the increasing complexity of Navya-Nyāya and the Vedāntist need to respond to it. See Chapter I, Section 3, pp. 10-13 and Chapter V, Section 8, pp. 79-80.

the discussion of the means or process of knowing absence accounts for this to some extent. The access route is also important. Besides the division of phenomena just mentioned, Advaita separates ignorance from space, time, god and dharma, and these four latter things from its consideration of absence. As the Bhagavad-Gītā shows, these problems are quite intertwined. It remains questionable whether accounting for them separately merely loses the problem in a diaspora.

What we are determined to talk about here is the absent entity. To do so we will continually have to introduce and pass from nothingness. But the term 'absence' will show itself to be more and more revelatory as we proceed. That which may conceivably appear but never does is absent. That which may occur but is not here presents us with an absence. The latter of these two sources of absence is away from us. Existing with what is away from us is to be alone. This loneliness is peculiar, however, because to be aware of itself it must be able to call to itself that which it is separate from. This knowledge of separation is the mediate character of knowledge. It exists apart from those experiences which bring us into conjunction with things away from us and wherein the experience of immediacy is manifest. We will discuss this more in Chapter Five. To be away is the condition of both the absent entity and of ourselves with regard to each other. That which is away from us may be on its way from

or to us, or it may be that which is lost. To be lost in this case is to be thoroughly impressed with non-existence. This latter occurs most thoroughly by forgetting the fact of existence, and this means the loss of memory in the fullest possible sense. That which is lost may be discovered by wanting it or in having thrown it away. Concretely we discover this in the desire to be rid of ignorance.

In all of these cases it is possible to consider ourselves as being the absent entity. This can occur both as the discovery of a present condition and as a possibility in the future. The necessity of discovering oneself to be in such straits is dictated by the occurrence of absence and our ability to know of it. Man is a being who is on his way. Because he is on his way, he is always away from that which he encounters. Even at the moment of the encounter he knows he is on his way, and thus the possibility of absence may infuse this momentary presence. That which he encounters is thus always away from him and his world becomes characterized by absence. From the position of those things which are absent, and of which he is wont to assume the position, it is he who is absent and they who are present. Because they are always acknowledged in his path, they are those things which reside upon and by the way. But because one is always in movement, it is always possible, upon

reflecting, to become lost. It is as that which is lost or absent from what is present that man experiences himself as absent. This is not mere wayfaring, which occurs in the midst of a journey, but it is being in such separation from one's path that it is no longer visible.

2. Method

What we are concerned with is the consideration given these particular types of phenomena, which are in themselves very strange, by a particular group of people. We must seek to find out their relationship with the phenomena in question. I will consider the ways in which absence appears and is approached prior to the actual encounter. This will be divulged by the notion and analysis of the entity itself. Finally the Advaitin conception of what happens during our acknowledgement of absence will be considered. The tradition states that in any instance of knowledge there is a knower, the thing known, and the cognition. We will take the initial cognition, "I am confronted by absence", and examine it in this way.

There are two types of contexts in which absence is discussed. One, which occurs in Bri.U., 1.2.1, Ch.U., 6.2.1, and Tait.U., 2.7, is the possibility of the cosmos arising from nothingness. Implicitly this involves the possibility of death being total absence, which means that our existence is surrounded by (covered with) nothing-

ness. "In the beginning nothing whatsoever was here. This (world) was covered over with death, with hunger -- for hunger is death."[2] The Vedānta-Paribhāṣā classifies this as a text which sets forth absolute reality. Its validity occurs in teaching the identity of the individual self with Brahman.[3] The validity of all means of knowledge, it says, except for Agama (verbal testimony) only obtains in conventional reality. We find the employment of both types of reality even in Śaṅkara's commentaries on these passages.[4]

The other context of absence is the Bhagavad-Gītā in which Arjuna, perplexed by contemplating the future battle, discovers that he is lost. He perceives immanent chaos by the annihilation of those in battle. In the attempt to gain what is absent through the destruction of others, he finds that his existence is futile.

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[2] Bri.U., v. 1.2.1, in R. E. Hume, trans. and ed., The Thirteen Principal Upanishads (2nd ed., revised; Madras: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 74.

[3] Adhvarīndra, Dharmarāja, Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. Swāmī Mādhavānanda (Belur Math, Dt. Howrah: Swami Vimuktananda, 1963), p. 150.

[4] Compare Ch.U., Ś.B., v. 6.2.1, in Mitra and Cowell, trans., The Twelve Principal Upanishads, III (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1932), pp. 191-193, with Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 1.2.1, in Swāmī Mādhavānanda, trans., The Brhadāranyaka Upanisad with the Commentary of Śankarācārya (Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas: Advaita Ashrama, 1950), pp. 20-25. See also Chapter IV, Section 4, p. 43 herein.

> Alas! we have resolved to commit a great sin, inasmuch as we are endeavouring to slay our kinsmen out of a craving for the pleasures of dominion.
>
> It would be better for me, if the sons of Dhṛtarāshṭra, with arms in hand, should slay me unarmed and unresisting in the battle.[5]

While acknowledging the contradiction of all possibilities, he took leave of choice and questioned.

> My heart contaminated by the taint of helplessness, my mind confounded about Dharma, I ask Thee: Tell me what is absolutely good. I am Thy pupil. Instruct me, who have sought Thy grace.[6]

In the possibility of his own annihilation, besieged by the negation of all that constitutes his world, he replies by a refusal to concur with destruction: "'I will not fight'".[7]

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[5] Śāstri, A. Mahādeva, trans., The Bhagavad-Gītā with the Commentary of Śrī Śankarachārya (5th ed., Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, 1961), vv. 1.45-46, p. 17.

[6] Ibid., v. 2.7, p. 21.

[7] Ibid., v. 2.9, p. 22.

I

VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF ABSENCE

1. Purview

There have been many Indian viewpoints on the significance of absence and the nature of our encounter with it. In the Navya-Nyāya school, absence was developed into a highly technical means of argumentation by treating it as a distinct reality. In the Sāṁkhya and Prabhākara Mīmāṁsā schools it was of little importance. Buddhism has treated it extensively, so much so that to include a summary of it would be misleading at best. Nonetheless Śaṅkara argues vehemently against the Buddhist position, and his conception must be understood to have taken their views into account. This study is restricted to the Advaita Vedānta account of absence. The comparison which follows is solely for the purpose of a summary differentiation in the hope that other possibilities for the consideration of this subject may be imagined and thus delimit Śaṅkara's viewpoint.

2. Absence as Merely an Empty Location

For the Sāṁkhyas and Prabhākara Mīmāṁsās non-existence is nothing but the bare location of the absence or the locus per se. Similarly, the non-existence of

one thing in another or the fact that one thing is not another means the mere existence of that which is present. The problem of doing or becoming one thing as opposed to another ceases to be of concern after the decision, for the fact of one's non-existence as another is incomprehensible. Prabhākara claims that direct apprehension involves the cognition of three factors: the object, the subject which is apprehending the object, and the act of apprehension. For example, "I see my kinsmen" is a direct apprehension. There is no object of cognition in the case of absence and hence no direct knowledge.[8]

To say that one only knows of the bare ground and not of the absence of kinsmen in the same direct way as the ground sneaks by the facts. For in explaining this ground, which one sees completely barren of kinsmen, one has to say that it is ground and also is bare which is to say there is a non-existence of kinsmen on it. Even if the ground were covered with tribes one would still notice the absence of kinsmen. Explaining in any way about the cognition of something which is missing in terms of the simple presence of this or that is impossible.

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[8]Prasad, Jwala, History of Indian Epistemology (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1958), p. 282-287.

3. Perceived Absence, a Distinct Reality

Nyāya accordingly treats absence as something other than the things which are present. Absence is the same order of reality as the location in which it occurs and is separable from where it appears. However, it is only known through the location, i.e., by perceiving the location, and through it, the absence which is attached to it and qualifies it. Hence, absence must be known through the relation of the location to the absence. It is known by the same instrument, therefore, as the location, namely perception.

For Nyāya, the knowledge of man is not eternal. It is the product of causes and operations which may be analyzed. The non-existent thing must be of the same order of reality as the location in which it is perceived or else the perception of it could not be implied by the perception of its location. The sense which perceives the location comes into a relation with non-existence, which characterizes the location, through the sense's relation to the location. Thus, in perceiving the absence of kinsmen on the field, we perceive first the field and then the absence. To perceive the absence we must be able to perceive the relation of the absent kinsmen to the field (samavāya) through the indirect relation of our senses with absence (viśesanatā). This changed

somewhat in the Navya-Nyāya. We thus perceive the field as qualified by absence, and not simply the fact of a field and an absence.

The already apparent complexity of this analysis of absence is increased in the later schools of logicians. But what must be kept in mind is the difficulty in treating the concept and yet the fact that it was undertaken in contra-distinction to the Prabhākara and Sāṁkhya schools. The main problem for Nyāya was in its concept of relation (sambandha) which was also considered to be a distinct reality. Śaṅkara attacked this concept in his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras 2.2.17. To posit the relation of a quality to its location as a separate entity, he says, involves one in an infinite regress of relations relating relations.

Navya-Nyāya attempted to escape from this problem in several ways. All things are known as related to other things and any entity can be analyzed as being in relationship to something else.[9] ". . . anything in this world of individuals may be taken as related to anything (same or different), no matter how involved,

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[9]The sentence "X is the father of Y" is analyzed in terms of the relation of fatherhood, where it occurs and what is the condition by which it occurs, as follows: The relation (of fatherhood) resident in X (or having X as its subjunct (anuyogin)) and conditioned by Y (or having Y as its adjunct (prativogin)). cf. Matilal, B. K., The Navya-Nyāya Doctine of Negation (Cambridge, 1968), p. 33.

indirect, or strange the relation may turn out to be."[10] Navya-Nyāya then explained that one such relation is the svarupa (essential) relation, and this is characterized by not being different from its relata. There are three kinds of svarupa relations, one of which is peculiar to an absence, i.e., abhāvīya viśesanatā.[11]

Thus Navya-Nyāya maintained that absence was a separate entity and was known perceptually, but in its division of realities was forced into a logical gymnastics to explain the fact that things appear related. The problem of oneself being that which is lost and may become absent is peculiarly preserved in the idea of absence as a separate entity with a special relation. But the problem lay in relating that which was not to that which was. Datta explains this problem in terms of the propositional logic which later Nyāya was concerned with. It asserted that all propositions showed the relation of subject to predicate. This can be seen in its more refined analysis of propositions. The Vedāntist was concerned to analyze experience and always considered judgements in the context of the experience to which they referred. Thus some statements may merely correct errors or illusions, e.g., "this rope is not

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[10] Matilal, p. 31.

[11] Ibid., p. 41.

a snake". It would contradict the intent of the statement to analyze it as meaning "this rope has an absence of snake".

The post-Śaṅkarite account of absence developed primarily in opposition to the Nyāya account. Whereas absence was (or could be) eternal for Nyāya, it was not for Advaita. The knowledge of absence for Advaita, although it was called perceptual knowledge, was known by means of anupalabdhi. For Nyāya it was known by perception.

4. Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṁsā and Advaita Vedānta

The Pūrva Mīmāṁsā of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Vedānta picked up the problem of the relation of absence and presence, and in so doing attempted to resolve the misery of absence. They disagreed with Nyāya with regard to the reality of relations and non-existence, as well as in the means of knowing non-existence. There is no way by which we can treat negative facts as positive facts, nor through the perception of positive facts establish negative facts. It cannot be understood how non-existence can be related either with its locus or with sense. Therefore the only relationship must occur in knowledge itself, and the knowledge of an absent entity must occur by a peculiar means of knowledge other than the senses. This is the foundation of non-apprehension (anupalabdhi), the cause of the knowledge of absence. Advaita Vedānta agrees with the

Bhaṭṭa school about the means of knowledge in most respects.[12] An absence has no independent existence from its location and must be of something in particular. "Non-apprehension is a means of knowledge (mānam) with reference to the object negated."[13] But all presences, it must be remembered, occur in some location and must be particular. Absence and presence occur under the same circumstances, although it is the absence which demonstrates the unreality of phenomena. This is important and difficult to understand, particularly with the peculiar sense of immediacy which an absence can have. Śaṅkara is aware of this problem for he says, "Brahman . . . seems to the slow of mind no more than non-being."[14]

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[12] In fact, Advaita Vedānta is indebted in most respects to the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā for its development of the fourfold division of absence and the unique means of knowing it (anupalabdhi). Indeed it is said that it is a principle that "'In empirical usage the path of the Bhaṭṭa (is followed)'". -- Bharatitirtha, The Vivaraṇa-prameyasaṅgraha, trans. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri and Saileswar Sen (Kumbakonam: Sri Vidya Press, 1941), p. 470.

[13] Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), II, 394.

[14] Ibid., II, 538; quoted from Ch.U., Ś.B., v. 8.1.1.

II

THE POSITION OF ABSENCE IN THE APPROACH TO ITS UNDERSTANDING

1. Purview

In asking after a phenomenon and how the encounter with it is to be accounted for, we must attempt to delineate the approach to it. In this way at least, we can discover what was the background of the experience of the encounter. In our case, we ask what the condition and access route was of those who are giving the account. Our problem and theirs is to give an account of the phenomenon of absence. We want to know the nature of our knowledge and of what it is.

2. The Student

Knowledge and the desire for it is the central focus of the student desiring release. Considering the means of knowledge and that which is to be known was undertaken during the course of study (śravana), deep meditation (nididhyāsana) or deliberation (manana), for it is by these that knowledge occurs.[15] Thus the

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[15] Sastri, Ananta Krishna, ed., Brahmasutra-Sankara-Bhashyam, Part III of Calcutta Sanscrit Series No. 1. (Calcutta: The Metropolitan Printing and Publishing House, Ltd., 1941), p. 10.

understanding of types of knowledge and their appropriate objects must occur in the requisite conditions for being a student.

There are four necessary conditions for knowledge to obtain, and they are characterized by a resolute openness to whatever may be the case. Although these conditions were held in most of the traditional systems, the Visistādvaita of Rāmānuja did not think these were necessary. The first is to be able to distinguish between what is true and false or what is the same, eternal and non-eternal. The second condition is indifference or lack of concern for everything that may be obtained through certain means either on earth or in heaven. The perception of absence then will not occur under the aegis of the desire for that which could be present but is not. If it occurs, it will not occur as an imposition on existence any more than the perception of present objects. The externality of both present objects and absent objects must thus be of the same order of reality. The third condition is to be in control of oneself, unrestricted by concern for self-enhancement. Here there are many qualities which could be discussed, all of which are for the sake of absolute resolve to be open only to what is true, no matter how long or futile the effort may seem. Sometimes these are enumerated as the six noble qualities. it is said that the internal aspect of them, that is, one's comportment towards knowledge, is the most important

as opposed to their external manifestation. The first is tranquility or equanimity in the face of the world (sāma) -- control of the mind. Dama is self-control over the senses. Titikshā is fortitude or endurance in the face of adversity. Uparati is the cessation of all manipulative actions.[16] Sometimes called renunciation, it is distinct from this, according to the Vedānta-Paribhāsā, because it means essentially the absence of distractions.[17] Shraddha is faith in one's teacher and the ultimate efficacy of one's exertions for knowledge. Samādhāna is attention to what is at hand. The fourth condition is an intense desire to be free from the bondage of ignorance, and the three previous conditions are supposed to stimulate this desire.

3. Repetition and Boredom

Before inquiring into the need for enumerating these qualities and their importance for our inquiry, we should pursue the notion of bondage a bit more. To desire the end of ignorance is to feel bound in it. This will be discussed further at the end of Chapter V.

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[16] See Tattwananda, Swami, trans., The Quintessence of Vedanta of Acharya Sankara (P.O. Kalady, Kerala State: Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, 1960), pp. 27-38.

[17] V.P., p. 221.

To feel bound is to feel constrained, that is, held in something which does not satisfy. The most thorough bondage occurs when the mind no longer strains at its bonds but feels bound nonetheless. A deep set loss of intrigue and desire, where repetition does not lead to an ever deepening knowledge, shows itself as boredom. It is the purposeless repetition of events (things presenting and absenting themselves) which leads to the feeling of bondage in the first place. Still it is only in disinterest that one can look beyond what one identifies one's existence with and ask what should be, with a clear conscience. Ultimate dissatisfaction does not come in failure but in boredom. Rebirth has to be understood in the sense that there is no history and therefore there is just endless coming to be and passing away of the self-same things.[18] Hence the most one could expect is merely to assume different duties which one could be aware of in any birth. The goal of Vedānta is "not happiness on earth or heaven (abhyudaya) but

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[18]For a Westerner with the idea of history rebirth seems to be almost an attractive possibility. Can we even conceive of boredom without the concept of history and a historical project? That is, can we of the West conceive of boredom as anything but the absence of history? But this is an entirely separate line of inquiry which draws us far afield, for the idea of history never seems to have occurred to the Indians. Boredom can be conceived of as simply a painful lack of interest. In this sense it doesn't matter whether there is history or not.

freedom from rebirth (nihśreyasa)".[19] Boredom becomes a possibility through the fulfillment of the first three conditions because of the rejection of all possibilities obtainable in the world or in heaven. As a pre-condition for knowledge, the world has been negated as a solution.

The paradox of the most intense desire for knowledge, arising within the lethargy of boredom, can only be explained through the state of openness to knowledge. Desire is antagonistic to knowledge, the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad says.[20] However, boredom still regards the world and thus betrays itself through the painful lack of desire. It is the desire for a non-repetitious state of being. Being unaffected by desire or its opposite is thus the most desirable state. But the problem is to avoid the inability to inquire and to remain at the same time open to any answer.

4. Openness as Absence

For any question or any answer posited we must allow a negation. One must be prepared for no solution or a dismal solution. The absence of predispositions means existing at a loss, quelling at every moment the grasping for resolution. There may be no end to our

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[19] Radhakrishnan, II, 474.

[20] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 4.5.15, p. 795.

ignorance. This situation must be allowed to continue until the absolute moment of certainty, where all possible replies have been exhausted and all questionable responses discarded. Such a position of absence brings one to the greatest threat: the reflection on one's own posture vis-à-vis the world, from the perspective of the world; that is the feeling of the void, sūnyatā.[21]

The access to absent entities and the consideration of them is now clear. The most rigorous openness to what is the case is founded in the most thorough series of negations and absences. Perception of the world can at least not be the product of our manipulating creation. But in the position of openness to what is truly existent, the possibility of absence has increased and prepared the way to the point that it is almost an obstacle. This means that it has an almost equivalent potency to presence. Our access route has made the phenomena more available than before. We find that in some way the very desire for knowledge arises because of absence.

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[21] Tattwananda, The Quintessence of Vedanta, p. 176.

III

NEGATION: THE FUNCTION OF ABSENCE

1. Questions

To refuse the world we must annihilate it. But how is it possible to negate something? Is it a matter of imagination, or an application of the memory of other absences? Negation is the biggest argument for saying that the mind, and therefore man, structures and makes his world, but we can observe fairly easily how much man imitates that which he encounters.

It is often extremely helpful to have alternatives, both objects and concepts, in order to see the structure of something. The alternative representation of the same object shows us its structure as that which answers to questions. The discovery of how to ask questions is extremely important and difficult. It gives us a tool by which to uncover our existence. Yet questioning seems to be an addition to what is already in the world, for in each case it hypothesizes the non-existent. It defines areas of lacking knowledge. We understand something in particular, to the extent that it remains absent from everything else. Yet what it is, is only noticeable in the context of its similarity

to something.

It seems to be necessary to perceive a structure, or the possibility of one, before it is possible to begin negating. This structural substratum may be equivalent to the coherent continuity of existence in which any absence is apprehended. Negation exists then from a grasping within existence for that which it shall not grasp. In its not obtaining, it shows to us the unobtainable within the limits of what may obtain. Thus it presupposes the perception of similarity. But pure similarity of things is complete identity or total non-differentiation. We couldn't perceive anything in this state. In our experience, things must be cut off from each other. They exist that way, through their mutual negations, in the world.

Each object maintains itself through the absence of others in it. But still, things being totally non-similar would mean a chaos of perceptions with no continuity. This would be total incoherence. Yet the supposition of knowledge is the possibility of coherence. Is man then the one who differentiates or is the world already differentiated? Or is it that a cognition as a judgement neither adds nor subtracts from reality? That is, in asserting what is known, a judgement achieves

something new only for thought.[22]

Negation presents itself to us in two ways in Vedānta: in the law of contradiction and the concept of sublation. We will find differentiation by name and form creating the background for the operation of these two forms of negation as they reveal illusion to us. The concept of illusion extends itself through an analysis of sleep and reality as what is 'not this', until by an act of double negation we are left with Brahman.

2. Words Which Negate: Contradiction and Sublation

Several words appear in the literature which mean 'negated'. Nisidhyate and pratisidhyate mean caused to be driven away or restrained. Nivrtti means abstention or negating. In the Vedānta-Paribhāsā it is one of two kinds of destruction, the other being bādha. Nivrtti, here, means the cessation of effects without the destruction of the material cause. The cause of such cessation "is the rise of a contrary mental state [a new cognition], or the removal of defects [such as pink glasses]."[23] The two terms which seem to have

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[22]Datta, D. M., "The Import of a Proposition in Vedanta Philosophy", The Philosophical Quarterly, 1929, pp. 264-279.

[23]V.P., p. 60.

gained the most formalized meanings are bādha and virodha.

Virodha means opposition, strife or incompatibility, evoking the idea of a clash without an outcome. It signifies "the incapacity of two things either to reside in the same time and place or to be identical."[24] Śaṅkara uses this as a relative, logical principle of non-contradiction, although, Devaraja says, it was not his criterion of truth or reality. Śaṅkara invokes it by saying, ". . . a general principle is proved by the absence of contrary instances."[25] In a much more general form, which is scarcely more than a grammatical remark, Śaṅkara mentions that an attribute and the privative form of the attribute may not belong to the same locus.[26] Viròdha, it will be seen, contributes to bādha.

Bādha, which is sometimes translated as contradiction and more often as sublation, means annihilation or destruction. Contrary to virodha, bādha evokes a sole winner with the absence of the other combatant. "Sublation is the removal of nescience, together with

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[24] Devaraja, N. K., An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge (Varanasi: Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1962), p. 137; quoted from Pañcapādikā Commentaries, p. 53.

[25] Thibaut, George, trans., The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana with the Commentary by Saṅkara (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962), v. 2.2.31, vol. I, 427.

[26] Ibid.; v. 2.2.33, vol. I, 429.

its own product present or past, by true knowledge".[27] Two causes are given for sublation (bādha). One, which destroys the material cause (avidya), is that which is really present. The other, which destroys the appetite for that which is unreal, is the cognition of the absent entity. This is subordinate to the first cause according to Bhāratītīrtha.[28] The principle is that the effect is contained in the cause and thus unreal with regard to it. Dr. Anima Sen Gupta explains that bādha points to a terminating point (avadhi). "When one experience is negated by another experience, there is always the revelation of something which is more real than the object of the negated experience."[29] Bādha is the final perception that an object appeared only falsely without having had a real existence. It is the knowledge of illusion, and also the criterion for truth, abādhitatva, the non-contradictedness of cognition.

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[27] V.P.S., p. 83.

[28] Ibid., p. 83.

[29] Gupta, Dr. A. S., "Advaita Vedānta and Sāṁkhya on Erroneous Perception", The Vedānta Kasari (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Sept., 1968).

3. Name and Form

The distinction of things which may be sublated occurs in Vedānta by language and perception (name and form). Yet because of the necessity of objects of knowledge, the cause of sublation must be the things themselves. Because we find absence and presence occurring equally in language, it is mysterious why one aspect of what we perceive should be more or less real. For in all events we find it difficult to know the cause of what can only be known as name and form.

Brahman becomes the basis of the apparent world, which is continually changing, by the element of plurality which Śaṅkara says is characterized by name and form (namarupa). Namarupa is at least one basis for the origins of absence. Furthermore, ". . . the distinction of names and forms, the fiction of Nescience, originates entirely from speech only".[30] The instrument for the proclamation of speech is Brahman.[31] Speech is what brings cognition to thought and to cognize anything we must see it as a particular quality. "Whatever is known is a form of the organ of speech, for it is the knower."[32]

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[30] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.1.27, vol. I, 352.

[31] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.1.4, vol. I, 32.

[32] Bri.U., v. 1.5.8, p. 218.

Yet the aim of knowledge is to know the cause of the thing. Here, by cause we don't mean the end for which it is meant. We mean that from which it originates, its substance. This concern for the substratum of what is differentiated will help explain the Vedāntic analysis of absence. ". . . the substance is in each case cognised by means of the quality; the latter therefore has its Self in the substance."[33] When we see a table, we see the tableness of that substance. We are unable to see the substance per se. When we see an absence...? Language differentiates, separates, and presents to us an aspect in existence and a quality of something other.

Words are connected eternally, in Advaita, with the species which they denote and it is species, not individuals that words denote. The particularity which manifests in any ordinary usage of the word seems to be a product of the substance which we are unable to see. We find, even in our acknowledgement of absence, a seeing in names, for we see in inextricable connection with a word which denotes an attribute. When we try to see through the word, for example 'table', we may then notice the wood of the table, its shape and measurements. We may take it apart, noticing nuts and screws or we may

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[33] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.17, vol. I, 395.

take apart the wood, noticing the grain etc. We are in an infinite regress of qualities and attributes. Substance then, is unascertainable in language for language differentiates. "Thus: being inaccessible to speech, Brahman, the Knowable, is defined in all Upanishads only by a denial of all specialties, -- 'Not thus' (Bri. Up. 2-3-6) and 'not gross, not subtle' (Ibid, 3-8-8) -- in the terms 'It is not this'".[34]

Attributes perceived are universals and it is these which negate the particular occasion by presenting possibilities. (To perceive the substantial requires another sort of negation.) It is through language that a possibility is perceived in actuality. This possibility presents a future absence (of what is now) by the negation of a current state of affairs (what will be done). ". . . we all know from observation that any one when setting about some thing which he wishes to accomplish first remembers the word denoting the thing, and after that sets to work."[35] This self-contained aspect of expect-

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[34] B.G., Ś.B., v. 13.12, p. 345.

[35] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.3.28, vol. I, 204. There is a certain amount of contention in the literature as to whether the world consists of just names and forms or names, forms and actions. (cf. Bri.U. 1.6.1) The V.P.S. notes this and reconciles the two by saying that "Vedāntins . . . admit three-foldness or two foldness. [name and form and action or name and form]" (V.P.S. p. 414) I think this merging of expectancy, possibility and action in language helps to explain the admission by Advaita of both the two-foldness and three-foldness of the universe.

ancy, which words evoke on each occasion, leads us into delusion.

"The differentiation of forms invariably depends on the manifestation of their names", Śaṅkara explains.[36] Thus the world arises characteristically out of language. But the meaning of a word is the image it conveys to the mind. In this sense it is form, for form can also mean a way of being, e.g., a form of activity. Thus it is said, "One of these two is the greater, namely Form; for whatever is Name, is indeed Form [emphasis mine]".[37] Namarupa confronts us on each contact with existence, and therefore the ground may not appear. The possibility or otherness inherent in this world thus originates from namarupa and conceals.[38] For "in so far as they are names . . . they are untrue; in so far as they are clay they are true."[39]

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[36] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 2.4.10, p. 362.

[37] Eggeling, J., trans., The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, Part V, vol. XLIV of Sacred Books of the East (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), p. 28.

[38] Absence, as occurring in namarupa, I maintain, reveals this concealing structure because it seems to pose a form in something that is without form (e.g., the absence of a chair in the room).

[39] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.1.14, vol. I, 320-321.

4. Illusion

Advaita models "its metaphysical reality on the structure of illusion".[40] Adhyāsa (illusion) means placing upon or erroneous predication, and is defined by Śaṅkara as "the apparent presentation, in the form of remembrance, to consciousness of something previously observed, in some other thing [or place]."[41] It occurs by the subject-predicate relation, and because the subject cannot be a predicate, partakes of the inadequacy of language which has already been discussed. Illusion is the appearance of something to be other than it is. When applied to a definite area of space, everything which becomes or changes falls under the category of illusion, for the reason that what appeared no longer appears. In its totality, illusion appears as change. Illusoriness is "the counter correlate [alternate account of the illusion] of absolute non-existence in the locus where it [non-existence] has been cognized."[42]

The object of the illusion, or non-existence once the illusion is known, is neither real, nor unreal,

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[40] Murti, T. R. V., "The Two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita", Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume (Amalner: Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1958), pp. 149-150.

[41] V.S., Ś.B., Intro., vol. I, 4.

[42] V.P.S., p. 81. See Chapter IV, pp. 54-55 for explanation.

nor both, but anirvacaniya (indefinable). Devaraja notes that "although anirvacaniya later meant 'indefinable' Śaṅkara always qualified his use of the term as 'in respect of reality and unreality'."[43] One ordinary example of this is seeing what looks like silver in a shell and then discovering that it is not silver. The silver is anirvacaniya and this is because its cause, nescience, is inexplicable.

Nescience is the ordinary term used in translating avidya which Śaṅkara defines as "the mutual superimposition of the Self and the Non-Self".[44] Avidya is neither positive (sat) nor negative (asat), but a third thing even though it shares in the positive and negative characteristics (bhāvatva and abhāvatva) of the world.[45] "Avidyā as the causa materia of all illusions is without a beginning and positive and yet removable by pure consciousness."[46] Avidya is the same as māyā according to

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[43] Devaraja, p. 163.

[44] V.S., Ś.B., Intro., vol. I, 6.

[45] Bhattacharyya, S. A., Studies in Post-Śaṁkara Dialectics (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1936), p. 285.

[46] Ibid., p. 284; quoted from Advaita-siddhi, (Bombay edition), pp. 544-545.

Bhāratītīrtha.[47] It contains the general idea of multiplicity but also, in the same way that each particular cow suggests the many cows with that name, ". . . 'māyā' is also used in the sense of abundance, i.e. denotes that where there is abundance of what the original word expresses."[48] In this way each cow suggests the absence of all other cows. But this māyā which consists of name and form is presented by nescience (avidya), according to Śaṅkara.[49] Māyā is thus a self-projecting structure of symbols which conceal reality.

Adhyāsa, which is the state of the world, is caused by avidya or māyā and has the character of anirvacaniya. Illusion can be attributed to the derangement of a sense organ[50] but ordinarily it is acknowledged by the comprehension of a particular loss of ignorance. This is analyzed as follows. First the location (thing or place) is cognized. Then the illusory percept (silver) makes its appearance. There is a possibility, then, either of a negative judgement that the silver is not the locus, or of the non-apprehension of the silver. Finally the negation of the illusion is accomplished

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[47] V.P.S., p. 104.

[48] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.1.15, vol. I, 67.

[49] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.3, vol.I, 369.

[50] See Sinha, Jadunath, Indian Psychology: Cognition (Calcutta: Sinha Publishing House, 1958), I, 248.

through the acknowledgement of the shell.[51] The cognition that silver was absent from the locus is an evidence of the sublation of the presence of silver. To have the experience of illusion, which is what tempts one to say that existence is unreal, the knowledge of absence as well as of presence is necessary. Thus it is argued, "because of non-apprehension by those without defect and because of the sublation and (consequent) reflection, the illusoriness alone of silver stands to reason, not its reality."[52] It is the sixth means of knowledge which makes illusoriness known.

Illusion and the process of sublation is also discussed in the analysis of sleep. Four states of consciousness are deduced: the waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and consciousness of all three (Viśva, Taijasa, Prājña, Turīya). There is a series of sublations and integrations of experience as one goes from the Viśva to the Taijasa to the Prājña states. The Taijasa state is sublated and shown to be an illusion each time we wake up. But it is the state of Prājña which offers the strangest thought: that it is possible to know that there is nothing, know that you knew it and know that it was

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[51] See Bhattacharyya, p. 6.

[52] V.P.S., p. 81.

known in a state of blissful existence.[53] It is coming from deep sleep that one says, "I did not know anything." It is this which, according to Advaita, shows that the cognition of absence is not pure nothingness and that fear in the face of absence is caused by factors other than absence.

This type of sublation is what occurs in the understanding of existence. By a process of reduction (neti-neti), in the inverse order of manifestation, one hopes to arrive at the substratum of things. But this arrival is only accomplished by a negation of all attributes, a process known as apavāda or the negation of negation. This double negation is explained by the story of Lidice. Because an absence is acknowledged only when there is a substratum, it won't be noticed when the location is missing. Thus, there may be no one sitting in a chair in a house, but if the house burns down we won't notice the absence of the man in the chair. Similarly, the absence of people in Lidice is not noticed when standing there. The absence of all attributes

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[53] This will be discussed further in Chapter V, Section 9.

means the negation of all negations without the reappearance of what was first negated. (And in this we see the fears of people who create memorials of Lidice and Auswitz.) But within this process a certain amount of truth becomes apparent. Truth "is determined through superimposition and withdrawal (. . .). Just as silver is superimposed on nacre [mother of pearl], the world of attributes is superimposed on the attributeless Brahman. This is adhyāropa. And just as silver is cognised to be non-existent in nacre, the world of attributes is known to be non-existent in Brahman. This is apavāda."[54]

This seems to be the process of hypothesizing and rejecting the hypothesis. It suggests a form and rejects it as not fitting the case. That there is a case is beyond doubt. When all the possible accounts have run their course and been dismissed, having been understood and intelligently rejected, then one is left face to face with the unknowable. This is the traditional method of teaching according to Śaṅkara: "'That which is devoid of all duality is described by adhyaropa and apavada,' i.e., by superimposition and negation, by attribution and denial."[55] This is the essential role of negation: the elimination of all duality.

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[54] V.P.S., p. 213, from note #2.

[55] B.G., Ś.B., v. 13.13, p. 349.

IV

ASAT AND ABHĀVA: THE ABSENT ENTITY AND THE PROBLEM OF CAUSALITY

1. Purview

In the last chapter we discovered that absent entities as well as present entities arise from language. But it is still unclear what absent entities are or how they enter our existence. There is always the suggestion that language acts like a blanket, keeping out the cold of nothingness, and absent entities are the holes in the blanket. There are many linguistic occasions for privative terminology, however, and only some of these are of direct concern. Absence indicates the state of being away, and what is absent is what is not present to us at the moment. In its present moment, absence appears as non-existence, but that which is non-existent cannot be lost or missing, neither can it repeat itself except as non-differentiated nothingness. What is absent may be either on its way to or from us, or we may be irrevocably separated from it. That which is absent has to be differentiated from that which is non-existent, but the problem is that their character merges at any given moment. The cohesion of existence through memory shows

in the distinction between absences. To understand the distinction we must peruse the concept of causality, and it is here that the characters of asat and abhāva will separate. The very possibility of distinctions with their concomitant moods can only arise during the course of existence.

2. The Privative Form

The privative form expresses privation or negation. It may denote or predicate the absence of a quality or attribute and has the quality of depriving or tending to take away. The principal sense of the word 'not' is non-existence[56] and may be used in at least four ways: in a command, a definition, a logical result and a perception.

The use of a command, such as "Don't do it", is not to create any particular type of action but to prevent an action from occurring. It directly negates a way of behaving (form) and indirectly seeks to prevent a particular situation. In itself, however, the command does not dictate a result but negates a procedure. "For the peculiar function of the particle 'not' is to intimate the idea of the non-existence of that with which it is connected, and the conception of the non-existence (of

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[56] V.P.S., p. 540.

something to be done) is the cause of the state of passivity."[57] It does not necessarily end activity in general but induces passivity towards certain things. It relies, however, on the ability to control an imaginary state of affairs. Thus each case of either a positive or negative command implicitly posits an absent entity. "Have some tea" implies that you don't have any now.

Definitions of things by means of privatives are ever-present in Advaita, which is one example of such a definition. It excludes things from consideration while asserting by implication that something is at hand. What is at hand, the ground of the absence, is understood by the structure of absence without which it would not be possible to define things in this manner. It surrounds the thing without stating it. This is like the game in which one thinks of a thing and the others guess it by a process of elimination ("Animal, Vegetable or Mineral").

The privative definition can be used to state very precisely the results of a logical inquiry. It has the ability to delineate just what is known about a thing and no more. This is particularly valuable if we don't know exactly what we are dealing with.

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[57] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.1.4, vol. I, p. 39.

Finally and most important for us, the privative form exhibits a perception such as "There is no chair." It should be apparent that the previous three types of privative use all rely, to a certain extent, on the direct knowledge of an absence. In a logical treatment, however, this distinctive attribute of absence is sometimes obscured. Bhāratītīrtha points out that ignorance of the fact that an absence always has a form or name and usually a context leads us to consider the non-existent in itself. When treated separately, it has lead to the idea of nothingness.[58] This shows up in a roundabout way. Saying that a sound is not-red does not necessarily imply that it is another color, nor does it necessarily mean simply that there is no red color in it. It may mean that it is not possible to relate color to the subject. Still, if what is not-red is taken to mean that it is some color, then to say that it is not not-red will not mean that it is red, but simply that it doesn't come into this kind of color relationship. Thus to say that something is neither red nor not-red does not mean merely that it has red stripes. For example, one hears, "you're either with us or against us", which is taken to mean that you're us or not us and this exhausts

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[58] V.P.S., pp. 540-541.

the possibilities of relationship. But it is quite reasonable to say that one is neither a communist nor an anti-communist meaning that you choose to stay outside the universe of their discourse. The problem of an either/or choice, it is now becoming apparent, assumes at bottom a nothingness in existence, and such a nothingness, we will see presently, throws our understanding of existence into chaos.

3. Abhāva

Abhāva is the privative form of bhāva whose root is bhu meaning to become, exist, occur or be in any condition. It is the formal term used to refer to the four kinds of absence.[59] Although sometimes interchangeable with asat, it may be distinguished. However, this will only become clear later. Śaṅkara in his commentary on The Bhagavad-Gītā uses bhāva and abhāva in reference to four things: living beings, birth and death, effects, and visible phenomena. The importance of etymology, according to him, is that the root of a noun always shows the changing character of the noun as the root is verbal. Hence phenomena which have verbal

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[59] Discussed in Section 7 of this chapter.

roots indicate a change.[60] A bhāva as a being[61] is encountered by us in the world. As a being in the world it undergoes six changes of condition (vikaras): birth, existence, growth, transformation, decline, and destruction.[62] Birth (bhāva) and death (abhāva)[63] are thus changes which a being passes through. Anything which exists under modification will have different forms at different times. ". . . all things undergoing modification [do not] have an identical form of existence in the present or in the future."[64] Bhāva is hence the particular form entered into and abhāva is not being in such a form.

Thus the positive effect of a change is a bhāva, whereas the omission of change, abhāva, leaves one in the previous state. Abhāva indicates that which hasn't been effected or which is no longer the effect. Because of its non-generating character it produces nothing.[65]

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[60] Jagadānanda, Swāmi, trans., Upadeshasāhasrī (A Thousand Teachings) of Sri Sankarachārya (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1961), #76-77, pp. 46-47.

[61] B.G., Ś.B., v. 13.27, p. 370.

[62] B.G., Ś.B., v. 2.20, p. 42.

[63] B.G., v. 10.4, p. 260.

[64] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 1.2.1, p. 24.

[65] B.G., Ś.B., Intro. to 3rd Discourse, pp. 87-88.

All phenomena which appear as a change or in the process of change are thus under-gone by a bhāva and hence are abhāva. They show themselves as abhāva phenomena in their transition. The character of all things that are of name and form is thus that they will not be. In this sense, ". . . Prakriti [is] resolved into nothing (abhava) by vidya or knowledge".[66] An abhāva thus is a phenomenon which is essentially absent. It is that from which a being is away. Even when a being manifests as a particular phenomenon it is coming towards it or going away from it and the phenomenon is hence essentially absent (abhāva).[67]

4. Asat

Sat and asat both come from the root as which explains the state of affairs. They both occur on two levels of meaning but divide experience on only one level. Ultimately, sat, only indicates what must be but can't be known. Sat indicates substance or what underlies everything which changes. It is the continuity in existence. As what always exists it is what is real. Reality is hence essentially inactive. Activity is

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[66] B.G., Ś.B., v. 13.23, p. 362.

[67] See B.G., v. 2.16 and Śaṅkara's commentary on it.

known by the change in name and form, that is, what is manifest. Here is where sat becomes confusing because it also designates what is manifest and that is fundamentally asat. It is at this point of manifestation that causality begins to explain how sat and asat may be differentiated through the exigencies of a coherent world. The interplay of all things must occur among existent things. Something may appear only if it is already existent and has had a continuous existence. ". . . if the non-existent should become existent and the existent should become non-existent, then nobody can be certain as to anything whatsoever in matters of evidence and things ascertainable by evidence".[68] The problem is finally that the world is anirvacaniya.

Sat, according to verses 17.26-27 of The Bhagavad-Gītā, is used in the sense of reality, goodness, an auspicious act or that which bodes well for the future and also devotion to sacrifice, gifts and austerity as well as the actions in connection with them. Sat, which is what is real, is thus applied to what is only relatively real. The problem with this ordinary application of sat appears in the Taittirīya Upanishad 7.2 and the Chāndogya Upanishad 3.19.1-3 where the explanation of

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[68] B.G., Ś.B., v. 18.48, p. 479.

the world is given that it was first non-existent and then became existent. Śaṅkara explains, ". . . sat is freely used to indicate the manifestation of the name and form of an object," and therefore ". . . being of unmanifest name and form, it is very like non-existence, though not actually so."[69] ". . . being implies the image of existence, and the expression 'one alone without a second' and 'existed' are its epithets, and by the addition of a negation to the word being all that was indicated by it is excluded."[70]

Actually sat is always the ground of everything, the first cause upon which everything else rests. Here it is opposed to asat which is understood as complete non-existence and contradictedness (a rabbit's horn). "Sat is that substance which is mere being or existence; it is invisible, indistinct, all-pervading, one only, without defect, without members, knowledge itself, and that which is indicated by all the Vedāntas."[71] In all other cases it will be that which appears reliant on sat, in this sense, but indicates a distinct aspect of the world. "Even now it [the world] is in a state of

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[69] Ch.U., Ś.B., v. 3.19.1, p. 119.

[70] Ibid., v. 6.2.1, p. 193. cf. Chapter III, Section 3. The "image" is namarupa.

[71] Ibid., v. 6.2.1, p. 191.

being, and has become the object of our senses by its name, form and other qualification, and is indicated by the word 'this' [viz. This is a house. This is not Jack. This hurts.]; while 'before,' i.e., anterior to the time of its creation, it could be indicated only by the word sat 'being,' and understood only by the idea of being, and therefore it is said, 'before this was mere being.'"[72] The primordial sat is that which transcends sat and asat and is imperishable (aksara). The grounded sat and asat form the limiting adjuncts or conditions (upādhis) of the aksara. Our consciousness of non-existence arises by reference to this asat. This consciousness of asat is part of every fact of experience. The other part is consciousness of sat. Such double consciousness "arises with reference to one and the same substratum (samānādhikaraṇa)".[73] What is asat may thus be what occurs as name and form; within name and form it may be what is absent.

What is asat indicates for us that which may change. As such it is inherently perishable. This is ordinarily what 'unreality' refers to as a translation for asat. The criterion of reality is imperishability.

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[72] Ibid., p. 191.

[73] B.G., Ś.B., v. 2.16, p. 35.

Every name and form is unreal because it is not perceived before its creation and after its destruction.[74] The strangeness of the world, feeling ill at ease or lost, is only a part of what 'unreal' means to the Advaitin. The tactility of the world or the fact that things are solid is only a misleading part of reality. One can perceive a form by touch as well as by sight. The unreality of all things which are known by name and form points to the necessity of an understanding of that upon which existence is based. When the substratum of understanding drops out, phenomenal activity seems without reality. Activity, as has been said, also has a form. Phenomena are now the counterpositives of non-existence and one feels absent from them. What undergoes the ephemeral is what lends reality to it and thus, by its absence and the consequent phenomenal unreality, demarcates the real from the unreal. From a different perspective we see that sat indicates what is ever existent and asat is finally that which has no real existence.

It is necessary to assume that what is real never moves or acts and what has ever moved or could ever move or act is unreal. From this it follows that

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[74] See Nikhilānanda, Swāmī, trans. and ed., The Māndūkyopanisad with Gaudapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary (Mysore: Śri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1955), vv. 2.6 and 4.31.

activity may only occur where there is already essentially activity and inaction may only exist in what is essentially real.[75] Thus what is real will never appear. It will remain unmanifest. One thing which remains unmanifest is the cognizer of whatever appears, (due logically to an infinite regress) who is the kṣetrajña (knower of the field -- see B.G.). Another thing is that aspect of what appears which is not graspable by the senses. This is the avyakta or what is "incomprehensible to the senses".[76] It lies at the core of causality, for the problem of cause and effect is that there must be a continuum in what is apparent.

5. Cause and Effect

Cause and effect, although they are known in a relationship by the perception of absence, must both be existent. That the cause must exist prior to an effect is usually acknowledged. We will discover, however, that there is no room for creation in Advaita, but the presence of a form is effected by uncovering what is already existent. Such uncovering discloses an illusion by making apparent what we were missing. Thus we term the effect which is not manifest, 'absent'.

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[75] See B.G., Ś.B., v. 18.48, pp. 477-482.

[76] B.G., Ś.B., v. 12.1, p. 303.

one. Intelligence contains motive power while being motionless. Śaṅkara claims that a thing devoid of action may move other things, through the example of a magnet.[81]

The effects which a cause may attend must already exist, possibly as already known. One cannot say that a jar, which will be, is non-existent, for the grammatical fact that it is the same thing as saying that it will not be. If we say that it is simply non-existent, then it is possible to respond that nothing is caused by a rabbit's horn. This is not possible for a nonentity (abhāva), like a rabbit's horn, is never born and doesn't have a cause.[82]

Causality, because it requires a coherence in existence, may not allow for connections between existence and non-existence for the reason given at the beginning of section four that there would then be no certainty in matters of evidence. This kind of certainty we have, according to Śaṅkara. Thus he says: "Separable or inseparable connection [with a thing's cause or with existence] is possible between two positive entities only, not between an entity and a nonentity,

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[81] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.2, vol. I, 369.

[82] B.G., Ś.B., v. 18.48, p. 479.

nor between two nonentities."[83] Finally, in a rather ironic statement, Śaṅkara notes that "We do not see people strive for things which they know to be non-existent."[84] Thus, the importance of noting the absence of something is in quelling appetites for it.

As effects must already exist, making or seeing an effect take place is watching the uncovering of what already is. The manifestation of an effect points out its pre-existence. ". . . the nature of non-existence is not possible for a thing characterised by the possession of different states (of existence) like increase and decrease".[85] As the form must exist prior to its manifestation so must the name.

The uncovering of an effect already existent in a cause we have called manifestation. The cause we have also noted is doomed to be perpetually covered. There are two kinds of obstruction of manifestation. One is the obstruction of the particles of the material remaining in some other form, e.g., clay remaining in a lump instead of revealing the pot. The other kind of obstruction is when something is hidden by things

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[83] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 1.2.1, p. 25.

[84] Ibid., p. 22.

[85] V.P.S., p. 22.

like darkness or an intervening obstacle. With an intervening obstacle like a wall, the thing is removed in order to remove the obstruction of the effect. In the case of darkness something is added, a light, to remove the obscuration.

What may be made manifest is always accomplished by removing obstructions. What is removed has the status of an obstacle. What was obscured exists as hidden. The status of absence has become radically changed.

6. Distinction and the Conditions for Noticing Absence

The effect that isn't yet revealed we would call absent. The obstacle to manifestation, after it has been removed, we would also call absent. Yet the two absences seem to have different characters. The first is called prāgabhāva or antecedent non-existence. The second is called pradhvamsabhāva. There are actually two other kinds of absence. All of these, at any moment of perception, may be called asat. One problem with calling these non-existent, particularly if one wishes to ascribe this character to an effect that is manifesting or, in the terminology of illusion, is superimposed, is that "there is the contingence of the non-existence of immediacy for the superimposed."[86] One

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[86] Ibid., p. 88.

characteristic of all perception is immediacy which indicates the substratum which is existence. ". . . non-existence is in all cases nothing else but the absence of all character of reality".[87] Therefore absence must in some sense not be asat.

We have already shown that "if non-distinguished non-existence were admitted to have causal efficiency, we should also have to assume that sprouts, &c. originate from the horns of hares".[88] Nobody can point out any definite distinction among absences for there is nothing to point to. It is only during the course of existence that these can be distinguished. It is necessary to show how these can be distinguished if we want to hold that antecedent absence is related to a cause. If the distinction is not clearly made then we must hold to the logical argument that no existence comes from non-existence and vice versa. If there are distinctive types of non-existence, "we point out that in that case the fact of there being such special distinctions would turn the non-entities into entities no less real than lotuses and the like."[89]

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[87] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.27, vol. I, 416.

[88] Ibid., p. 416.

[89] Ibid., p. 416.

The conditions for noticing an absence are integrally connected with what occurs at the moment. These conditions can then aid in determining the type of absence. Any absence must occur in a location, for there is a difference between an absent entity and an absence of perception. If nothing is perceived, the location will also not be perceived and everything could then be absent. But only the absence of perception could be known, whereas whether an entity was present or absent could not be known. One is not blind upon the knowledge of a missing house. If we pass from perception of the ground to the absence of the house, there must be an experience which is a fact given there. This thing beside that which underlies an absence is what should be there in order for no absence to occur. This is the counterpositive (pratiyogin) of the absence. These two conditions must be given in any experience of absence: the substratum and the counterpositive.[90] Bhāratītīrtha will go so far as to say that in the case of illusion, "the subsequent cognition 'there is no silver here' has real silver for content".[91] This is to say that what had

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[90] V.P.S., pp. 34-35. The V.P.S. seems to use "counter-correlate" for what we and the V.P. call the "counterpositive". I don't believe the V.P.S. is referring, by its terminology in this case, to the Nyāya account of absence.

[91] Ibid., p. 57.

been cognized, is known to the world as real. Such is the nature of the counterpositive. The fact remains that this silver is absent.

7. Four Types of Absence

There are four types of absence: prāgabhāva or previous absence, pradhvamsābhāva or absence as destruction, anyonyābhāva or mutual absence, and atyantābhāva or absolute non-existence.

Atyantābhāva is the type of non-existence from which Śaṅkara always draws his examples. It is defined as an entity which for all time will never be present in a particular substratum.[92] Thus it will never arise as an effect. It is subject to destruction by means of the destruction of the substratum. Examples of it are color in air, or horns on a hare. (Square-circles and the like are not used as examples of this type of absence in the literature I consulted. The reason, I believe, is that square-circles are contradictions in terms whereas atyantābhāva refers to something which never arises from an existent thing, i.e., from a cause.) Nyāya defines this type of absence as the negation of a connection between two things, such as ears on a pear. This negated

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[92] V.P., p. 139.

connection is eternal. Two points in the Advaitin understanding deserve notice. The first is that the causal relationship of appearance with a substantial cause is invoked and dismissed. Due to the absence of a cause, a connection is not even to be considered between this non-existent entity and its locus. "We cannot indeed think of a thing which can cause the birth of a barren woman's son or his relation to anything else."[93] The second is that atyantābhāva is not eternal for it relies on a substratum to even be considered.

One type of atyantābhāva occurs in the case of an illusion. The counterpositive of this kind of absence is the color in air or the horns on a hare. If we were to see such things we would think we were hallucinating. (In the West, the classic example of atyantābhāva is a pink elephant.) Illusoriness may thus be understood through this terminology. It is the counterpositive of what is absolutely non-existent in the locus where what is illusory has been cognized. What is atyantābhāva is the silver in the shell. It doesn't exist in any way as an effect of the shell, like a pot is the effect of clay, but is an illusion like a mirage of water on the desert. There is absolutely no water

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[93] B.G., Ś.B., v. 18.48, p. 480.

on the desert. Because the mirage has been seen it has some status as an illusion. The illusoriness of silver in a shell is the counterpositive of the absolute non-existence of silver in a shell. Thus illusoriness is defined as ". . . the counter-correlate of absolute non-existence in the locus where it has been cognized."[94]

Anyonyābhāva is the absence of one thing where another thing is. It is sometimes translated as "mutual exclusion".[95] The thing which is, is negated by another thing, as in "the jar is not a cloth". The cloth, Śaṅkara notes, is a positive entity although existing as a negator.[96] Taking these two positive entities together we observe that they have different names and forms. Each one is not the other and hence each is the absence of the other.

What is apprehended in the cognition according to the Vedānta-Paribhāsā is difference or separateness (bheda and prthaktva) which are indistinguishable. The indistinguishability of these two things is mentioned to contradict the Nyāya understanding of this type of absence, which defines it as the negation of the relation

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[94] V.P.S., p. 81.

[95] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 1.2.1, p. 24.

[96] Ibid., p. 24.

of identity.[97] What is being attemped is to stay away from absence in terms of relations and remain within the realm of what can be perceived. Thus the absence of one thing where another thing is present is what is important. The difference may be general ("a jar is not a cloth"), specific ("this jar is not the one"), or refer to qualities ("this jar is not big"). But the absence always seems to deal with individual cases. It does not seem to include statements like "all animals are not dogs". Such knowledge, arising from reasoning, makes use of the cognition "this animal is not a dog", but only indirectly. (e.g., This is an animal. My dog is an animal. But this is not a dog. Therefore all animals are not dogs.) I conclude that anyonyābhāva is known during a confrontation with an instance of it, and not merely as the concluding judgement at the end of reasoning. Thus it is not just any difference but is the difference of one thing from another. Datta, who says that anyonyābhāva is nothing but difference[98] might disagree with me here. But it is consistent with

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[97] Chatterjee, Satischandra, The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge (2nd ed.; Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1950), p. 178.

[98] Datta, D. M., The Six Ways of Knowing (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1960), p. 181.

the Advaitin disinclination towards universals that categorical differences would not be included in this.

Anyonyābhāva has a beginning, if its substratum, the occasion for noticing a difference, has a beginning. Due to its reliance on name and form, anyonyābhāva is destroyed when avidya ceases. The location of the absence is understood existentially only as what evokes the cognition of difference and this must happen through a present entity. Ordinarily, we don't go about listing all the things which are different from the things we perceive. But whenever we distinguish or try to distinguish something, we note differences to a certain extent.

Considering the two types of anyonyābhāva, conditioned and unconditioned, may aid in explaining this. In conditioned difference, something is required in addition to the things which are different to show that they are different. This is the condition for the difference. But the thing to be differentiated must be present as the substratum of this difference. The difference between the water in a bay and the water in a lake can only occur if there is water, the substratum. But to be differentiated it requires the boundary between the bay and the lake. The substratum which is differentiated is known as the subordinate concomitant, vyāpya. The thing which

makes the vyāpya different is the upādhi or limiting adjunct. The aksara we have already said, is limited by sat and asat. Difference is that by which fear steps in. When space is differentiated from the rest of space by a form, it is the basis of that form, for in the absence of this space the absence of the form could not be cognized. Thus in observing that the chair is missing we rely on the presence of space as the basis of the judgement, and we cognize it by differentiating this space from other spaces. This is known as the doctrine of (apparent) limitation (avacchinna-vāda).[99]

Śaṅkara notes that "one and the same thing may be the subject of several names and ideas if it is considered in its relations to what lies without it."[100] This explains, the Advaitins say, the different aspects of Brahman owing to the different minds which reflect him. This conditioned difference owing to reflection is known as the doctrine of pratibimba-vāda.[101]

Unconditioned difference is that in which the two things are not reliant for their difference on a third thing, such as the limiting adjunct (upādhi).

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[99] V.P., p. 141, from note #3.

[100] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.17, vol. I, 397.

[101] V.P., p. 141, from note #3.

It is the difference between two upādhis, as in "a jar is not a cloth".

In all these cases of conditioned and unconditioned anyonyābhāva, what is necessary to notice is that one thing is not apprehended in another and that this absence is not eternal. Either the substratum or the limiting adjuncts are subject to destruction because they are the functions of avidya. This helps explain the apparent overlapping of types of mutual absence.

The final two types of absence to be considered are those which exist within a causal relationship as effects which either haven't become apparent yet or were apparent and have disappeared. Atyantābhāva was that type of absence which never could be effected and could never cause anything. It is distinct from the last two types of absence for they have or will have appeared. But because they are eventually absent, they are ultimately illusionary. Anyonyābhāva is an absence between things which have already appeared.

Prāgabhāva is "the object of a cognition that the thing will come into being".[102] The object of this cognition is the absence of an effect in its material cause previous to its coming into existence. For in-

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[102] V.P., p. 138.

stance, when I notice that this piece of iron is not yet a horseshoe, the horseshoe is absent. It may never have existed to our knowledge and thus prāgabhāva cannot be assigned a beginning. It ceases however as soon as the horseshoe appears. At this point we must say, by the relation of cause and effect, that it was merely absent from sight and touch.

Pradhvamsābhāva is an absence which "is invariably preceded by the object of which it is the non-existence."[103] Therefore the existence of the object is a necessary factor. The absence is cognized in the remains of the object. It is this which forms the substratum of the absence. Thus a broken pot is the location of its absence. Similarly the horseshoe is the location of the absent piece of iron. We found in our discussion of apavāda that such an absence can come to an end by the destruction of the substratum.

When I come looking for someone and don't see him, although I look at several people, what I notice is his absence. The Advaitin interprets each look as a case of anyonyābhāva and the absence of the person in the room as either an inference or a case of pradhvamsabhāva or prāgabhāva. All the persons involved remain

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[103] Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 176; quoted from Aśubodhini, p. 218.

essentially positive entities.

The positive aspect of the absences rests in the relationship of ideas to things. As we have pointed out, to explain the meaning of a negative statement in terms only of positive concepts seems impossible. But Śaṅkara points out that forms and ideas come from objects and this is given in the consciousness of both things and ideas. "If there were no objects", he says, "the ideas could not have the forms of the objects."[104] The thing constitutes the means to an idea for him and it is part of our problem that we cannot see this thing. Datta explains that a thing is the unity of "various intrinsic (svarūpa) and extrinsic or relative (bāhyarūpa or sambandhirūpa) aspects."[105] But these aspects of things all arise from objects.

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[104] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.28, vol. I, 422.

[105] Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 118.

V

KNOWLEDGE AND NON-APPREHENSION

1. Purview

All absence occurs in a particular place and is of a particular thing. Valid knowledge of it is caused by the sixth means of knowledge accepted by Advaita Vedānta, anupalabdhi or non-apprehension. A means of knowledge, pramāṇa, is that unique activity by which valid knowledge (pramā) is produced. Valid knowledge is that consciousness of something which has for its object something that is uncontradicted. Anupalabdhi can be checked by seeing if it would be possible to perceive the absent thing in the place where it is said not to be. Perception is also required to ascertain the location of the absence. How perception or cognition is interpreted, unfolds the peculiar threat that absence contains for us.

2. Knowledge

Cognition is self-luminous. That is what knowing something discloses. The self-luminosity of a cognition means that it is immediately experienced and experienced until a new cognition occurs. ". . . a psychosis con-

tinues in the field of consciousness as long as the mind does not assume the form of a different object."[106] This means that time cannot be understood as just the change of events, for it would then be demarcated by a steady stream of absent entities so to speak. It must exist for the Advaitin as something unique. Cognition has one other interesting aspect, which the student opened himself to: it doesn't conform to human desire. Instead cognition finds its source, aside from the light of consciousness, in the means and objects of valid knowledge.[107] "Knowledge . . . is the result of the different means of (right) knowledge, and those have for their objects existing things; knowledge can therefore not be either made or not made or modified, but depends entirely on existing things".[108]

3. Validity

The reciprocity of absence and presence, the two necessary attributes of the world for valid knowledge to occur, becomes clear when we attempt to understand validity. We must have an object of knowledge, which has been considered in the last chapter, and we must have

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[106] Sinha, p. 162.

[107] V.P.S., p. 516.

[108] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.1.4, vol. I, 35.

a means which is the subject of this chapter. "A means of knowledge is or is not a means according as it leads or does not lead to valid knowledge."[109] Valid knowledge, which is of something having a particular attribute as its feature (prakāra), must be conducive to successful effort, and therefore has for its object something uncontradicted by other means of knowledge.[110] For a contradiction to occur there must be an object of the knowledge. Hence, it is necessary to specify the counterpositive of an absence just as it is necessary to state the object of a perception. The object of a perception contradicts the claim that that object is absent and vice versa. Validity in itself is the part of a cognition which decides what something is, as it is, and not as something else (e.g., "here is a shoe"). ". . . validity is the capacity of cognition to determine a thing."[111] In each case of a valid cognition it is the totality of the causes of a cognition that apprehend its validity. Invalidity is apprehended through some extraneous agency. For example, if I walk through a glass window, I infer from the falling glass etc.

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[109] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 2.1.20, p. 309.

[110] See V.P., pp. 5 and 144.

[111] V.P.S., p. 205.

that my previous perception (that it was an empty space) was invalid.

4. Psychology

A cognition is self-luminous and yet it indicates something other than ourselves. The Advaitin explains this by the flowing out of the mind which reflects the light of the self, to join the object of knowledge to the knower. This results in the appearance of conditioned anyonyābhāva, having consciousness as its substratum.[112] The mind (antahkarana) is the limiting adjunct of the self. Depending on its function it is called by different names. Thus whereas the antahkarana is accounted for by avacchinna-vāda (apparent limitation), its varying appearance is accounted for by pratibimba-vāda (reflection determined by its relationship to other things).[113] Śaṅkara lists four different aspects of the antahkarana: manas (state of undefined perceiving), buddhi (defined perception), vijñāna (knowledge), and

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[112] For Śaṅkara's analysis of this see V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.2.28, vol. I, 422.

[113] See Chapter IV, Section 6.

citta (memory).[114]

Each aspect of the antahkarana is the source of types of mental states, i.e., the totality of an instance of the reflection of consciousness, or a cognition. Consciousness "limited by the mental state is the Consciousness associated with the means of knowledge".[115] The empirical self which is limited by the antahkarana provides the unifying substratum for all things to be connected, in which pure consciousness is reflected. The original apprehension of something, its impression (saṁskāra), and its recollection all abide in the same substrate. Recollection occurs in this substratum by the impression's excitation.[116]

5. Perception and Immediate Consciousness

Perception (pratyakṣa) is the means of knowing what is present in a particular part of space at the same time as the cognition of it, by the mind occupying

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[114] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.3.32, vol. II, 48. The Vedānta-Paribhāṣa lists ahamkara (ego) in place of vijnāna (p. 32). The ahamkara, according to Datta, is perception with reference to the self (e.g., emotions). Vijñana is generally knowledge held by the individual, and so the two concepts are related in terms of the ego. Datta notes that there is only real agreement among various Vedantic authors about buddhi and manas, some considering these two as the only aspects of the antahkarana. -- Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 48.

[115] V.P., p. 14.

[116] Sinha, pp. 384-385.

this space. It is characterized by immediacy. ". . . immediacy is but the ever-perfect light of the self, as reflected against the inert antaḥkaraṇa".[117] That is, perceptual knowledge is immediate (aparoksa) and as so characterized does not necessarily require the activity of sense, as in the case of God who has immediate knowledge of everything.[118] Perception is accordingly defined as follows. "An object is said to be cognized by perception when it is capable (of being perceived) and is devoid of any existence apart from that of the Consciousness associated with the subject, which (Consciousness) has for its limiting adjunct a mental state in the form of that object."[119] Perception can be of both the external and the internal (sensuous and non-sensuous). The knowledge of general ignorance occurs by internal perception as does the knowledge of emotions (there seems to be no distinction between moods and emotions in Vedānta).

The perception of external objects involves the unification of three modes of consciousness. These are

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[117] Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 132.

[118] cf. Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, pp. 36-37. In the V.P., p. 12, "immediate" is the translation of sāksāt, indicating the witness self.

[119] V.P., p. 30.

unified by the antahkarana moving out through the buddhi, through the manas, and then through the sense organs to take the form of the object.[120] The mind hence is identified with the space that its object occupies. Such a state of identifying modification is called a vrtti. "Thus in cases of perception such as, 'This jar,' the jar etc. and the mental state [vrtti] in the form of those combine in the same space outside the body".[121] The three modes of consciousness are cognizing, cognitive and object consciousness. That limited by the mind (antahkarana) and associated with the subject (pramātr) is cognizing consciousness. Cognitive consciousness is limited by the vrtti (function) of the antahkarana and is associated with the pramāna. The object (visaya) limits consciousness by its form. Through the union of these modes of consciousness, which in our case only occurs by perception and this through the five senses, an external object is immediately experienced.[122] This means that, due to the unity of consciousness operating as a substratum of both the subject

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[120] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 4.3.7, p. 612.

[121] V.P., p. 15.

[122] V.P., pp. 20-21. The V.P. and the V.P.S. do not include the mind as an organ although it is said to have parts.

and object, their existences are not separated from each other. Thus the perceptuality of objects is defined as consisting "in their not being different from the (Consciousness associated with the) subject."[123]

When the perceptuality of an object is apprehended it may result in determinate or indeterminate perception. An articulation of the state of affairs such as, "I see a jar", is a determinate perception (savikalpaka) and apprehends the relation between the subject (I) and the object (jar) in the perception. It operates parallel to the knowledge arising from non-apprehension. This will appear in the concept of indeterminate (nirvikalpaka) perception. Nirvikalpaka pratyaksa (indeterminate perception) apprehends the undifferentiated substratum which unites the subject and object at the same point in existence. To apprehend any qualifications such as an individual object or its qualities, Sinha explains, "presupposes the apprehension of their difference, and difference means mutual non-existence [anyonyābhāva], which is not apprehended even by determinate perception."[124]

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[123] V.P., p. 25.

[124] Sinha, p. 33.

6. Four Pramānas

Besides pratyaksa (perception) and anupalabdhi (non-apprehension) there are four other means of knowledge (pramānas). One pramāna is never opposed to another for each one gives knowledge about those things which cannot be known by other means.[125] Anumana (inference) is the knowledge of invariable concomitance, i.e., where one thing is, the other thing is always with it. Upamana (comparison) is the instrument for the knowledge of similarity. Comparison begins with a perception that something belongs to a particular class. It proceeds by determining the likeness of another particular member of this class with that thing. The new knowledge that the particular member of the class is like the present thing is not a perception with regard to the particular member; hence it is called upamana. Agama (verbal testimony) is another means of knowledge and consists in being able to understand language. It can also be a source of knowledge and an authoritative source (śabda) when it is impersonally repeated as in the case of the Vedas. Arthāpatti (presumption or postulation) occurs when something is inexplicable. It is sometimes called negative inference or negative invariable concomitance.

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[125] Bri.U., Ś.B., v. 2.1.20, p. 302.

Without assuming a thing which is not already known, something will have occurred which never occurs with just the facts which are known. Whereas in inference one proceeds from the knowledge that two things always occur together, in presumption the facts at hand are conflicting. We postulate an unknown fact to explain what has occurred. The Advaitin uses this means to explain figurative language as well as strange phenomena.

The strangeness of the phenomena is distinct from the common phenomenon which precedes an inference. In each case of presumption an undefined absence occurs and we move by this to its definition and the cohesion of phenomena. From the origination and destruction of the world illusoriness is presumed as an explanatory fact. It should be noted that it is inference by which unreality is determined.[126] The very facts which assume our being at home in the world are the ones which show us our separation in inference. One must feel existent and be assured of the continuity of existence. Then the disruptive features, the holes or non-existences, are absences. That presumption is an accepted means

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[126] "After inference has thus been set forth, it will prove the unreality of the entire universe, which is other than Brahman". -- V.P., p. 77. See Chapter III, Section 4 for an example of this (p. 34).

of knowledge, goes towards man's essential residence in the world and not his uncanny strangeness. What is absent is supposed, as being in some way existent. In order to find one's way in the world what happens must not be contradictory. What is non-existent is contradictory. Therefore one presumes the existence of that which does not contradict our experience. Because one's experience is uncontradictory, one's existence is continuous. Therefore one continues to exist as the substratum of a coherent world. Presumption is based on an absence of the most devastating kind -- discontinuity.

7. Anupalabdhi

In our discussion of absent entities we found that, for the Advaitin, every absence requires a ground to appear upon, and that it also appears in the context of name and form. But neither the cognition of an empty ground nor the empty ground itself can explain our cognition of a particular or more general absence there. The question is that our senses seem to make contact only with things which are present; how then do we perceive absence? This must be different from simply acknowledging a memory for we can remember something that is present as well as absent, and we can acknowledge the absence of something which has never occurred in the

particular location before. Nonetheless memory seems to be somehow involved in this knowledge. The issue is confused by our inclusion of difference, for this is present in memory also. To perceive anything one must be able to differentiate, and so to avoid further difficulties, anupalabdhi was postulated as the unique cause of the knowledge of abhāva. Let us consider an example which is even less 'absence oriented' than the Advaitin account. I put my hand on my leg and leave it still. That it is motionless I can tell from the lack of sensation, for only when it is moving do I feel anything. When it moves I can tell the difference between the crease and the smooth cloth. But I also know that it is moving because there is a continually changing sensation. The sensation, or lack thereof, tells me about states of my hand while the existence of my hand goes unquestioned; it exists continually. The presence of new sensations as my hand moves creates a stream of memories. Each new sensation, by the necessity of having a new sensation to have one at all, is different. Sensation occurs, in this case, as change and it exists for us as past and present. Still, to know the past is to know it as absent but as having been through it.

Advaita Vedānta considers absence as an objective character of things. When in the situation of an

apprehended absence, there is an immediate presentative feeling different from recognition or remembrance, which is able to specify what is absent. This is called anupalabdhi. It is the non-apprehension of the counter-positive of an absence and the means to a type of perceptual knowledge. Anupalabdhi arises as one mental state and as such is opposed to the mental state of perception, for the absent object has an existence apart from the subject. Because the mental state is of a different class, the instrument must be different. There can also be perceptual knowledge which arises from verbal testimony, as in the case of pointing something out to someone, the Vedānta-Paribhāsā notes. Thus we should be careful about the nature of anupalabdhi for it could be very different from just sight. The consciousness limited by the mental state is the consciousness associated with the means of knowledge (in this case anupalabdhi). It is this latter which becomes one with the consciousness limited by the mind. It should also be kept in mind that it is absence of a particular thing that is known by anupalabdhi and not the non-existence of knowledge in general.[127]

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[127] V.P.S., p. 35.

The Katha Upanishad indicates a meaning for upalabdhi when it says:

> Not by speech , not by mind,
> Not by sight can He be apprehended.
> How can He be comprehended [upalabhyate]
> Otherwise than by one's saying 'He is'?
>
> He can indeed be comprehended [upalabdhavya]
> by the thought 'He is' (asti)
> And by (admitting) the real nature of both
> (his comprehensibility and his incom-
> prehensibility).
> When he has been comprehended [upalabdhasya]
> by the thought 'He is'
> His real nature manifests itself.[128]

Comprehension here, indicates understanding a thought which appears in language. It is a type of apprehension which grasps that which may only be demonstrated through language but has a separate kind of existence. A deep inter-relationship of language to thought and existence seems to be implied. Incomprehension or non-apprehension would involve some kind of mystification while indicating the object's incapability of being approached. Labdhi means obtainment, catching, or acquisition. An being the privative and upa meaning up or hither, anupalabdhi means not catching up, rather like a butterfly net. This indicates for us the type of activity being analyzed

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[128] Katha Upanishad, vv. 6.12 and 6.13, in Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, p. 360. Sanskrit transliterated from Dr. E. Röer, ed., The Twelve Principal Upanisads (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1931), I, 90.

and the nature of that which is apprehended. Instead of describing the instrument for the knowledge of absence as apprehension, it is called non-apprehension. Nothing in this case is apprehended. The counterpositive of the absence was not-apprehended when the net swept a particular location.

A pramāna is the cause (kārana) of a pramā which is a true cognition. "A karana is . . . the unique or special cause through the action of which a particular effect is produced."[129] Therefore the absence grasped by this instrument cannot be grasped by any other instrument. Memory seemed to be playing a large part in anupalabdhi, but we must be cautious. If it depended on memory, then one would have to say that where we forgot to think of something, which could be present, it would appear.[130] The complexity of a situation in which an absence is noticed is what lead to anupalabdhi being a unique pramāna.

Anupalabdhi is defined as "the extraordinary cause of that apprehension of non-existence [abhāva] which is not due to knowledge as an instrument."[131]

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[129] Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 27.

[130] Matilal, pp. 114-115.

[131] V.P., p. 125.

It is not the cause of the knowledge of absent, imperceptible objects as inference, comparison, verbal testimony, or presumption may be. Thus it does not deal with dharma, adharma, space, time or God. It does not deal with the memory of absence. It must however have the ability to take in or hold (yogyānupalabdhi) what could be perceived. That is, assuming the presence of the counterpositive in the substratum of the absence, it would be perceived. This latter qualification is turned into a canon for testing the validity of a non-apprehension, that is "if it were present it would have been perceived." The proper sense must also have been engaged. For example, if one does not feel something which is beyond reach, it would be inappropriate to say that it was absent from sight. This means that the absent entity could have been perceived from the same place and at the same time in which the non-apprehension took place. One must be trying to perceive the absent object and failing. But this trying as well as testing is an act of the imagination and as Das notes, "Imagination, far from accounting for absence as a fact, presupposes it at least as its occasion."[132] Thus anupalabdhi is not

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[132] Das, Adhar Chandra, Negative Fact, Negation and Truth (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1942), pp. 14-15.

dependent on what tests it, but must take place under the conditions where perception is possible, viz., with the eyes open and attentive, sufficient light, the location within sight, etc. As in any pramāṇa, the conditions and process may be checked but the pramāṇa may not be challenged. The objects of anupalabdhi are the four types of absence discussed in the last chapter.

8. The Analysis of Anupalabdhi and the Problem of Memory

The account of the factors in the occurrence of anupalabdhi should not surprise us. "On the perception of the existing object and recollection of the absent one, there arises the subjective [mental] knowledge (mānasam jñānam) of non-existence."[133] This multiple activity is conceived of at the moment of cognition as one mental state. The functioning of a pramāṇa is called "the psychosis of the internal organ [antahkaraṇa]".[134] Sinha explains that the Advaitin, in distinction to the Naiyāyika who believes in the atomic nature of the manas, finds nothing objectionable in "the fusion of elementary psychoses into a composite psychosis."[135] There may be

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[133] Datta, The Six Ways of Knowing, p. 190; quoted from Bhatta, Śloka-vārtika, p. 482.

[134] V.P.S., p. 37.

[135] Sinha, p. 100.

two different psychoses at the same time. Part of the conception of anupalabdhi seems to have been in reaction to Nyāya which tried to relate absence to its locus and have it be seen through perception. This made it necessary for absence and its relation to its locus to be separate realities. For Vedānta, anupalabdhi was an answer.

The perception of the ground of an absence, which gives us immediate knowledge, is not all that is necessary for anupalabdhi to occur, but it would be misleading to assume that non-apprehension is the title for a logical decision that something isn't present. It is not the conclusion of reasoning that something doesn't obtain, any more than seeing a house on the way to the store leads us to believe that the existence of the house obtains. The intimate connection of knowledge and language, shown in Chapter III Section 3, goes far in explaining at this point why absence is not, in effect, created by a counterpositive. To say that absence is a linguistic creation imposing itself on the 'real' world would be very misleading. One would have to say in the same breath that presence is a linguistic creation imposing itself on the real world. The merging of nama-rupa and its substratum is the status quo of the ordinary world. But to see this a little more clearly in terms

of the Bhatta explanation given in the last paragraph, we need to explain a bit more about memory. Cognition is an act which is not dependent on a person. It is different from activity which may be commanded. The freedom of a person is in terms of directing his cognition in a direction (closing eyes, plugging nose, etc.). But one may not bring about the cognition or non-cognition of something. Śaṅkara explains this, showing the relationship of language to cognition. ". . . not the circumstance of subordination or non-subordination to some other purpose, but rather the presence or absence of a certain idea furnishes a reason for (our assuming) the existence of something. This is exemplified by the case of a person who, having set out for some other purpose, (nevertheless) forms the conviction of the existence of leaves, grass, and the like, which he sees lying on the road."[136]

Similarly in memory and what makes up memory, Bhāratītīrtha says, there is no dependence on human effort but on the occurrence or process of residual impressions arising. This is a kind of calling up, but the power, like that in invocation, rests outside of human control. Residual impressions are brought

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[136] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.3.33, vol. I, 220. See also Chapter III, Section 3.

forth even when one doesn't desire them.[137] The sight of something may call up what is similar, as may thinking. But memories may appear for some unknown reason and in this case betray an unseen potency in one's experience. These three contributing factors arouse the cause of memory but without controlling it. Throughout this it is impossible to have a memory of what hasn't been experienced. (Thus atyantābhāva is defined in terms of a contradictory combination of cognitions such as a rabbit and a horn.) Memory is thus that which "is incapable of being performed or not performed or performed otherwise (at one's will), does not go beyond the thing as experienced, and is dependent only on the calling up of the residual impression of that (experience)."[138]

Our memory continually makes us aware in new ways of events which we had previously only articulated in one way. We find that we knew things at the time but hadn't articulated them. The problem with this in non-apprehension is that at the moment of our confrontation with a particular locus, we must be aware of a particular counterpositive. This militates against a new awareness of an absence by means of non-apprehension,

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[137] See V.P.S., p. 86.

[138] Ibid., p. 524.

in a thought about what has previously occurred. It must be explicit at the moment it occurs. In the case of someone suggesting a counterpositive to us at a later date ("Did you see a house where this field is now?") we presume due to our past observation of the location (field) that the counterpositive (house) was absent. To have had a non-apprehension we must have been aware of it at the time. ("No, I remember not noticing one.")

9. The General Knowledge of Ignorance

Although anupalabdhi makes illusoriness known, it doesn't make the general knowledge of ignorance known. The split between the knowledge of the absence of knowledge and the knowledge of an absent entity is important, for it is the contention of Vedānta that the knowledge of the absent entity is nescience also. Avidya may be distinguished from the pramāṇas with respect to what is known. It represents the means to what is unknown, whereas the pramāṇas represent the means to what is known. Each is related to the witness self (sāksin) under these guises. But because avidya is the cover of everything, even being the limiting adjunct of consciousness -- which is known as the antahkarana -- it is directly accessible to the self without the intercession of various organs etc.

How ignorance is known and what kind of knowledge this is, has not yet been answered. We are tempted to say that the expression describing deep sleep upon waking, "I knew nothing", is a statement of ignorance. But on close examination, it reveals itself as the knowledge of having had no cognition. It refers to knowing that in the state of deep sleep no names and forms presented themselves or were dealt with. This is not the knowledge of ignorance but the knowledge of the absence of certain things. This knowledge occurs by presumption (arthāpatti) and not anupalabdhi, because the counter-positives of absence are not remembered during blissful sleep. What is perceived and remembered is the undisturbed happiness of deep sleep, according to Advaita. Because avidya has the nature of an existent, if there had been cognition something would have been cognized (as in the case of "I am ignorant"). Therefore we presume the non-existence of cognition and say "I knew nothing." This is further elucidated in Śaṅkara's commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras 2.3.18. The locus of such a negation is existence, of which there is no negation. This is explained: "When space and time are (themselves) denied, then, because of the non-existence of another space and time, it should be said only of the bare meaning of 'exist' that it is the locus (of

the negation), since negation without a locus is impossible."[139]

"I am ignorant" is the witness' direct, and hence immediate, experience of avidya. It is known in the manner of acknowledging a mood, like "I am happy." That it can be a direct and immediate experience is explained by the nature of avidya. It is "non-intelligent in nature, is located in the self and pervades things external and internal".[140] The occurrence of the knowledge of ignorance may be explained by the knowledge of other moods. Pleasure and its apprehending mental mode subsist in one and the same substratum, the antahkarana. This means that a mood is directly perceived as a quality of the mind and not of an object external to the mind. One's state of mind may be a type of differentiation, but it is an encompassing state through which everything is seen. If one says this is the problem, then the meaning in the Taittirīya Upanishad 2.7 ("When, however, one makes a cavity, an interval therein, then he comes to have fear."[141]) is reduced to where there is fear there is fear. We think, however, that it means that

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[139] V.P.S., p. 408.

[140] Ibid., p. 34.

[141] Hume, p. 287.

where one cognizes absence there is fear. Difference is then a mode of ignorance. To say "I am ignorant" is to conceive oneself as avidya, which is to state the problem. One is existing as absence and one is lost. This knowledge then points not to one's nature, but on the one hand to a position apart from where it is possible to be, and on the other hand to the understanding (the witness) of avidya. Conceived as such, avidya is an existent ground in which to be lost.

The experience, or knowledge, of ignorance is realized by becoming verbal testimony: "I am ignorant." This statement itself is then the pramāṇa for the knowledge of ignorance.[142] Śaṅkara qualifies this particular knowledge as follows: "The absence of knowledge cannot be referred to, unless the absence be the object of a direct consciousness of it during the absence."[143]

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[142] V.P.S., p. 37.

[143] Devaraja, p. 190; quoted from Śaṅkara's commentary on the Praśna Upanishad, v. 6.2.

CONCLUSION

Two problems were opened to us in the last chapter. The problem of the nature of the fear, which difference arouses in us, and the threat which absence contains did not become clear. The qualification of our knowledge of ignorance, as having to occur by a direct consciousness of it, was not tied to the analysis of ignorance as a mode of absence. During the course of the expansion of these problems, I hope to review some of the results of this inquiry, and open the way to a few parting thoughts in the appendix.

We have noticed at several points in this essay that absence and presence are reciprocal[144] (and essentially positive) entities. Knowledge may in no way be created by man and absence is no exception.[145] We may learn from others where there is similarity and difference just as someone may point out to us something that we hadn't noticed before. Śaṅkara tells the story of ten people who cross a river. When they reach the other side they decide to count the number present to see that they

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[144] For example, see p. 64.

[145] See p. 63 and footnote #108.

had all made it safely. Each one counts the other people and decides that there are only nine people present. Finally someone points out that the counter is the tenth man. We may learn from others about what is present as well as about what is absent. But such things have to be or not be there to be acknowledged.

Although absence as we now understand it may be connected with presence to a certain extent, there is still an absolute split in their expression. As objects of knowledge and in the means to their acknowledgement they are separate. Yet we can and must be cognizant of both, for we exist as the connection and dialectic between them. Because the self is not manifest it can carry on the dialogue of presence and absence. If it were to be manifest it could not partake of both as it would be either one or the other.

Many of the most wide-ranging experiences of absence (ignorance, the non-cognition of sleep, not knowing dharma) are not contracted by anupalabdhi yet certainly partake of absence. In Chapter V, I maintained that even ignorance is a mode of absence, for it is the discovery of one's mode of existence as that which is essentially absent or absenting. "I am ignorant" is almost a statement of location. It is partially for this reason that

we see the approach of the student in boredom, threatened principally by the void.[146] Still we have been able indirectly to consider these absences and understand their distinction from perceptual knowledge. Anupalabdhi is simply the empirical counterpart of perception with a few changes. We cannot have a non-apprehension in retrospect (we also cannot perceive in retrospect what we didn't perceive at the time). Anupalabdhi is only partially immediate and is more tied up with the name and form of objects than is perception.

In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.6-7 the problem of the threat of absence is discussed. The threat is thoroughly acknowledged as something which must have been well known to the hearers of this upaniṣad. Fear, which is produced by the cognition of distinction, is the ordinary translation for bhayam. It is said "When the other makes even a small hole in him -- then fear [bhayam] is produced for him."[147] Making a small hole means considering Brahman by any kind of distinction. Bhayam is dread, alarm, fear or anxiety, and it arises not in the perception of identity but in that which distinguishes. What distinguishes is characterized by a

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[146] See Chapter II.

[147] Tait.U., v. 2.7, in Röer, p. 219.

hole which is a distinguishing absence. The reason for this, Śaṅkara explains, is that by seeing even a small difference, the fear of change and the acknowledgement of the annihilation of what one identifies oneself with occurs.[148] Seeing an absence in Brahman is to have seen him as not existing and it is by absence that one distinguishes. One who sees absence is joined with it and if he sees that as himself, then he becomes absent. Bhayam is the experience of thinking of oneself as differentiated. This is explained by the creation of the world in which Brahman when manifested became distinguished by all that is and is not. "When he had entered it -- he was endowed with form and void of form -- defined and not defined -- a foundation and without foundation -- endowed with knowledge and void of knowledge --".[149] The unity of Brahman was thus obscured by difference. The encounter with difference is the encounter with ignorance. This analysis of bhayam is confirmed by Śaṅkara's assertion that identification with another causes pain in the other's absence.[150]

The psychology of perception developed on pages

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[148] V.S., Ś.B., v. 1.1.19, vol. I, 71.

[149] Tait.U., v. 2.6, in Röer, p. 217.

[150] V.S., Ś.B., v. 2.3.46, vol. II, 63-65.

67-69 aids in seeing the ease with which ignorance may be entered. The immediacy of perception increases the likelihood of an identity with absence. This psychology of the moving out of the antahkarana explains the exhaustion of buying food in a supermarket; looking at row upon row of different items. Instead of the mind being the receptor of sensations it is extended. Thus the more sensation the more exhausted one becomes. Sensation would not be valued for its own sake in Advaita.

The fear occurring in the apprehension of absence brings us to another designation of absence, the end. For it is the end above all which strikes fear in us. We think of it as the void which describes a long form. The end of a ruler is distinguished by the absence of any more ruler.. It may also designate that which limits anything. The Vedāntic interpretation of absence, however, points out that not only is the absence a positive entity but the substratum which underlies the knowledge of an absence is existence. Even avidya is an existent although it is devoid of consciousness.

This latter understanding of absence we interpreted in terms of the relationship of the knower and the world as being away, and also in terms of the objects known in the world as being away. This presented itself through the problem of causality in which we found that

there is no possibility of existence springing from non-existence. The cause and the effect are continuous and thus absent entities, as effects, are waiting to be uncovered in their causes.[151] Thus we noticed that the status of absence vis-à-vis non-existence had radically changed. This understanding of causality affected our understanding of memory and language.

All four types of abhāva occur experientially and immediately. They are not just linguistic conceptions but are interpreted experiences. By the Advaitin account of absence in terms of positive entities, the impossibility of maintaining a dim but undefined idea of something missing or wrong is expounded. What is wrong is precisely the difference in the conception of oneself. An unencountered alternative can have no existence for the individual, for the alternative must be in one's memory. Hence the necessary alternatives are already present in the individual's existence. The person's loss and state of being away is defined in terms of the nature of his involvement with avidya and it is explained by an analysis of this involvement.

One of the criteria of truth is that it leads

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[151] For more on this problem see The Māndūkyopanisad with Gaudapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary, v. 4.3-23, pp. 216-237, and also V.S., S.B., v. 2.1.18, vol. I, 334-342.

to salvation (moksa). This becomes linked in a strange way with the problem of absence. The cognition of an absence points out a deficiency in what is present. The requirement, however, that something always has to exist as the counterpositive of an absence, may seem to end the type of criticism which is aware that a problem exists but does not know what it is. As a Westerner, I may be inclined to believe that a counterpositive (the solution for the problem of what is absent) may not already exist (as in the case of invention). This goes against the concept of causality in Vedānta. Now it is important that moksa, if it is discovered, be eternal. The historical question of whether the idea of the eternity of salvation preceded the idea of the prior existence of counterpositives for the knowledge of the absent entity is beside the point. The concept of the temporal creation by man of what he determines to be a solution, alongside the concept that to be saved he must be immortal, is an impossible situation. What becomes clear in the Advaitin discussion is that the prior existence of the counterpositive is necessary for the problem to occur. That is, the discovery of salvation requires that the moment of discovery be incidental to the existence of the counterpositive. It cannot be qualified, in an essential way, by the fact of its

acknowledgement.

We discovered that abhāva is a phenomenon which is essentially absent from being. But it is the knowledge of this which presents that which is eternal and that which is not. The persistance of the consciousness of a jar, even when the jar disappears, makes the knowledge of absence available even as it presents the persistance of consciousness. It becomes necessary through a process of negating (neti-neti) to show the absent nature of our being with phenomena. For to acknowledge phenomena as absence, ultimately by apavāda, is to concur with the presence of Brahman.

> As the flowing, sea-going rivers, when they have reached the sea, are annihilated, as their names and forms perish and only the name of sea remains, so the sixteen parts of the witness (soul) which are going to the soul (as the rivers to the sea), when they have reached the soul, are annihilated, their names and forms perish and only the name of soul remains; it is (then) without parts, it is immortal. Here follows this memorial verse:
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> "Let man know the spirit, who ought to be known, in whom the (sixteen) parts abide, as the spokes in the nave [nābhau] (of the wheel), in order that death may not pain you."[152]

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[152] Praśna-Upaniṣad, v. 6.5-6, in Röer, pp. 131-132.

APPENDIX

A Note on Images of Absence

That there is fear where one sees the slightest hole in Brahman explains one aspect of the symbolism of circles, but holes are jagged things which penetrate other things. We may distinguish holes in this sense from circles which unify and represent the central point of a wheel. Circles delimit an essential vacancy at the central part of that which revolves and hence repeats. That which is repetitious is the alternating absence and presence of an entity. The center of a wheel is what it revolves around, but for repetition to occur and the wheel to spin, an axle is required. It is the hole in the center of the wheel which permits an axle so that the wheel can be spun. The motionless center of the wheel is thus what enables repetition. But this center is plenitude. It is the spirit, according to the Praśna Upaniṣad 6.5-6. But it is more than this. It is possible that the symbol of the wheel nave (0) became the designation for zero, even as the name itself (nābha)

came to mean zero.[153] As such the concept of zero was a very full and unthreatening concept, for it witnessed the plenitude of being. Absence in this sense presents no fear of the void; it is its antithesis. The same could be said with the concept of space. Its fullness is contingent on its non-differentiation. When zero and space are conceived as permeated by being, the void and nothingness have no residence in our world.

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[153] Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., "Kha and Other Words Denoting 'Zero' in Connection with the Metaphysics of Space", Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies London Institution, London, 1934.

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