

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-REALIZATION
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ŚĀṆKARĀCĀRYA

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A Study of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi
and Aparokṣānubhūti

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

September 1973

MASTER OF ARTS (1973)
(Religious Sciences)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario.

TITLE: The Phenomenology of Self-Realization in
the Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya

A Study of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparoksānubhūti

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NUMBER OF PAGES:

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis explores the phenomenological characteristics of Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita philosophy, using two minor works attributed to him by tradition, namely, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparoksānubhūti. An attempt is made to find parallels in the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya, such as the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, the Bhagavad-Gīta Bhāṣya, and commentaries on the ten or eleven Upanisads. The Transcendental Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl is used as the basic model for comparison.

PREFACE

Readers of this thesis may be curious to know how and why a Westerner, especially one raised in a Christian home and Church environment, trained in Theology for the ministry, and a former missionary in India, came to his present preoccupation and fascination with Advaita Vedānta. This preface is written, therefore, to provide a brief autobiographical sketch of the author's spiritual and intellectual pilgrimage to date.

My home was, and still is, a very religious place. Every member of our family attended Church and Sunday School regularly and was active in Church-related activities. My two elder brothers trained for the ministry before me. Even when a teen-ager, the worship and service of God retained in my life its place of paramount importance.

During my undergraduate years at McMaster University, I greatly enjoyed courses in psychology, philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. The question that arose insistently in my mind during those years was epistemological: "How do we know God?" Interestingly enough, it was during this period of my education when I decided to volunteer as a missionary to India.

To be an overseas missionary of our denomination, one was required to study theology in seminary and to be ordained by the Church. I enrolled, therefore, at McMaster Divinity School where my favorite subject was Systematic Theology. I sought a solution to the epistemological problem of religious knowledge by writing my B. D. Thesis on the Doctrine of Revelation, with special reference to its media. The thesis explored Biblical examples of divine revelation in nature, and through the events of history and the self-consciousness of Jesus. The Christian experience of the Holy Spirit, with its divine immanence in man, solved the problem of revelation for me in the context of Christian theology.

I felt spiritually exhausted by the end of my seminary training, and knew that I was not ready for an encounter with Indian culture and religion. So I went to Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut, U.S.A., to study, among other things cultural anthropology and Indian religious philosophy. This administered a rude shock to my inherited faith in God, but I recovered in time to be commissioned as a missionary to India. I sailed, along with my wife and three small children to India in 1958, eager to express God's love in humanitarian service to the Indian people, and to enter into dialogue with Hindus on the meaning of religion.

My eleven years in India (1959-1970) were spent in the service of a minority Christian community. The ingrown,

ghetto-like mentality of the Church did not encourage dialogue with Hindus, much less humanitarian service. I busied myself with Biblical teaching and preaching and literacy work within the Christian community. Gradually, my disallusionment with the social expression of Christianity led me to suspect that something was wrong with the theology motivating and sustaining it. A flood of books from the West, culminating in the secular and Death of God theologies, seemed to confirm this suspicion. I began to search for a more viable faith, one with strong intellectual roots. For a while, I was attracted to the existential theologies of writers like John Macquarrie.

On my return to Canada in 1971, I turned my attention more and more from theology to philosophy and the philosophy of religion. I enrolled in the Department of Religion at McMaster, hoping to find a new approach to the problem of religious knowledge and experience. My continuing interest in Indian philosophy determined my course of study. Since then I have completed two years of Sanskrit and plunged into the intricacies of Vedāntic philosophy.

My thesis research, conducted under the excellent guidance of Dr. K. Sivaraman, has led me to discover the remarkable similarity of Śankarāchārya's Advaita Vedānta and Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology. Though the two philosophies represent Eastern and Western, ancient and modern, religious and secular modes of philosophizing about

Ultimate Reality, yet they are closely related.

The Advaita philosophy, it seems to me, offers a uniquely catholic or universal philosophy of religion. It lays bare the foundation of all knowledge, including religious knowledge. It harmonizes with science and logic. Advaita Vedānta defends genuine spirituality against materialism, psychologism, scientism, and supernaturalism. It corrects the dogmatic notions of "revelation" common to most, if not all of the empirical religion, and the fulfilment of man's long quest for knowledge of Divinity.

This thesis marks the beginning, not the end, of a great spiritual and intellectual adventure. I look forward to a more intensive study of Śaṅkarācārya's writings from a phenomenological point of view in the doctoral programme. I am confident that such a study will contribute to building a bridge of understanding between Christians and Hindus, and towards the emergence of a universal philosophy of religion.

I wish to acknowledge here special thanks to members of my thesis Supervisory Committee, Dr. K. Sivaraman, (Chairman) Dr. J.G. Arapura, both of the Department of Religion; and to Dr. G.B. Madison of the Department of Philosophy. I am grateful to Mrs. Betty Repa for her labours in typing the thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Wherever "S. B." or Bhāsyā appears after an abbreviation it means that Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on that work is being referred to.

<u>B. G.</u> or <u>Bhg. G.</u>	<u>Bhagavad-Gītā</u>
<u>B. S.</u>	<u>Brahma Sūtra</u> or <u>Vedānta Sūtra</u>
<u>Br. Up.</u> , or <u>Brihad. Up.</u>	<u>Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad</u>
<u>Chānd. Up.</u>	<u>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</u>
<u>Katha Up.</u>	<u>Katha Upaniṣad</u>
<u>Mānd. Up.</u>	<u>Māndūkyopaniṣad</u>
<u>Mund. Up.</u>	<u>Mundaka Upaniṣad</u>
<u>Taitt. Up.</u>	<u>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</u>

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We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually "there for us", "present to our hand", and will ever remain there, is a "fact-world" of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets.

If I do this, as I am fully free to do, I do not then deny this "world", as though I were a sophist, I do not doubt that it is there as though I were a sceptic; but I use the "phenomenological" Επισημη which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence (Dasein).

- Edmund Husserl, Ideas, 99-100

Consciousness, considered in its "purity", must be reckoned as a self-contained system of Being, as a system of Absolute Being, into which nothing can penetrate, and from which nothing can escape; which has no spatio-temporal exterior, and can be inside no spatio-temporal system; which cannot experience causality from anything nor exert causality upon anything, it being presupposed that causality bears the normal sense of natural causality as a relation of dependence between realities.

On the other side, the whole spatio-temporal world, to which man and the human Ego claim to belong as subordinate singular realities, is according to its own meaning mere intentional Being, a Being, therefore, which has the merely secondary, relative sense of a Being for a consciousness. It is a Being which consciousness in its own experiences (Erfahrungen) posits, and is, in principle, intuitable and determinable only as the element common to the harmoniously (Einstimmig) motivated appearance-manifolds, but over and beyond this, is just nothing at all.

- Edmund Husserl, Ideas, 139

INTRODUCTION

1. Preamble

¹
Advaita Vedānta is not a religion per se but is rather a philosophy of religion that evolved on the Indian subcontinent as the fruit of a long process of meditation on religious phenomena by enlightened seers. It is the culmination of centuries of reflection on a bewildering variety of religious experiences known to the Hindus and recorded for posterity in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad-Gītā and many other sacred writings. This sophisticated product of man's intellectual and spiritual intuition emerged in the context of India's jungle of religious beliefs and practices, not the least of which is known to-day as Buddhism. Even within the orthodox fold of Hinduism, Advaita had to contend with rival schools of philosophy such as Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita.² One of the earliest and best-known formulators of Advaita was Gaudapāda, but the genius who, more than any other, articulated and systematized it as a universal philosophy

¹

¹Vedānta means "end or culmination of the Veda". The term signifies those schools which claim to summarize the teachings of the four Vedas, including the Upaniṣads. Advaita means "non-dual", the doctrine that represents Ultimate Réality (Brahman-Ātman) without duality or multiplicity, without qualities or attributes.

²Dvaita means "dual"; Viśiṣṭādvaita means "qualified dualism".

of religion, and brought it to ascendancy over its rivals in India was Śaṅkarācārya.³

There is a vast amount of literature attributed to the authorship of Śaṅkarācārya by tradition. Most scholars agree without dispute that he wrote commentaries on the ten major Upaniṣads: Brhad-āranyaka, Chāndogya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Īśa, Kena, Kātha, Praśna, Mundaka, and Māṇḍūkya. There are some reservations about the commentary on the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, but none about the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya or the Bhagavad-Gītā Bhāṣya.⁴ There is much less consensus among scholars about the Sankarite authorship of "minor" works like Upadeśasahasri, Ātma Bodha, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, and Aparokṣānubhūti. There are more than a hundred such works. It is perhaps impossible to establish with certainty, by the historical method, how many of these documents are authentic writings of Śaṅkarācārya. The possibility of establishing their dating and authorship by internal literary and philosophical evidence is more feasible, though inconclusive. We shall assume, therefore, that the tradition attributing Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti to Śaṅkarācārya is true unless it can be shown that the philosophical contents are

3

See my Appendix 1 for a summary of the man and his works.

4

Bhāṣya means "commentary". In future, we shall designate commentaries by Śaṅkarācārya by the abbreviation "Ś.B." following the name of the text commented upon.

inconsistent with his known writings. In this connection, for example, we examine and reject the argument against Śaṅkarācārya's authorship of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi advanced by Daniel H.H. Ingalls on philosophical grounds.⁵

I am convinced that Śaṅkarācārya's so-called "minor" works give a better introduction to the essentials of Advaita Vedānta than his "major" commentaries. They are more direct and forthright in style, designed as "manuals" for those aspiring to "Self-realization". They are unencumbered with arguments against opponents of rival schools, or technical discussions of obscure points in philosophy. They are free from the burden of commenting on the text of Scripture (Śruti). They are cast in a phenomenological mode of expression.

My general approach in this thesis can be described as "phenomenological". Therefore, I have devoted considerable space in the Introduction to a description of the phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl, the father of modern Phenomenology. I do not pretend to give an adequate survey of Husserl's complex methodology. At best, I indicate some general features for comparison with Advaita Vedānta. I find a striking affinity of method and result in these two philosophies of ancient and modern times.⁶ Both proceed by the

5

See Appendix 2 for my refutation of Ingall's theory.

6

I am encouraged in this bold idea by J.N. Mohanty's

systematic analysis of human consciousness. Both employ a method of "reducing" or "bracketing" the phenomenal world. Both attain astonishingly similar results: the Transcendental Ego of Husserl, and the transcendental Self (Ātman) of Śaṅkarācārya.

Lest any of my readers doubt the relevance of Phenomenology to the study of Advaita or religious philosophy in general, I have included a section in this Introduction called "Religion in a Phenomenological Key". I am indebted to Peter Koestenbaum's illuminating article on the subject.⁷ He lists nine points where Husserl's Transcendental Ego impinges on the world of religion. I make use of only seven, though I am sure there are additional ones to be considered.

The final section of my Introduction deals with the unique method of Advaita called "deliberate superimposition and rescission" (adhyāropāpavāda). It is of crucial importance for interpreting Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy, and I shall have occasion to refer to it in the thesis whenever it is necessary to resolve apparent contradictions between the empirical and transcendental modes of speaking and thinking. Failure

article, "Phenomenology in Indian Philosophy", in Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of Philosophy, XIII, Brussels: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1953, pp.255-62.

7

Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology", chapter 7 of Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, Ed. J. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz, Princeton, Toronto and London: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1967, pp.185-193.

to understand this method has led to gross misinterpretation of Advaita by scholars of East and West. It is appropriate only in the context of Transcendental Phenomenology and so I draw attention to it at the outset.

Daniel H.H. Ingalls advances the theory that Śaṅkarācārya started out in the Bhedābheda tradition,⁸ and later moved away from it under the influence of a phenomenistic school akin to Gaudapāda's Kārikās. He opines that Śaṅkarācārya did not go as far in the direction of phenomenism as Gaudapāda, and that his most original contribution was the concept of a qualityless Brahman.⁹ I question the thesis that Śaṅkarācārya's attribute-less Brahman can, in any sense, be associated with phenomenism. Buddhist "phenomenism" is an anti-substance doctrine directed not only against material substance but also against "spiritual substance" whereas Śaṅkarācārya's (and even Gaudapāda's) approach may be described as an attempt at ultimate reduction of the phenomenal world. Phenomenism and phenomenology are radically different types of reduction. For Husserl reduction involves dispensing with all genetic and existential considerations and focusing on the "eidetic" structures of experience.

⁸ Bhedābheda-vāda is the theory that the individual selves are both different and non-different from Brahman.

⁹ Daniel H.H. Ingalls, "The Study of Śaṅkarācārya", art. in

The transcendental Brahman-Ātman emerges only after a ruthless "phenomenological reduction" of the world. I find no essential difference between the phenomenology of Śaṅkarācārya and his predecessor Gaudapāda. Ingall's thesis results from a failure to distinguish phenomenalism from phenomenology and to discern the method of transcendental phenomenology in the ancient formulators of Advaita.

In Chapter One I plan to deal with Śaṅkarācārya's Four Preliminary Qualifications (Sādhanā). These are outlined in both Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti, as part of the "requirements" for admission to the "school" of Self-realization. They surpass mere academic qualifications, demanding of the student mental and spiritual preparation of a unique kind. We shall examine them to find out what principles of the phenomenological method are involved. At the end of the chapter we shall see how Śaṅkarācārya reinterprets and supplements the eight steps of Patañjali's Yoga to suit his own purposes.

In Chapter Two I plan to analyze the Three States of Consciousness - Waking, Dream, and Deep Sleep, as they are used by Śaṅkarācārya for "reducing" the ego and attaining Self-realization. (Aparokṣānubhūti).

Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, XXXIII, Ed. Karmarkar and R.N. Dandekar, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1953, p.12.

In Chapter Three I plan to deal with Śaṅkarācārya's description and "reduction" of the Five Sheaths (kośas) that "cover" the Self - the physical, vital, mental, intellectual, and bliss sheaths. These get falsely identified with the Self through primal ignorance and have to be "reduced" one by one so that the Self (Ātman) may be realized.

In chapter Four I plan to deal with Śaṅkarācārya's "reduction" of the Three Bodies - the gross, subtle, and causal bodies. This will repeat somewhat the material of the Third Chapter in a different form, but will allow me to introduce some new entities for reduction, for example: Īśvara (God), Prarābdha Karma (those actions determining bodily existence), and the causal relation. The thoroughness of the "phenomenological reduction" in Chapter Four enables me to elaborate on the transcendental Self (Ātman), and on the "I am" sayings of the Jīvanmukta (one who is liberated while still embodied) that are found uniquely in both Aparoksānubhūti Vivekacūḍāmaṇi. The latter are of special interest because they are not found in the "major" commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya.

In my conclusion, I shall recapitulate the phenomenological steps outlined in the four preceding chapters, and summarize my reasons for concluding that Śaṅkarācārya was a transcendental phenomenologist in an age when those grandiose terms were unknown.

2. The Approach Through Husserl's Phenomenology

The writer finds it illuminating to approach Advaita Vedānta through the methodology known to-day in philosophical circles as Transcendental Phenomenology. We shall deal with its relevance to the study of religious phenomena in a later section. Here we are primarily concerned to describe what we mean by Phenomenology, and to isolate some of its leading features. James M. Edie describes Phenomenology as a "science of experience" or a "radical empiricism" that cannot be equated with traditional empiricism or psychologism. By analyzing consciousness in its "intentionality", Phenomenology uncovers the "strict correlativity" or polarity of subject and object in consciousness. This opens up the possibility of a third or "Transcendental" dimension:

The phenomenological method is a descriptive method; the type of philosophy it inaugurates can be called a radical empiricism.... Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject; it is a science of experience.... It is, therefore, a study of consciousness as intentional, as directed towards objects, as living in an intentionally constituted world. The subject (noesis) and the object (noema) are studied in their strict correlativity on each level of experience.... Such a study is transcendental in the sense that it aims at disclosing the structures of consciousness as consciousness.... In short, phenomenology is a study of phenomena.¹⁰

10

Pierre Thévenaz, What is Phenomenology? And Other Essays, Ed. and Trans. James M. Edie, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962, p.19-20

The technique of "phenomenological reduction" is fundamental to Husserl's method because it suspends the "natural attitude" of the mind and permits the grasping of the world as phenomenon. It is not concerned either to affirm or deny the factual reality of the world, but to clarify its "constitution" in consciousness:

It is by a process of reduction (going against the natural tendencies of the mind) by a radical asceticism... that he exorcises the spectre of psychology and the sly temptations of psychologism... to permit a grasping of the world...as phenomenon. It is not a question of making it appear in its factual reality or in its existence (which are put in parentheses), but in its immanent reality to consciousness.... To reduce does not mean to eliminate or to put in doubt.... All to the contrary, the primordial and essential purpose of the reduction is to bring to light this essential intentional contact between consciousness and the world, a relationship which in the natural attitude remains veiled.¹¹

The radical nature of Husserl's phenomenological reduction is indicated by his use of epokhé (Greek meaning "abstention"). He "brackets" or "disconnects" the natural world and all theories or sciences related to the natural world:

We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually "there for us", "present to hand", and will ever remain there, is a "fact-world" of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets. If I do this, as I am fully free to do, I do not then deny this "world", as though I were a sophist,

11

Thévenaz, op. cit., p.42-3.

I do not doubt that it is there as though I were a sceptic; but I use the "phenomenological" ἐποχή, which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence (Dasein).¹²

What result is achieved by Husserl's radical abstention (epokhé) from the "natural attitude"? He becomes aware, for the first time, of "transcendental subjectivity" and perceives it as the origin, support, and foundation of all meaning:

For Husserl, in the reduction the world remains where it is, but now one perceives that every act of knowledge in fact refers to a subject (the transcendental Ego) as to and ultimate and primary term which is the origin, the support or foundation of its meaning. The reduction leads then, simultaneously to "the apodictic evidence" of the I (to the cogito, to the consciousness of self) and to the world-phenomenon intended by the transcendental consciousness, and above all to their absolutely fundamental and indissoluble conjunction.... But this cogito is not, as with Descartes, the indubitable knowledge of a being, ...nor is it the interior experience of a sort of primitive fact, the ego. That would be to remain on the level of the world, of psychological knowledge, and of the natural knowledge of fact. It is the grasping of self outside the natural world, in an absolutely indubitable evidence, as transcendental subjectivity, that is to say as origin of all meanings, as the sense of the world.¹³

Gaston Berger warns us against thinking that Phenomenology, because of its recognition of "transcendental subjectivity" turns away from this world and somehow claims to reveal another world: "The ego's life transcends the

12

Edmund Husserl, Ideas, General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, 3rd. ed. Trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969, p.99-100. (underlining mine).

13

Thévenaz, op. cit., p.47. (underlining mine).

world, not because it is foreign to the world, but because it constitutes the world.¹⁴ He considers that the task of phenomenology is to explain "the origin of the world" in relation to the constitutive intentionality of the Transcendental Ego: "Here the adequate formula is "ego-cogito - cogitatum"..."all facts in the world, all essences, send us back to the transcendental ego as the ultimate term which alone appears to us as necessary."¹⁵ Eugen Fink makes a similar point when he calls world constitution the central and fundamental concept of Phenomenology:

The true theme of phenomenology is neither the world on the one hand, nor a transcendental subjectivity which is to be set over and against the world on the other, but the world's becoming in the constitution of transcendental subjectivity.¹⁶

Husserl's distinction between the Transcendental Ego and the human ego separates him from the existentialists, who reject the concept of "disembodied pure consciousness"

Phenomenologically...I exist as a transcendental Ego, an awareness of what it is to be an embodied Ego in the

14

Gaston Berger, The Cogito in Husserl's Philosophy, Trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin, Intro. by James M. Edie, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p.72.

15

Berger, op. cit., p.73

16

Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" in The Phenomenology of Husserl, Ed. R.O. Elveton, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970, p.130.

world. But it is just this embodied Ego, or at least an Ego essentially engaged in the world, not just a pure conscious subject, with which the existentialists are concerned. Thus Husserl's distinguishing between a transcendental Ego, pure consciousness as such, and a human Ego immersed in the world, and his granting of a primary reality to the former rather than the later, separate him in principle from the existentialists whom he has so strongly influenced.¹⁷

For Husserl, it is not only possible but desirable to progress from awareness of the "human ego" to the "transcendental Ego" by the method of "eidetic reduction". Maurice Natanson defines "eidetic reduction" as moving (in consciousness) from "matters of fact to essences, from empirical to essential universality."¹⁸ "The eidetic reduction is a method by means of which the phenomenologist is able to attend to the character of the given, setting aside that which is contingent and secondary and noting that which shows itself as universal."¹⁹ The final outcome of Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology" is the "constitutive identity"¹⁹ of the human and transcendental Egos.

17

F. Molina, "Husserl: The Transcendental Turn", Chapter 3 in Existentialism as Philosophy, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1962, p.50.

18

Maurice Natanson, Literature, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences (Essays in Existentialism and Phenomenology), The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962, p.14.

19

Natanson, loc. cit.

The identity which prevails here is not a form of identity that can be determined within the horizon of the mundane idea of being, but is rather a form of identity which holds between a mundane being...and a transcendental being. Is man therefore the absolute? Not at all. But neither is the absolute a "transcendent" reality beyond man and not encompassing him.... In place of a "transcendent" relation between man and the world-ground we must posit a "transcendental" relation which does not overlook man's worldly finitude...but which comprehends it as a constituted meaning, thereby taking it back into the infinite essence of spirit.²⁰

All ontic forms of identity fail to define the "constitutive" identity of the human and transcendental Egos, because no analogous relation is possible in the "natural attitude."

Husserl's conclusion may be termed transcendental and phenomenological idealism. Ultimately, he realizes the one, universal, transcendental, pure Consciousness that is the Ground and Source for all individual egos and their constituted world(s):

In any event, it is clear that Husserl considered the full development of his phenomenology to be bound up necessarily with a transcendental idealism in which pure consciousness as the phenomenological residuum gained by means of epoche and transcendental reduction is the rock bottom of all phenomenological enquiry. And this transcendental ego is, for Husserl, consciousness as such, in its ultimate generality, revealed as the very condition for the possibility of individual empirical egos and ultimately, their world. Thus, there are not transcendent egos, but the Transcendental Ego, which is the phenomenological ground and source for the individuated consciousnesses within empirical reality. ²¹

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Eugen Fink, op. cit., p.144.

21

Natanson, op. cit., p.20-21.

3. Transcendental Phenomenology and Advaita Vedānta

The preceding section serves to highlight the salient features of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology. It is now appropriate to ask whether the general structure of Phenomenology resembles the structure of Advaita Vedānta as found in the writings of Śaṅkarācārya. The answer is a categorical "yes". Consider the following points:

(1) Husserl's epoché or abstention from the "natural attitude" and deliberate "bracketing" of the general thesis of "objectivity" with respect to the world parallels in function Śaṅkarācārya's call to "renounce" the world of objects and actions. The world's "factual existence" remains, but its claim to reality or validity is "reduced" to secondary or practical reality (vyavahārika satta) in comparison with the Absolute Reality (paramārthika satta) of Brahman-Ātman.

(2) Husserl's concept of the "natural attitude" with its naïveté regarding the "reality" of phenomenal existence and its theses of "objectivity" (for example, in the sciences or positivism) functions like Śaṅkarācārya's concept of ignorance (avidyā). In Advaita, the cancellation or rescission (apavāda) of "entities" falsely superimposed on the Self (Ātman) by ignorance results in "liberation" (mukti) or the immediate intuition of Brahman.

(3) Husserl's concept of the Transcendental Ego as "pure" consciousness and its qualitative difference from the "human ego" of empirical existence functions like the Self (Ātman) in Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta. The Ātman too is non-egological, non-empirical, devoid of all qualities or attributes, absolutely unique and universal. It is the "essence" of all empirical egos, the Being (Sat) of all existence, the source of all meaning. It is Consciousness (Cit) itself.

(4) Husserl's concepts of "intentionality" and "constitution" with respect to the Transcendental Ego's creativity in relation to the world, functions like Śaṅkarācārya's concepts of ignorance (avidyā) and cosmic illusion (māyā). The empirical selves (Jīvas) and their "world" of multiplicity or duality results from the "projecting" (vikṣepa) and "covering" (āvaraṇa) functions of cosmic illusion (māyā), which is the mysterious power (śakti) of Brahman. In Advaita, the phenomenal world has "reality" only in a secondary or derivative sense, only as a false "appearance" of Ultimate Reality. It is indescribable (anirvacanīya) in terms of either "existence" or "non-existence".

(5) Husserl achieves "apodictic" or absolutely certain evidence of the Transcendental Ego by the method of "phenomenological" and "eidetic" reduction. This corresponds to the immediate and self-evidencing knowledge of the Self (Ātman) called "Self-realization" which is attained in Advaita Vedānta by the progressive cancellation or rescission of false superimpositions imposed on the Self by ignorance.

We could enumerate many more points of similarity. Enough has been said to indicate the parallel structures of the two philosophies and the indisputable fact that they share a common approach to Reality. They both may be termed "transcendental-phenomenological idealism". J.N. Mohanty, a well-known scholar of Phenomenology and Vedānta in India has written in strong and unequivocal support of the thesis that orthodox Vedānta, and its predecessor Sāṅkhya are motivated, originally, by phenomenology and ought to be interpreted in that context.

Mohanty writes:

The ultimate principle in each of these systems [Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta] is the pure consciousness itself and the dynamis [sic] of thought seems to have often the motive of withdrawing the attention from the object-world and fixing it upon this region of pure consciousness. The withdrawal and attainment can not be catastrophic and must have to pass through successive stages. Hence the need of a description of these successive stages and this constitutes the underlying motive of the transcendental psychology.....
Indeed, it is interesting to see how in the Sāṅkhya, an evolutionary ontology has been made subordinate to the phenomenological motive. Conceived as a purely naturalistic evolutionary ontology, the terminology of the Sāṅkhya becomes unmeaning.....
Purusa, the ultimate Conscious principle is the pure Consciousness, - transcendental subjectivity.²²

The Vedānta has also a metaphysical motive; but it is phenomenology that predominates. Indeed the history of the Vedānta during the period following its great formulator Sankara falls into two main camps, which we can here differentiate as follows. The one emphasises the logical-ontological aspect; the other and the more orthodox school emphasises what we would like to call the

²² J.N. Mohanty, op. cit., p.258.

phenomenological aspect. And the history of the Vedānta also contains enough evidence for the only too well-known fact that the logico-ontological aspect developed only when the Vedānta as a philosophical school had to stand up and defend its own against the attacks of the Buddhists and the dualists. But to understand the Vedānta only through its dialectics is to miss its true and inner essence. The Vedānta's "Brahman" is rather the transcendental subjectivity of Kant or Husserl than the all-inclusive Absolute of Hegel or Bradley.²³

The great Vedāntist Sankara begins his famous commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras by formulating this fundamental distinction between Immanence and Transcendence, between consciousness as such and all that by its very nature has the status of "intentional" being.....

...the Vedāntic literature abounds in phenomenology of perception, of dream, of sleep and of the illusiory[sic] experiences. To explore these treasures and to get at the original motive is a task of great magnitude as well as of immense interest.²⁴

4. Religion in a Phenomenological Key

We turn now to the specific application of phenomenological method to religion, using Peter Koestenbaum's excellent article on the subject as our guide. Though Husserl gave no religious significance as such to his doctrine of the Transcendental Ego, Koestenbaum's interpretation of it is highly

23

Ibid., p.259.

24

Ibid., p.260.

25

Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, Ed. J. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz, Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1967, p. 174-214.

suggestive and invites comparison with the Self (Ātman) of Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta. The paradigm of "intentionality" is the starting-point, because it differentiates the Transcendental Ego from the "human ego":

The paradigm of the intentionality of consciousness mentioned earlier (i.e., the ego-cogito-cogitatum triad) can serve as basis for a brief explication of the Transcendental Ego and its religious implications.... When I focus my attention on any object of apprehension - a physical object, an abstraction, a feeling - no problem regarding the nature of the ego appears. But when the intentionality of consciousness directs itself on the ego proper, when I explore my own ego, then the above analysis of consciousness demands that we postulate two different egos in experience: the ego that is perceived (called the empirical or the psychological ego) and the ego that does the perceiving or apprehending (called the Transcendental Ego). The Transcendental Ego is the ultimate core of consciousness. It cannot be apprehended in the manner of an object - since it is the perennial subject - but it is nevertheless present in experience.²⁶

Actually, it is misleading to talk about "two different egos" in experience as if we were all suffering from schizophrenia. The intention is quite different, namely, to draw attention to the capacity of the self to be aware of itself, to objectify its operations. It is probably more accurate to speak of a "polarity" in consciousness (rather than a duality) which we symbolize in language as "human ego" and "transcendental ego":

First of all, the Transcendental Ego is experienced as distinct from the body and the psychological states of the individual. I experience my anxiety, my joy, and my body. The I that does the experiencing is structurally different from that which it experiences: the I is the Transcendental Ego, and the anxiety, joy, and the body represent the empirical or psychological ego. The two

egos are at opposite extremes of the intentional stream of consciousness.²⁷

Koestenbaum feels that philosophy as a whole has neglected to give phenomenological descriptions of the appearance of the Transcendental Ego in consciousness. Existentialists like Sartre, in fact, deny its existence altogether and describe its absence as "Nothing". The term is not altogether inappropriate, since we lack language to describe this unique, non-objectifiable locus of experience.²⁸

The experience of the Transcendental Ego and its inexpressibility in language may in fact account for a wide variety of religious phenomena like the Buddhist Nirvana, the Vedantic "Neti Neti", the "Death of God" theology of modern Christianity, not to mention the many species of mysticism. Koestenbaum sees the experience of the Transcendental Ego as the primal source of all "negative theology":

27.

Ibid., p.185+6.

28

It is doubtful whether modern philosophers like Sartre, when they use the term "Nothing", succeed in emptying the self of all positive or transcendental meaning. Michael Novak certainly does not: "It is important to base one's life upon the experience of nothingness, to continue to return to it, and never to forget it. For the experience of nothingness is a penetrating, truthful experience. It is not an illusion or a threat, but a glimpse into our own reality... In the nothingness, one has at last an opportunity to shape one's own identity, to create oneself." Novak, however, is like most existentialists in rejecting "pure consciousness" (Transcendental Ego) as a fiction. Michael Novak, The Experience of Nothingness Harper and Row, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London, 1970.

The persistence of negative theology in the religions of the world can be understood in the light of the independence of the Transcendental Ego here mentioned.... If we now assume that an exposition of the Transcendental Ego is one clue to the phenomenological understanding of God, then we can make sense of many of the manifestations of religion, including negative theology. The view that awareness of God can be evoked only by designating what he is not, corresponds to the fact that the Transcendental Ego is inaccessible to ordinary forms of experiencing and their linguistic equivalents. Negative statements are needed, not only for God, but for an apprehension, suggestion, and appreciation of the Transcendental Ego.²⁹

Koestenbaum traces that sense of personal continuity and identity we all experience in life to the permanency of the Transcendental Ego. It is eternal presence, unaffected by the ever-changing kaleidoscope of internal and external events belonging to the empirical ego. It is difficult, if not impossible, to account for the constancy of personal identity between birth and death on any other premise:

The Transcendental Ego is experienced as always the same. It is the continuous background of changes in the empirical ego. These changes in the empirical ego are shifts in mood, focus, growth, outlook, attitudes, and so on. In the midst of such chaos, the individual experiences himself to be the same throughout. That sense of personal continuity and identity has its source in the experience of the Transcendental Ego. The Transcendental Ego is experienced as permanent.³⁰

Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on the Brahma Sūtras bases his argument for the Self's role in knowledge (implying memory and anticipation) and immortality on its permanency:

29

Koestenbaum, op. cit., p.186.

30

Ibid., p.186.

Let us further consider the relation expressed in the following clauses: 'I know at the present moment whatever is present; I knew (at former moments) the nearer and the remoter past; I shall know (in the future) the nearer and the remoter future.' Here the object of knowledge changes according as it is something past or something future or something present; but the knowing agent does not change, since his nature is eternal presence. And as the nature of the Self is eternal presence, it cannot undergo destruction even when the body is reduced to ashes; nay we cannot even conceive that it ever should become something different from what it is.³¹

Koestenbaum finds that the Transcendental Ego is an ontological necessity in experience. Its non-existence is simply inconceivable. One obvious parallel in Christian theology is the ontological "proof" for the existence of God:

The Transcendental Ego is experienced as existing necessarily. The reason for such a statement is that the presence of the Transcendental Ego is required in order to conceive of its non-existence. To conceive of even the possibility of the non-existence of the Transcendental Ego presupposes the presence, in experience, of the Transcendental Ego.... This approach to the exploration of the Transcendental Ego is reminiscent of the ontological argument. In fact, the ontological proof for the existence of God is the same as the phenomenological disclosure of the element of necessary existence in the Transcendental Ego.³²

There is a self-authenticating evidence about the Transcendental Ego of Husserl and the Self (Ātman) of Advaita Vedānta.

It is known immediately and intuitively, with "apodictic" certainty, and requires no "proof" beyond its own existence.

31

The Vedānta Sūtras, Ś.B., XXXVIII Trans. George Thibaut, Delhi, Patna, Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962, p.14-15.

32

Koestenbaum, op. cit., p.189.

Koestenbaum notes that Husserl's Transcendental Ego is experienced as non-spatial and a-temporal. It is, therefore, legitimate to speak of its "infinity" and "eternality":

The Transcendental Ego is experienced as external to both space and time. Space and time are, strictly speaking, cogitata, that is, intentions and constitutions of the Transcendental Ego....

Space and time are intended to apply to the physical universe, but no such intention is apparent in the attempt to examine the Transcendental Ego reflexively. Infinity and eternity are therefore permissible metaphors with which to designate the manner in which the Transcendental Ego gives itself to introspection.³³

The categories of space and time are, of course, equally inapplicable to the Self (Ātman) of Advaita Vedānta. But Śaṅkarācārya rules out another category not mentioned by Koestenbaum, namely "causality":

The nature of the cause inheres in the effect and not vice versa; so through reasoning it is found that in the absence of the effect the cause, as such, also disappears.³⁴

And again:

One should verily see the cause in the effect, and then dismiss the effect altogether. What then remains, the sage himself becomes.³⁵

Husserl makes the same point about the Transcendental Ego when he writes:

33

Ibid., p.189,190.

34

Śaṅkarācārya, Aparoksānubhūti, Trans. Swāmī Vimuktānanda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1938, sloka 135, p.72.

35

Ibid., sloka 139, p.74.

.... Consciousness, considered in its "purity", must be reckoned as a self-contained system of Being, as a system of Absolute Being, into which nothing can penetrate, and from which nothing can escape; which has no spatio-temporal system; which cannot experience causality from anything or exert causality upon anything, it being presupposed that causality bears the normal sense of natural causality as a relation of dependence between realities.³⁶

We move on to Koestenbaum's next point about the implications of Husserlian philosophy for religion. He stresses the singularity of the Transcendental Ego. This cannot, in any way, bring the charge of solipsism³⁷ against Husserl, because it refers exclusively to a wrong identification of the empirical ego with total being. Such an identification is absurd because it contradicts experience. It is clearly not intended in Phenomenology:

Experience discloses only one Transcendental Ego. Such a view may be akin to the unity and singularity of a universal Spirit found in Absolute Idealism, but it certainly is not a form of solipsism. In terms of the Husserlian categories here developed, solipsism becomes the mistaken identification of the empirical ego...with the totality of being.... In fact, this identification is absurd. Any empirical ego, including one's own, is seen to be but an infinitesimal speck in the totality of spatio-temporal being.... Furthermore, in connection with the singularity of the Transcendental Ego, it does not make sense to talk of another Transcendental Ego, since that Ego would be merely an object or cogitatum to the original

36

Husserl, op. cit., p.139. (underlining my own).

37

Solipsism is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Toronto: Thomas Allen Ltd., Springfield: G.&C. Merriam Co., 1953, p.805) as: "The theory or belief a. That the self knows and can know nothing but its own modifications and states. b. That the self is the only existent thing."

Transcendental Ego.³⁸

Śaṅkarācārya was the spokesman of Advaita (meaning, Non-Dualism) rather than simple oneness or unity. It is a subtle but important distinction because it indicates the difference between finitude and infinity. Alan Watts observes: "One and Many are both terms of number, and thus of finitude and dualism. Hence the infinite must be called the non-dual rather than the One."³⁹ Advaita Vedānta is a philosophy of religion, not a religion per se. It strives for the "essence" of religion in the infinite, indescribable Self (Ātman). "As an intellectual being, man can realize himself as the ātma, the infinite imagining itself as the finite. But as a being of reason, feeling, and sense, man must relate himself to the infinite as to a God ⁴⁰ other than himself." In religion proper, man is related to the Infinite analogically because reason can never grasp or express the truth of non-duality.

Koestenbaum's next step is to identify the Transcendental Ego with the totality of Being defined and experienced as Consciousness:

38

Koestenbaum, op. cit., 190 (My own underlining)

39

Alan Watts, The Supreme Identity, New York, Random House 1972, p.69.

40

Ibid., p.70.

The Transcendental Ego has close affinity and may be considered as even identical with the Transcendental Realm or the totality of Being.... It follows both from definition and from intuition that all of Being is experienced as suffused with consciousness, that is, as related to the Transcendental Ego (which I am);....⁴¹

This equation of Being with Consciousness in the Transcendental Ego distinguishes Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology from traditional idealistic and naturalistic metaphysics. The latter tend to concentrate on the subjective or objective poles of consciousness while neglecting its structural wholeness.⁴² Husserl's technique of "phenomenological reduction", on the other hand, leads him to the "apodictic" or absolutely certain evidence of "transcendental subjectivity" and to know it as the ultimate origin of all meaning and being. It is "pure" consciousness or what Śaṅkarācārya calls Cit. It is, perhaps, legitimate to translate Husserl's Transcendental Ego into religious terms as Godhead. The symbolic nature of our theological vocabulary must be frankly recognized for what it is: projections or objectifications of a Reality encountered in the depths of human consciousness. Berdyaev calls this Reality Spirit:

Spirit is never an object; nor is spiritual reality an objective one. In the so-called objective world there is no such nature, thing, or objective reality as spirit.

41
Koestenbaum, op. cit., p.191.

42
Ibid., p.191-2.

Hence it is easy to deny the reality of spirit. God is spirit because he is not object, because he is subject.... In objectification there are no primal realities, but only symbols.... The objective spirit is merely a symbolism of spirit.... The subject alone always has reality.⁴³

Spirit or Godhead would seem to be the theological equivalent for Śaṅkarācārya's transcendental Self (Ātman).

Koestenbaum refers to the phenomenon of the "empty" consciousness in universal religious experience as the appearance of the Transcendental Ego:

It may be possible to comment on the manner of appearance of the Transcendental Ego.... The height of religious illumination, be it the vision of God in Western mysticism or nirvana or samādhi in Oriental mysticism, can be described metaphysically as the experience of empty consciousness. Consciousness is there...but the contents are gone, the particular determinations and differentiations have been eliminated. Such would be the experience of the pure Transcendental Ego.⁴⁴

In Aparokṣānubhūti, Śaṅkarācārya defines Samādhi. Negatively, it is consciousness unobstructed by objective thinking. Positively, it is knowledge of Brahman-Ātman, that simply and nothing more:

The complete forgetfulness of all thought by first making it changeless and then identifying it with Brahman is called Samādhi known also as Knowledge.⁴⁵

43

N. Berdyaev, Spirit and Reality, New York, 1939, pp.5, 53.

44

Koestenbaum, op. cit., p.192.

45

Śaṅkarācārya, op. cit., sloka 124, p.66.

The "emptiness", far from being a state of "unconsciousness" like dreamless sleep is rather an intensification or illumination of "pure" consciousness. It is the appearance of Ātman.

Koestenbaum concludes his discussion of the Transcendental Ego and its implications for religious philosophy with some comments on "freedom". The "active" aspect of transcendental freedom is expressed by the capacity to "constitute" the world of empirical egos and to invest it with meaning.⁴⁶ The "passive" aspect of freedom is the Transcendental Ego's ability to "witness" all being. Hence the metaphor of omniscience is not misapplied: "To know all means to be the observer of all. Omniscience is one kind of freedom; it is the freedom of knowledge."⁴⁷ A problem to resolve, says Koestenbaum, is the apparent contradiction between the omniscience of the Transcendental Ego and the finitude (ignorance?) of human experience in the world:

The value and truth of religion may well be said to stand or fall with the success with which it can reconcile the apparent contradiction between the intuitions of the omniscience and omnipotence of the Transcendental Ego and the obvious finitude of human experience. If there is an answer within the context of phenomenology, it must be found in immediate experience, not in metaphysical inference.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Koestenbaum, op. cit., p.192-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.193.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.194.

He discusses several solutions to the problem. Did the Transcendental Ego "constitute" matter in order to be in the presence of "genuine otherness"? (This relates to the theological problem of how and why God created the world.) The other solution is to attribute the experience of finitude to the embodied ego alone, and the supposed "contradiction" to a confusion or wrong identification of the transcendental and human egos:

Another proffered solution is that the experience of finitude applies solely to our experience of an empirical ego: since we tend to confuse (through unanalyzed identification) one particular empirical ego with the Transcendental Ego, we transfer to the Transcendental Ego the sense of finitude associated with the empirical ego. It follows, conversely, that the sense of finitude emerges only when man tries to impose the capabilities of the Transcendental Ego onto an empirical ego. As long as the focus of consciousness is on the Transcendental Ego, the sense of limitation does not arise.⁴⁹

The first solution may be said to produce the theological or symbolic way of resolving the paradox between omniscience and finitude. The second solution approximates the one offered by Śaṅkarācārya with his doctrine of "mutual superimposition". According to it, the empirical ego (Jīva) by its intellect (buddhi) falsely "superimposes" qualities and attributes of itself on the Self (Ātman). Inversely, the Ātman superimposes the characteristics of the empirical ego on itself. The cure for this ignorance (avidyā) is discrimination (viveka) between the two, followed by direct, intuitive knowledge of the Ātman

as the sole Reality. Husserl, though he distinguishes between the "transcendental Ego" and the "human ego" and gives primacy to the former as the "constitutor" of the later, does not ask why "constitution" takes place. He is content merely to "describe" the structure of consciousness.

Koestenbaum's resolution, in phenomenological terms, of the paradox between omniscience and finitude parallels the Advaitic experience of "Self-realization":

To experience the infinite bliss which is the Transcendental Ego - that is, omnipotence and peace - the individual must dissociate the Transcendental Ego from its entanglements with the world, and specifically, with an empirical ego.... The meaning of life, i.e. ultimate satisfaction, is to be attained merely through the clear understanding of the Transcendental Ego itself.⁵⁰

Knowledge of the structure of consciousness itself is enough to attain "ultimate satisfaction", "the meaning of life", or the "infinite bliss" of the Transcendental Ego.

The Method of Advaita Vedānta: Deliberate
Superimposition and Rescission

Did Śaṅkarācārya anticipate the method of Transcendental Phenomenology to arrive at his non-dual philosophy of the Self (Ātman)? A clue is obtained by examining the distinctive methodology of Advaita Vedānta: deliberate superimposition (adhyāropa) and subsequent rescission (apavāda). I take my point

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.195.

of departure from a book by Swami Sat chidanandendra Saraswati. It is an English translation of the Introduction to his work in Sanskrit called Vedānta-Prakriyā-Pratyabhijñā. Saraswati raises the question whether any systematic method can be discovered by means of which the unity of the three major Scriptures (Prasthānās) of Vedānta - the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad-Gītā, and Brahma Sūtras - can be established? He replies that a study of the three Prasthānās one by one is not at all likely to yield a common method or a unified system of philosophy. Most scholars agree that theistic and non-dual elements exist intertwined in the Bhagavad-Gītā, and it is not easy to reconcile them. A similar condition prevails in the Brahma Sūtras. Saraswati quotes authorities like P. Deussen, G. Thibaut, Max-Muller, S. Radhakrishnan and Das Gupta in support of the view that only the commentaries (Bhāṣyas) of Śaṅkarācārya bring order out of chaos, follow a systematic method, and result in a unified system of philosophy that does justice to the three Prasthānās. They do so by subordinating divine beings like Viṣṇu and Śiva to Brahman-Ātman.⁵² It is absolutely certain that Śaṅkarācārya and his famous predecessor Gaudapāda stood in the orthodox tradition of Advaita Vedānta, and remain

51

Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswati, How to Recognize the Method of Vedānta, Holenarsipur, Adhyatma Prakasha Karyaloya Press, 1964, p.2.

52

Saraswati, op. cit., p.11

to this day the most ancient and authoritative mentors of Vedāntic philosophy. Saraswati makes no attempt to apply the methodology abstracted from the major commentaries (Bhāṣyas) of Śaṅkarācārya to the minor works (prakaraṇas) attributed to him by tradition. This is probably because of the notorious difficulty of establishing their authorship with certainty. I feel, however, that it is useful and legitimate to illustrate the method and coherent system of Advaita from Vivekacūḍāmani and Aparoksānubhūti, both of which are attributed to the authorship of Śaṅkarācārya. There is no good reason to impugn his authorship of these books on the basis of either method or philosophical content.

Saraswati defines (Advaita) Vedānta as a systematic account of Knowledge or Being by which the All is reduced to the One. The method for doing the job is called Adhyāropa-apavāda. He takes his cue from a statement by Śaṅkarācārya in his Gītā Bhāṣya:

That which is devoid of all distinctions and details is explained through deliberate superimposition and rescission.

The Sanskrit reads as follows:

tathā hi sampradāyaviti vacanam 'adhyāropāpavādaḥ nyāyān nī-
prapañcam prapañcyate' iti 55

53 See my Appendix 2 for argument in favour of Śaṅkarācārya's authorship of Vivekacūḍāmani.

54 Saraswati, op. cit., p.27.

55 Ibid., 29 compare B.G., Ś.B. XIII:13.

Saraswati defines superimposition (literally) as "laying something on something else, falsely imputing the nature or property of something to something else."⁵⁶ He explains the use of the method, as follows:

It is a postulate of Vedānta that, owing to a natural tendency of the human mind, a beginningless superimposition called avidyā compels us all to look upon Reality as infected with manifold distinctions. Now in order to educate the mind to interpret Reality as it is, the Upaniṣads uniformly employ the aforesaid method of adhyaropapavāda or deliberate superimposition or provisional ascription and subsequent rescission or abrogation.⁵⁷

Śaṅkarācārya uses this time-honored method to explain why Brahman is portrayed in the Gītā anthropomorphically, i.e. with hands, feet, head, etc:

the special features noticed in the Kshetrajña (the Self) owing to the limiting conditions caused by the different forms of kshetra (the body etc.) being unreal, have been rescinded in the previous sloka, and Kshetrajña has been taught to be realized as neither being nor non-being. But here...even the unreal nature manifested through the limiting conditions, has been treated as though it were the property of the knowable just to bring its existence home, and hence the knowable Kshetrajña is spoken of as 'possessed of hands and feet etc. everywhere.' Accordingly, there is the well-known saying of knowers of tradition: 'That which is devoid of all details is set forth in detail through deliberate superimposition and rescission.'⁵⁸

56

Ibid., p.29.

57

Ibid., p.29.

58

B.G.Ś.B. quoted by Saraswati, op. cit., p.30.

Śaṅkarācārya, following the Vedāntic tradition, deliberately leads his readers on a "journey through ignorance (avidyā)" because there is no other way to approach Reality phenomenologically. For example, he superimposes the three states of consciousness - waking, dreaming, and deep sleep - only to rescind them again. He superimposes the five sheaths (kośas) covering the Self, then cancels them one by one so that the Self (Ātman) emerges in consciousness. All superimpositions presuppose a fundamental error of conceptual reasoning called ignorance (avidyā). This is not an event in time and space, but an inherent, beginningless defect or structure of mind. One abolishes it by the progressive cancellation of the superimpositions of ignorance. One proceeds phenomenologically by the systematic negation of all objects, all relations, all dualities, until the Self is discovered.

Wherefore it is only a cessation of the perception of the differentiated forms of the external world that can lead to a firm grasp of the real nature of the Self. For, the Self is not a thing unknown to anybody at any time, is not a thing to be reached or got rid of or acquired. 59

The method of "deliberate superimposition and subsequent rescission" is consistent with, and inexplicable without the general viewpoint of Transcendental Phenomenology.

Śaṅkarācārya's method may be compared to that of an

59

The Bhagavad-Gītā With the Commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya
 Trans. A. Mahādeva Sastri, 5th Ed., Madras: V. Ramaswamy
 Sastrulu and Sons, 1961, commentary on XVIII: 50, p.488,
 line 5 ff.

archeologist working on a site. He begins digging, after establishing a fixed point of reference. He works systematically, uncovering artifacts plot by plot. He measures carefully the depth and location of each object, and tries to discover their mutual relationships. He theorizes on the basis of geology, history, culture etc. So in the pages of his commentaries and minor writings, we find Śaṅkarācārya the archeologist at work. He demonstrates how to "dig" through the accumulated layers or sheaths of consciousness to the Self. At each level of the phenomenological investigation, he pauses to assess the value of the entities uncovered. He works with supreme confidence in the outcome, and urges his companions not to get discouraged. At last, after the labour of many reductions, the soil of ignorance is removed. The foundation of an ancient civilization - of all civilization - emerges in plain view. It is called Being-Consciousness-Bliss (Sat-Cit-Ānanda). It was there all the time, of course, but buried, forgotten, neglected. It needed only to be discovered. It is the very Self (Ātman) of every man, the "essence" of phenomenal selfhood and worldly existence.

brahma sathyaṁ jagannithyetyevairūpo viniścayah so'yaṁ nityānityavas tu vivekah
samudāhrtah

A firm conviction of the mind to the effect that Brahman is real and the universe unreal, is designated as discrimination (viveka) between the Real and the unreal.

tadvairāgyam jihāsā yā darsānaśravaṇādibhih dehādibrahmaparyante
hyanitye bhogavastuni

Vairāgya or renunciation is the desire to give up all transitory enjoyments (ranging) from those of an (animate) body to those of Brahmahood (having already known their defects) from observation, instruction and so forth.

sarvadā sthānanam buddeh śuddhe brahmaṇi sarvadā tatsamādhānamityuktaṁ
na tu cittasva lālanam

Not the mere indulgence of thought (in curiosity) but the constant concentration of the intellect... on the ever-pure Brahman, is what is called Samādhana or self-settledness.

ahaṁkāradidehāntān bandhānajñānakalpitaṁ svasvarūpāvahodhena
muktumicchā mumuksuta

Mumuksuta or yearning for Freedom is the desire to free oneself, by realizing one's true nature, from all bondages from that of egoism to that of the body - bondages superimposed by Ignorance.

- Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, 20, 21, 26, 27

CHAPTER ONE

THE FOUR QUALIFICATIONS

1. Preamble

In this first chapter we shall examine the Four Preliminary Qualifications (Sādhana) for "Self-realization" outlined in the two small books known as Vivekācūḍamaṇi (Crest Jewel of Discrimination) and Aparokṣānubhūti (Self-Realization), which are attributed to Śaṅkarācārya's authorship. We shall compare their contents to see whether they come from a common author, and we shall compare their teachings with passages in the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya to determine what discrepancies, if any, exist. We shall also try to deduce what phenomenological characteristics are involved in the Four Qualifications. At the end of the chapter, we shall study Śaṅkarācārya's Fifteen Steps for the attainment of Knowledge (Self-Realization) outlined in verses 100 through 124 of Aparokṣānubhūti. These represent a re-interpretation and amplification by Śaṅkarācārya of Pātāñjali's eight steps of Yoga-discipline or technique.

The author of Aparokṣānubhūti wrote consciously and deliberately for those desiring to undergo the discipline

necessary to acquire final liberation (mokṣa) from ignorance (avidyā) and relative existence (samsāra).¹ Strictly speaking, there is nothing to be "acquired", since the Self (Ātman) exists as the one, eternal Reality underlying and pervading all phenomena, including the individual ego (Jīva). One can no more deny the Self than deny one's own existence. How then does one "realize" the Self or "acquire" liberation?

It is accomplished solely by training the mind to transcend the limitations of empirical knowledge, to view such pseudo-knowledge as the product of primal Ignorance (avidyā) or cosmic Illusion (māyā). Now obviously, this radical reversal of values, whereby what was previously regarded as "real" knowledge (from the relative point of view) is seen to be false and misleading, and whereby what was formerly not known to exist at all is seen to be the one and only real Existence (from the absolute view-point) is not very easily "acquired". It is the "reward" reserved for the "pure in heart" (sadbhiḥ) who persevere in meditating on the truth "with full effort"

(prayatnena).² The supreme Knowledge of "identity" with Self (Ātman) is realized only when the last vestige of subject-object duality is overcome in consciousness.³ This realization

1. Śaṅkarāchārya, Aparokṣānubhūti, Trans. Swami Vimuktānanda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1966. śloka 2, p.2

2 Ibid., śloka 2, p.2.

3 Ibid., śloka 2, p.2 Vimuktānanda's commentary.

of non-duality (advaita) is the consummation of Self-realization.

Śaṅkarācārya names Four Preliminary Qualifications (Sādhana) for the man intent on acquiring "liberation" (mokṣa): 1) Dispassion (Vairāgya); 2) Discrimination (Viveka);⁴ 3) Six Treasures (Samādisaḥ Sampattiḥ); 4) Yearning for Liberation (Mumukṣutā). These qualifications are "acquired" by "propitiating Hari (the Lord), through austerities and the performance of duties pertaining to their social order and stage in life."⁵ In other words, the performance of one's social and religious duties are not totally irrelevant, but means of preparation for "Self-realization". Śaṅkarācārya does not advocate a "mysticism" of an individualistic and anti-social nature. He recognizes the social dimension of religion as a matrix within which man can (and does) progress to spiritual maturity. This point is neglected by many interpreters of Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy.

In Aparokṣānubhūti dispassion (vairāgya) is defined briefly as "indifference to all objects of enjoyment from the realm of Brahmā the god to this world" on account of their perishable and non-eternal nature.⁶ It is considered folly to replace desire for enjoyments in this life with desire for enjoyments in the next life. Both kind of desire must be

⁴ The Six Treasures are Sāma, Dāma, Uparati, Titikṣā, Śraddhā and Samadhāna.

⁵ Ibid., sloka 3, p.3.

⁶ Ibid., sloka 4, p.3

eliminated because they direct attention away from the Real to the unreal, and prevent the bliss of Self-realization. Like Jesus, Śaṅkarācārya sometimes employs humor and hyperbole to stimulate the imagination of his hearers. He says, just as one treats the excreta of a crow (kakavisthāyam) with studied indifference and revulsion (vairāgyam), so one must learn to treat objects of enjoyment. They are ephemeral, and deserve our contempt for "luring" us away from the knowledge of the eternal Self.

In Vivekacūdamani, dispassion or renunciation (vairāgya) is listed after discrimination (viveka), not first as in Aparokṣānubhūti. It is defined as "the desire to give up all transitory enjoyments (ranging) from those of an (animate) body to those of Brahmahood (having already known their defects) from observation, instruction and so forth." ⁷ The implication is that the pleasures of the body, such as eating, sleeping, and sexual gratification, are in approximately the same class as enjoyment of the blessings of the god Brahmā, since both share the defect of belonging to transitory existence. This inclusion of the highest god Brahmā in the phenomenal world, and subsequent renunciation, is based on the experience of disillusionment with religious observances performed expressly for gaining Heaven (svarga). It opens the way for a "transcendental"

7

Śaṅkarācārya Vivekacūdamani, Trans. Swami Madhavananda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrāma, 1970, sloka 21, p.8.

awareness of ultimate Reality beyond the gods, but is scarcely available to the man who has never worshipped.

Discrimination (Viveka), according to Aparokṣānubhūti, is the settled conviction that there is only one permanent (nityam) permanent being, namely the Self (Ātman). Everything else in the "seen" (driśyam) or phenomenal world is "opposed" (tadviparītaḡam) to Self i.e. transient, relative, impermanent.⁸ This implies, necessarily, that the contents of the "subjective" world, including the ego (Jīva) itself, are no more real than the so-called "objective" world. One must "discriminate" between the objects of empirical knowledge, whether of the psychological or physical variety, and the trans-empirical or transcendental Self known only by intuition. The line drawn between the "Self" and the "Not-Self" is on the basis of the destruction of the objectifiable entities and the non-objectified subject or "Self" which is known not by psychological introspection or self-consciousness but "enjoyingly".

In Vivekacūḡamani,⁹ Śaṅkarācārya begins his list of four qualifications with discrimination (viveka) "between the Real and the unreal (nitya-anitya-vastu)"⁹ He explains the meaning of that distinction as "a firm conviction of the mind

⁸ / Śaṅkarācārya, Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 5, p.4.

⁹ / Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekacūḡamani, śloka 19, p.7.

to the effect that Brahman is real and the universe unreal."¹⁰
 It must always be borne in mind that, in Vedāntic context,
 "real" (satya) means "eternal (nitya)" and "unreal" means the
 opposite, non-eternal.¹¹ This definition agrees essentially
 with the one in Aparokṣānubhūti, but it takes precedence over
 renunciation (vairāgya) in the list of qualifications. This
 may be intended to indicate that renunciation is the "practical"
 analogue of knowledge.

The Six Treasures (samādīśad sampattiḥ) are enumerated
 in Aparokṣānubhūti, beginning with control of the mind (sama)
 and restraint of the external organs (dama). Sama is defined
 as "abandonment of desires (vāsanā-tyāgaḥ) at all times."¹²
 This implies a deliberate effort to dissociate the mind from
 external stimuli of the senses. Together, they are intended
 to bring about the cessation of all desires. Uparati is
 described as "turning away completely from all sense-objects".¹³
 This is a further intensification or perfection of sama-dama,
 and is achieved spontaneously without effort.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid., śloka 20, p.7.

¹¹ Sat is another name for Brahman-Ātman.

¹² / Śaṅkarāchārya, Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 6, p.4.

¹³ Ibid., śloka 7, p.5.

¹⁴ Ibid., Swāmī Vimuktānanda's commentary on śloka 7, p.5.

In Vivekachūdamāni, sama is defined as "resting of the mind steadfastly on its Goal (viz. Brahman) after having detached itself from the manifold sense-objects by continually observing their defects."¹⁵ This definition makes explicit what was implicit in the Aparoksānubhūti definition: a positive turning of the mind to the "transcendental" Reality after "reducing" the objects in consciousness to nil. Dama is likewise defined positively, as well as negatively: "Turning both kinds of sense-organs away from sense-objects and placing them in their respective centres."¹⁶ This is called "self-control". Uparati or "self-withdrawal" is "the mind-function ceasing to be affected by external objects."¹⁷ It most certainly does not imply empty-mindedness or a state of unconsciousness but full and vivid awareness of the Self without any distractions of mental or physical objects.

In Aparoksānubhūti, the definition of titiksā is "patient endurance of all sorrow or pain" (sarva-duḥkhānām sahanam) which, when practised, results in happiness (subhā)¹⁸

^{15/} Saṅkarāchārya, Vivekachūdamāni, śloka 22, p.8.

¹⁶ Ibid., śloka 23, p.8.

¹⁷ Ibid., śloka 23b, p.8

¹⁸ Aparoksānubhūti, śloka 7b, p.5.

Śraddhā is defined as "implicit faith" in the Vedas and the teachers (gurus) who interpret the Vedas.¹⁹ Private study is not enough. One should enter into a trusting relationship with a saint who has experienced the truth of the Vedas, who has realized the Self (Ātman). Samādhāna is "concentration of the mind on the only object Sat (Brahman)" and implies an exclusive reverence for the Self.²⁰

The author of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi defines titikṣā or "forbearance" as "the bearing of all afflictions without caring to redress them, being free...from anxiety or lament on their score."²¹ No mention is made here of the happiness (subhā) which ensues, perhaps to avoid any suggestion of emotional attachment to external events. The freedom from anxiety suggests a state of peaceful equilibrium and poise. Śraddhā is "acceptance by firm judgment as true of what the scriptures and the Guru instruct."²² It is much more than mental assent. It implies a state of wholehearted reliance and trust in the guru and his instruction. Samādhāna or "self-settledness" is "the constant

¹⁹ Ibid., śloka 8, p.5.

²⁰ Ibid., śloka 8b, p.5.

²¹ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, śloka 24, p.9

²² Ibid., śloka 25, p.9.

concentration of the intellect...on the ever-pure Brahman."

It is decidedly not "mere indulgence of thought (in curiosity)" ²³

We can say that the total man is involved in "transcendental mediation" on the reality of Being. This completes the list of Six Treasures (samādīṣad sampattiḥ).

The fourth and last preliminary qualification is called mumukṣutā. Śaṅkarācārya defines it in Aparokṣānubhūti as a "strong desire" (sudriḍha buddhiḥ) for "the final liberation ²⁴ from the bonds of the world" (samsāra-bandha-nirmuktiḥ).

The desire to be free from the limitations and frustrations of finitude and ignorance must animate the whole course of discipline leading to Self-realization. This desire alone is legitimate, because it transcends all other desires and attachments to the phenomenal world and enables the mind to merge into the Self (Ātman) that is infinite Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. The attainment of the Self is man's highest good because it liberates him from the bondage of ignorance. But Śaṅkarācārya warns that only the man who possesses the above mentioned Four Qualifications is a fit person to undertake the pursuit of Self-Knowledge.

Mumukṣutā or "yearning for freedom" is defined in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi as "the desire to free oneself, by realizing

23

Ibid., śloka 26, p.9

24

Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 9, p.6

one's own true nature, from all bondages" ranging in nature from egoism to body-consciousness. These "bondages" or limitations are superimposed on the transcendental Self by ignorance.²⁵ It must be added at once that "bondages" are illusions of the mind that persist only so long as a man remains ignorant of his true identity. The real nature of the Self is infinite freedom.

This completes the list of the Four Qualifications outlined by Śaṅkarācārya in Aparokṣānubhūti and Vivekacūḍāmaṇi. There is a close parallel between the two accounts, and no basic conflict of intention. The minor differences are differences only of emphasis. There is no good reason to suggest that they were composed by a different author, though we may suppose that a different set of pupils were in mind.

2. Some Parallels in the Major Commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya

Now it is commonplace knowledge that these four qualifications are also found in the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya. They are listed at the very outset of the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya (commentary):

Well, then, we maintain that the antecedent conditions are the discrimination of what is eternal and what is

²⁵ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, śloka 27, p.10.

non-eternal; the renunciation of all desire to enjoy the fruit (of one's actions) both here and hereafter; the acquirement of tranquillity, self-restraint, and the other means, and the desire of final release. If these conditions exist, a man may, either before entering on an enquiry into active religious duty or after that, engage in the enquiry into Brahman and come to know it; but not otherwise. The work 'then' therefore intimates that the enquiry into Brahman is subsequent to the acquisition of the above-mentioned (spiritual) means.²⁶

Although he seems to refer to them in passing, Śaṅkarācārya assigns great importance to the Acquisition of these four "antecedent conditions". They, and they alone, qualify a man for "enquiry into Brahman".

In his Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya, Śaṅkarācārya singles out "desire" as the cause of man's bondage to empirical existence and ignorance:

These two hankerings after the ends and means are the desire, prompted by which an ignorant man helplessly enmeshes himself like a silkworm, and through absorption in the path of rituals becomes outgoing in his tendencies and does not know his own world, the Self.... Desire consists of the two hankerings after the ends and means, visible and invisible, which are the special sphere of an ignorant man. Hence the wise man should renounce them.²⁷

The renunciation (vairāgya) of desire (kāma) for "ends and means" in connection with ritualism is required as one of the indispensable conditions for knowing the Self. All desires,

26

The Vedānta Sūtras with Commentary of Sankarācārya, XXXIV Trans. George Thibaut. Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968, p.12, line 2 ff. B.D. 1.1.1.

27

Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad With the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Trans. Śwami Madhavānanda, Mayayati: Advaita Ashrama, 1950, p. 194, line 1 ff. Br. Up. 1.4.7. (my underlining).

except the desire for liberation, are to be renounced, even the normal hankerings for children, wealth, and blessings of the gods:

Knowing this very Self, their own reality, as 'I am this, the Supreme Brahman, eternally devoid of relative attributes, and ever satisfied', the Brahmanas - they are mentioned because they alone are qualified for renunciation - renounce, lit. rise up in an opposite direction to - what? - the desire for sons, as means of winning this word...hence the meaning is, they do not marry. (The desire) for wealth: procuring cattle etc. which are the means of rites... that one may win the world of the gods either by combining rites with mediation, which is divine wealth, or solely through mediation on Hiranyagarbha.²⁸

"Attachment" to the world (through desires) is the cause of transmigration from one relative existence and body to another. The abolition of these desires accomplishes the fulfilment of all desires in Self-realization:

It has been said that only the man who is attached to results transmigrates. Since one who has no desires cannot perform (ritualistic) work, the man who does not desire necessarily attains liberation. How does a man cease to desire? He who is without desires is the man who does not desire.... How do they leave? The objects of whose desire have been attained? How are they attained? Because he is one to whom all objects of desire are but the Self - who has only the Self, and nothing else separate from it than can be desired:²⁹

Absence of desire (akāma) is equivalent to desire for Self-realization (ātmaakāma) : and paradoxically, for the man of Self-realization, desirelessness and desire of the Self are

28

Ibid., p.480, line 24 ff. Br. Up. 3.5.1. (my underlining)

29

Ibid., p.718, line 15 ff. Br. Up. 4.4.6.

both equivalent to desire (āptakāma) for wife, sons, wealth, gods etc. because the "essence" of all persons and entities is known to be only Brahman-Ātman and nothing else. So the "acquiring" of Self is the acquiring of everything in the universe: 30

In his Bhagavad-Gītā Bhāṣya, Śaṅkarācārya demonstrates discrimination (viveka) between the Real and the unreal on the basis of what is permanent (nitya) and temporary (anitya) in consciousness. Though he is restricted by the task at hand, i.e. to write a commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, yet he shows his familiarity with this approach to Ultimate Reality:

For, every fact of experience involves twofold consciousness (buddhi), the consciousness of the real (sat) and the consciousness of the unreal (asat). Now that is (said to be real, of which our consciousness never fails; and that to be unreal, of which our consciousness fails. Thus the distinction of reality and unreality depends on our consciousness. Now, in all our experience, twofold consciousness arises with reference to one and the same substratum (samānādhikaraṇa).... Of the two, the consciousness of pot, etc., is temporary as was already pointed out, but not the consciousness of existence. Thus the object corresponding to our consciousness of pot etc. is unreal, because... temporary; but what corresponds to our consciousness of existence is not unreal, because...unfailing.³¹

The conclusion of the passage is interesting because it refers to "the patient endurance (titikṣā) of sorrow and pain" integral to phenomenal existence for one aspiring to know Brahman. All such phenomena as "grief and delusion" are known,

³⁰ Ibid., p.191, line 24 ff. Br. Up. 1.4.17.

³¹ The Bhagavad-Gītā with the Commentary of Sri Śaṅkarācārya, Trans. A. Mahādeva Sastri, Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrai and Sons, 1961, p.35, B.G. 11:16.

ultimately, to be non-existent:

This conclusion - that the real is ever existent and the unreal is never existent - regarding the two the Self and the non-Self, the real and the unreal, is always present before the minds of those who attend only to truth, to the real nature of the Brahman, the Absolute, the All, "That". Thus hast therefore better follow the view that all phenomena (vikāras) are really non-existent and are, like the mirage, mere false appearances do thou calmly bear heat and cold and the pairs of opposites, of which some are constant and others inconstant in their nature as productive of pleasure or pain.³²

Uparati or the "mind-function ceasing to be affected by external objects" is inferred but not directly named in a passage of Śaṅkarācārya's Bhagavad-Gītā Bhāṣya: "Wherefore it is only a cessation of the perception of the differentiated forms of the external world that can lead to a firm grasp of the real nature of the Self."³³ This is really a description of "self-withdrawal" from mental and physical objects so that a direct and immediate intuition of the Self can take place. In a similar way, there is no mention of "yearning for freedom (mumukṣutā) but a mere statement of the liberation (kaivalya) which results when the Self (Ātman) is known, and ignorance (avidyā) is abolished.

Pure Self-Knowledge is the means to the Highest Bliss; for, as removing the notion of variety, it culminates in liberation (kaivalya). Avidya is the perception of variety involving actions, factors of action and the ends of actions.... The remover of this avidya is th

³² Ibid., p.37, line 11 ff, B.G. II:16.

³³ Ibid., p.488, line 5 ff., B.G. XVIII:66.

knowledge of the Self arising in the following form,
 "Here I am, free, a non-agent, actionless, devoid of
 results"....³⁴

Freedom is always associated with the Self, bondage with the not-Self. The not-Self is made up of all "names and forms" (nāma-rūpa), all objectivity, all appearances created by ignorance (avidyā). The Self, on the other hand, is pure Knowledge, Freedom and Bliss Absolute.

Many more references to the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya could be made to show that all the elements of the Four Qualifications names in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti are present there, either implicitly or explicitly. We have abstracted from the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya, and the Bhagavad Gīta Bhāṣya enough evidence to conclude that Śaṅkarācārya was very familiar with, if not the original author of the Four Qualifications.

3. Phenomenological Implications

We proceed now to examine this four-fold approach to Self-realization from the phenomenological view-point.

Discrimination (Viveka) is a technique for separating the Real from the unreal, the Self from the not-Self, the

34

Ibid., p.500, line 21 ff., B.G. XVIII:66.

permanent from the impermanent, "pure" Consciousness from its intentional objects. It corresponds more or less to the Husserlian procedure of distinguishing between the transcendental and the empirical modes of consciousness, the Transcendental Ego and the human ego, the transcendental subjectivity and the world "constituted" by intentionality.

For Śaṅkarācārya, the absence of discrimination (viveka) leads to the confusion of mutual superimposition (adhyāsa). By an uncritical process of the mind, attributes of the ego (Jīva) and its objects, both psychological and physical, are superimposed on the Self (Ātman) and vice versa:

The union between Kshetra and Kshetrajñā, between the object and the subject, which are opposed to each other in nature, is of the nature of mutual adhyasa; i.e. it consists in confounding them as well as their attributes with each other owing to the absence of the discrimination between the nature of Kshetra and that of Kshetrajñā, like the union of a rope and a mother of pearl respectively with a snake and silver when they are mistaken the one for the other owing to the absence of discrimination.³⁵

If the uncritical union of Kshetra (lit. the field) and Kshetrajñā (lit. knower of the field) produces Mithyā-jñāna (false knowledge, illusion), discrimination (viveka) destroys it:

The union of Kshetra and Kshetrajna which is of the nature of adhyasa - which consists in confounding the one with the other - is a sort of illusion (Mithyajnana): and this illusion vanishes - because of its opposition to the right knowledge - when a man attains to a knowledge of the distinction between Kshetra and Kshetrajna as defined in the sastra, when he is able to separate Kshetrajna

from Kshetra like the ishika reed from the munja-grass and to realise that Brahman, the Knowable, which is devoid of all upadhis...is his own Self....³⁶

It should be pointed out that Kshetra and Kshetrajña are in a totally unequal relationship for the man of discrimination. That is, one is real, while the other is false. Śaṅkarācārya concludes the commentary above with this remark: "Kshetra is non-existent and only appears to be existent."³⁷ One must also remember that the technique of discrimination (viveka) in no way rules out the use of "deliberate superimposition" (adhyāropa) and "deliberate rescission" (apavāda) by Śaṅkarācārya for another purpose. In fact, indeed, adhyāropa-apavāda is the technique proposed for achieving "discrimination."

In the Phenomenology of Husserl there is no talk of discrimination as such. Rather, he proceeds by the method of "disconnecting" or "bracketing" the "thesis of the natural standpoint", by which he means the suspension of the empirical mode of consciousness. He calls this the method of epoche (Greek, ἐποχή) or "abstention":

We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually "there for us", "present to our hand", and will ever remain there, is "fact-world" on which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets.

³⁶ Ibid., p.368, line 20 ff., B.G. XIII:26

³⁷ Ibid., p.369, line 5 ff., B.G. XIII:26.

If I do this, as I am fully free to do, I do not then deny this "world", as though I were a sophist, I do not doubt that it is there as though I were a sceptic; but I use the "phenomenological" ἐποχή, which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence (Dasein).³⁸

The method of abstention has far-reaching consequences. It throws light on what Husserl calls a "fundamental error" of human consciousness that fails to discern the difference between transcendent and immanent, and between perception and meaning:

We are told that the thing in itself and in its itselfness is not given to us; that what every existent (Seiendes) in principle possesses is the possibility of seeing things as they plainly are, and more specifically, of perceiving them in an adequate perception which gives us the bodily self without any mediation through "appearances" But this view is nonsensical. It implies that there is no essential difference between transcendent and immanent, that in the postulated divine intuition a spatial thing is a real (reelles) constituent, and indeed an experience itself, a constituent of the stream of the divine consciousness and the divine experience.... Between perception on the one hand and, on the other, the presentation of a symbol in the form of an image or meaning there is an unbridgeable and essential difference.³⁹

Husserl "discriminates" here between transcendent "fact" and immanent "essence" or "meaning" in consciousness. This leads him to the intuition of an "absolute Self" that is "necessary" and "indubitable" guarantee of all immanent perception as well as "contingent" thing-objects:

³⁸ Edmund Husserl, Ideas, General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Trans, W.R. Boyce Gibson, London: Collier-MacMillan Ltd., 1962, pp.99-1000.

³⁹ Ibid., p.122-3.

Every immanent perception necessarily guarantees the existence (Existenz) of its object. If reflective apprehension is directed to my experience, I apprehend an absolute Self whose existence (Dasein) is, in principle, undeniable.... The thesis of my pure Ego and its personal life, which is "necessary" and plainly indubitable, thus stands opposed to the thesis of the world which is "contingent".⁴⁰

The technique of "abstention" (epokhé) permits Husserl to discriminate sharply between the "pure" or transcendental Ego and the human ego of "intentional" and therefore "contingent" or relative existence:

On the other side, the whole spatio-temporal world, to which man and the human Ego claim to belong as subordinate singular realities, is according to its own meaning mere intentional Being, a Being, therefore, which has the merely secondary, relative sense of a Being for a consciousness.⁴¹

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that discrimination between the Real and the unreal, the Self and the not-Self, the Transcendental Ego and the human ego, is operative in the philosophies of both Saṅkarācārya and Husserl. The labels differ, but the differentiation in consciousness seems to be approximately the same. They are both using what may be called a "transcendental result".

The question arises whether Husserl's designation of the human Ego and spatio-temporal world as "intentional Being" or a "Being for a consciousness" differs from

40
Ibid., p.130-1.

41
Ibid., p.139.

Śaṅkarācārya's understanding of the ego (Jīva) and the relative world (samsāra) as illusion (māyā).⁴² Is "intentional Being" in the category of Real or unreal? Perhaps the introduction of the three-truth theory in Vedānta was meant to resolve this problem: the world is declared to be neither Real (Being) nor unreal (Non-Being) but an ambiguous existence that is indefinable (anirvacanīya) in terms of either one. The man of Self-realization, of course, is able to affirm the reality of things qua Brahman or Ātman, and deny reality of them qua independent entities.

We move on to a discussion of renunciation (vairāgya) from a phenomenological view-point. What function does "the desire to give up all transitory enjoyments" ranging from those of the body to Brahmāhood play in Advaita Vedānta? What phenomenological meaning can we assign to the renouncing of the desire for sons, wealth, ritual, and the blessings of the gods? Is there anything similar in the programme of Husserl and Phenomenology?

To begin, we must note that renunciation or detachment (vairāgya) refers to a "mental condition". It is a state of consciousness which dawns after much experience of life's fleeting, but ultimately disappointing pleasures. One turns with revulsion from the so-called satisfactions of family, society, and religion, to the inner source of permanent

⁴²The falsity of the claim to be "real" is what Śaṅkarācārya means by the expression māyā more than its dejure unreality.

unity and bliss.

It is true that renunciation (vairāgya), as defined above, involves abstention from action. Those in the religious vocation, for example, may refrain from marriage and the normal responsibilities of a home and family, or from involvement in social and political affairs. Karma Yoga (the way of works) may benefit an ignorant man by leading him to disillusionment about ritualism, and subsequently to Jnana Yoga (the way of knowledge) which is superior:

Though the Religion of Works...leads the devotee to the region of the Devas the the like, still, when practised in the spirit of complete devotion to the Lord and without regard to the (immediate) results, it conduces to the purity of the mind (sattva-suddhi). The man whose mind is pure is competent to tread the path of knowledge, and to him comes knowledge; and thus (indirectly) the Religion of Works forms also a means to the Supreme Bliss.⁴³

But there is no doubt that Śaṅkarācārya advocates the renunciation even of all (religiously orientated) action for the man of Self-realization. That is precisely because he has achieved the goal of religion, namely Wisdom, and no longer is impelled to strive for anything:

Wherefore works are enjoined on the ignorant, not on the wise, Wisdom (Vidyā) arising, nescience (Avidyā) disappears as does the darkness of the night at sunrise.... When he has learnt to look upon all this dual world as a mere illusion, as though it were night, when he has realised the Self, his duty consists not in the performance of action, but in the renunciation of all action.⁴⁴

⁴³ Bhagavad-Gītā, S. B., op. cit., p.6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.78, line 5 ff., B.G. 11:69.

The real renunciation (vairāgya) involved in the renunciation of (religiously motivated) action is the renunciation of egoism, as Śaṅkarācārya makes clear in his description of the ignorant man:

The man whose mind (antahkarana) is variously deluded by ahamkāra, by egoism identifying the aggregate of the body and the sense with the Self, i.e., who ascribes to himself all the attributes of the body and the senses and thus thoroughly identifies himself with them - he, by nescience, sees action in himself; as regards every action, he thinks "I am the doer".⁴⁵

Śaṅkarācārya's teaching about renunciation (vairāgya) is clearly intended for the select company of men and women who are prepared to sacrifice all, even the comforts of family, caste, and religious duty, in the pursuit of Self-knowledge. It is offered to those who are willing, by physical and mental discipline, to meditate constantly on the One Reality underlying all phenomena. Every experience, every act of consciousness, is subject to searching enquiry (vicāra). In the final analysis, every phenomenon is found to be relative, changing, non-eternal; but the inner Witness (Sākṣi) of phenomena remains identical, unchanging, eternal. On the basis of this discrimination between the Real and the unreal, or the Self and the not-Self, one resolves to turn the attention of the mind away from phenomenal existence and to focus it on the Eternal Self. This involves the renunciation

45

Ibid., p.108, last line, B.G. III:27.

of everything false associated with the ego (Jīva), namely: desires, feelings, ideas, actions, hopes, fears, etc.

Renunciation, however, need not paralyze a man's ability to act. Quite the opposite. It enables him to perform all duties in society with a greater degree of freedom and creativity. Liberated from the "bondage" of egoity, he undertakes his work with tranquillity and "detachment". He lives in peace with all men, because he knows them to be the Self (Ātman).

In Husserl's Phenomenology, we find no advice to "renounce" anything, whether the ego, or the world, or action. The procedure called "phenomenological reduction" is a mental one, a technique for discovering the structure of consciousness and its "constitutive" relation to the world. I agree with Eugen Fink when he writes that the "world's becoming" or "constitution" is the central theme of Phenomenology:

The true theme of phenomenology is neither the world on the one hand, nor a transcendental subjectivity which is to be set over and against the world on the other, but the world's becoming in the constitution of transcendental subjectivity. As the logos of the world..."phenomenology" is the theoretical exhibiting of the world-forming constitution: it is essentially "constitutive" phenomenology.⁴⁶

There is a real sense in which Husserl's project may be said to be world-affirming, since the origin of the world is accounted for by the "constitutive intentionality" of the non-worldly "transcendental subjectivity":

46

Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism", in The Phenomenology of Husserl, Selected Critical Readings, Ed., R.O. Elveton, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970, p.130.

The phenomenological reduction is not primarily a method of simply "disconnecting", but one of leading back. It leads, through the most extreme radicalism of self-reflection, the philosophizing subject back through itself to the transcendental life of belief...whose acceptance-correlate, the world, "is". In other words, it is the method for discovering and exposing a knowledge-thematic which is in principle nonworldly: the dimension of the origin or the world.⁴⁷

Husserl's method of "bracketing" the world (and the "human ego" as part of the world) is meant, ultimately, to conserve the world or to include it in the totality of Being. In all fairness it must be said that, although Saṅkarācārya's method of realizing the transcendental Self (Ātman) involves renunciation (vairāgya) of the empirical ego and its world, he too affirms phenomenal existence as the "appearance" of Brahman. The world, for Husserl, is a product of the Transcendental Ego's "constitutive intentionality"; whereas, for Saṅkarācārya, it is the product of primal ignorance (avidyā) and cosmic illusion (māyā).

I take the liberty of by-passing a discussion of the Third Qualification for Self-realization namely the Six Treasures (Samādiṣaḍ sampattiḥ) and its phenomenological implications, because its six minor points are involved, indirectly, in all the others.

We come, then directly to Saṅkarācārya's Fourth Preliminary Qualification, "longing for liberation" (mumukṣutā).

47

Ibid., 126.

The desire for final release is, of course, very meaningful in the context of Advaita Vedānta. It implies release from the "bondage" of ignorance which is the fundamental evil to be overcome in life. It implies release from the ego-sense (Jīva) that involves one in action (karma) in the phenomenal world (samsāra). It implies release from transmigration or rebirth (punar-janmah). It implies the positive achievement of "freedom". The freedom of knowledge is omniscience. The freedom of existence is omnipotence. The freedom of bliss is one's ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction. Liberation is the "realization" of the Self's infinity.

48

The desire for freedom must be so intense in a mumukṣu that he is willing to pursue the Real with life-long dedication. Liberation is impossible without a sustained analysis of one's own consciousness. This is a variety of "phenomenological reduction" and leads, finally, to the direct intuition of the transcendental Self (Ātman) which is Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss (Sat-Cit-Ānanda). All egoity ceases with the dawn of Self-Knowledge or transcendental Freedom.

48

Swami Chinmayananda, Talks on Vivekachūḍmani, Third Ed., Madras: Chinmaya Publications Trust, No Date., p.53; "Because of our non-apprehension of our Real Nature, misapprehensions about ourselves arise in our mind, such as the ego-centric identification with the body, mind,

In the Phenomenology of Husserl, freedom or the desire for freedom is not referred to explicitly. The goal is to attain access through "phenomenological reduction" to "transcendental subjectivity". In the passive meaning, freedom is the witness of being, so the metaphor of "omniscience" is not inappropriate to the Transcendental Ego. As Koestenbaum says: "To know all means to be the observer of all.

Omniscience is one kind of freedom; it is the freedom of knowledge."⁴⁹ In the active sense, freedom is experienced as unlimited, so that the metaphor of "omnipotence" is apt.

Husserl's Transcendental Ego, as the passive observer of all being and active "constitutor" of the world, is therefore both omniscient and omnipotent.⁵⁰ In answer to the question, "What can serve here as motive?" Husserl replies: "The motive is clear: I come to know and to deepen my knowledge that all knowing and intending of the world stem from my

and intellect, together called the 'ego' and it is these identifications that give us our sense of limitations. It is Infinite. It is absolute. It is perfection."

49
Koestenbaum, op. cit., 193.

50
Ibid., 192-3 I owe the ideas of "active" and "passive" with their corresponding metaphors to Koestenbaum.

own experience."⁵¹ We conclude that Husserlian Phenomenology, no less than Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita, aims at achieving freedom through self-knowledge.

To sum up the preceding section, it is accurate to say that Śaṅkarācārya's preliminary qualifications for Self-realization are "phenomenological" by intention. Discrimination (viveka) is the art of distinguishing between the Réal and the unreal, or, in Husserl's terminology, between Essence and Fact. Renunciation (vairāgya) is the necessity of turning away from the world, or, in Husserl's parlance, "suspending" or "bracketing" the world of facticity. Desire for freedom (Mumukṣutā) is the motivation of a candidate for Self-realization; or, in phenomenological idiom, the goal is to know and intend with "absolute self-responsibility."⁵² Each qualification reinforces the sense of the succeeding one, and the last one is the supreme, all-encompassing requisite for Self-realization or transcendental Freedom.

⁵¹ Edmund Husserl, Husserliana VIII, p.416 quoted by Ludwig Landgrebe in The Phenomenology of Husserl, Ed. Elveton, p.202.

⁵² Ludwig Landgrebe, in Elveton, ibid., p.295.

4. The Fifteen Steps: A Phenomenological
Reinterpretation of Pātañjali's Yoga

In Aparokṣānubhūti 100-134, Śaṅkarācārya expounds fifteen steps (tri-pañcāṅgāni) for the attainment of Knowledge⁵³ by the practice of profound mediation (nididhyāsanam). Since, from the absolute point of view, there is no reality assigned to the concepts of "means" and "ends", it must be assumed that Śaṅkarācārya adopts here the relative point of view of those aspiring to Self-realization. The fifteen steps are listed as follows: 1. Control of the senses (yamah); 2. Control of the mind (niyamah); 3. Renunciation (tyāgah); 4. Silence (maunaṁ); 5. Place (deśah); 6. Time (kālatā); 7. Posture (āsanaṁ); 8. Restraining Root (mūla-bandah); 9. Equipoise of the Body (dehā-sāmyaṁ); 10. Steadiness of Vision (drksthitiḥ); 11. Control of the Vital Forces (prāṇasaṁyamana); 12. Self-withdrawal (pratyāhārah); 13. Concentration (dhāraṇā); 14. Meditation on Ātman (ātmadhyānaṁ); 15. Complete absorption (samādhiḥ).⁵⁴ Śaṅkarācārya's fifteen steps (tri-pañca-āṅgāni) include the eight steps of

⁵³ Śaṅkarācārya, Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 100, p.53.

⁵⁴ Ibid., ślokas 102-3, p.54-55.

55

Pātañjali's Yoga. This eighfold path (aṣṭāṅga Yoga) consists of the following steps: 1. yamaḥ; 2. niyamah; 3. āsanah; 4. prānāyāmah; 5. pratyāhārah; 6. dhāranāh; 7. dhyānah; and 8. samādhi. Though he retains these titles, Śaṅkarācārya reinterprets the eight steps of Rāja Yoga to harmonize with his phenomenological approach to transcendental Reality. In the following pages we shall give attention to the way he reinterprets each one of the eight steps. We shall also examine the seven new steps introduced, namely: renunciation (tyāgaḥ); silence (maunaṁ); place (deśah); time (kālatā); restraining root (mūla-bandhah); equipoise of the body (deha-sāmyah); steadiness of vision (drk sthitiḥ).

Yamaḥ in Pātañjali's Yoga means "restraint" or control of the senses. It includes the five vows of Jainism: abstention from giving injury through thought, word or deed (ahimsā), from speaking falsehood (mithyā), from stealing (asteyā), from lustful passion (brahmacharya), and from avarice (aparigraha).⁵⁶ These five abstentions are designed to control external behaviour. Śaṅkarācārya is more interested in controlling the mind that governs the senses and outward

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Yoga is defined in Pātañjali's Yoga-sūtras 1. 1-2 as "the cessation of the modifications of chitta" (yogaś-citta-vrtti-nirodhyah) Chitta means the three internal organs of Sāṅkhya - buddhi (intellect), aḥaṅkāra (ego) and manas (mind).

56
 C. Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960, p.172.

behaviour. He advocates restraint of the senses (indriya-grāmasaṁyamah) by "practising" the thought that "All this (existence) if Brahman." ⁵⁷ Who can injure, speak lies, steal, act lustfully or greedily against a neighbour knowing him to be Brahman as oneself? Knowledge of Brahman functions in relation to Patañjali's yamah the way Jesus' law of love functions in relation to the Ten Commandments. It fulfils and transcends all the external requirements.

Niyamah in Aṣṭāṅga Yoga is "internal and external purity (śauca), contentment (santoṣa), austerity (tapas), study (svādhyāya), and devotion to God (Īśvara-pranidhāna).⁵⁸ These five subdivisions, with the exception of "contentment", prescribe things to be done. They are action-orientated. Śaṅkarācārya reinterprets niyamah as "the continuous flow of only one kind of thought (sajātīya pravāhah) to the exclusion of all other thoughts."⁵⁹ The kind of thought recommended is "I am Brahman", "This Ātman is Brahman" etc. Such a thought, when practised habitually is the "supreme bliss" (parānandah), and requires no external "actions" to complete it.

57

Aparokṣānubhūti 104, p.55.

58

Sharma, op. cit., 172.

59

Aparokṣānubhūti 105, p.55

Āsana in Rāja Yoga means the adoption of certain postures of the body, some of them uncomfortable and tortuous, to aid one's meditation. Śaṅkarācārya reinterprets this to mean a "posture" of consciousness "in which the meditation on Brahman flows comfortably (sukhena) and unceasingly (ajasraṁ).⁶⁰ What else is this but "transcendental consciousness" free from the distractions of the gross (sthūla), subtle (sukṣma), and causal (kāraṇa) bodies?

Prāṇāyāma in Pātañjali's system means "control of breath" and involves "regulation of inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath" under expert guidance.⁶¹ Śaṅkarācārya redefines it as "the restraint of all modifications of the mind" like Citta by identifying them with Brahman.⁶² Exhalation (recakah) is the negation (niśedhanaṁ) of the phenomenal world (prapañcasya); inhalation (pūrakah) is the thought, 'I am verily Brahman'; retention of breath (kumbhaka) is the holding steady of that thought. Taken together, they constitute Prāṇāyāma for Śaṅkarācārya, not the "torture of the nose" (dhrāṇapīdanam).⁶³ The breath is wholly dependent on the mind

⁶⁰ Ibid., 112 p.59.

⁶¹ Sharma, op. cit., 172.

⁶² Aparokṣānubhūti 118, p.62.

⁶³ Ibid., 119-120, p.63.

and not vice versa, and so it is better to control the mind than waste one's energies controlling breath.

Pratyāhāra in Yoga is "control of the senses" and consists in "withdrawing the senses from their objects" and directing them towards the "internal goal" by a "process of introversion".⁶⁴ / Śaṅkarācārya aims rather at merging (majjanām) the mind in Supreme Consciousness (Citi.) by realizing Self (Ātman) in all objects.⁶⁵ Transcendental Consciousness easily and spontaneously views all objects as "constituted" within itself. So the arduous task of withdrawing the senses from external objects is bypassed.

Dhāraṇā (Concentration) in Yoga is "fixing the mind on the object of meditation like the tip of the nose...or the image of the deity."⁶⁶ / Śaṅkarācārya reinterprets it to mean "steadiness of the mind through realization of Brahman wherever the mind goes."⁶⁷ If the mind, when concentrated on various objects, disregards the names and forms superimposed on them by ignorance, it sees only Brahman-Ātman. This is Dhāraṇā's fulfilment in Advaita.

⁶⁴ Sharma, op. cit., 172.

⁶⁵ Aparokṣānubhūti, 121, p.64.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 122, p.64.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 122, p.64.

Dhyāna, in Yoga, means "meditation" and consists of "the undisturbed flow of thought round the object of meditation."⁶⁸ / Saṅkarācārya reinterprets it as "remaining independent of everything" (nirālambatayā) as a result of the thought, 'I am Brahman'. The merging of all objects in Brahman, the Source of objectivity, and the realization of Brahman as one's Self,⁶⁹ is productive of Bliss Absolute.

Samādhi is the final step in Yoga. It means "concentration". The mind and its object of meditation merge into one, whereas in Dhyāna they remain separate. There are two kinds of Samādhi: Conscious (samprajñāta) in which the object is transcended. The former is called Ekāgra, the latter Niruddha.⁷⁰ / Saṅkarācārya reinterprets Samādhi to mean "the complete forgetfulness of all mental activity (vṛtti-vismaranaṁ) by making it changeless (nirvikāra) and then by identifying it with Nirguna Brahman.⁷¹ The absence of objective thoughts does not signify a state of unconsciousness. "Pure" or Transcendental Consciousness remains. It is free of all qualities or attributes, and activity of any kind.

⁶⁸ Sharma, op. cit., 172.

⁶⁹ Aparokṣānubhūti, 123, p.65.

⁷⁰ Sharma, op. cit., 172-3.

⁷¹ Aparokṣānubhūti, 124, p.66.

The above listed eight steps are adapted from Pātañjali's Yoga. The transformation, in every case, is in the direction of transcendental subjectivity and away from "transcendent objectivity". We turn now to the seven new steps introduced by Saṅkarācārya to make up his list of fifteen.

Tyāga (renunciation) is the first. He defines it as "the abandonment of the illusory universe (prapañca-rūpasya) by realizing it as the all-conscious Ātman." This, syas Saṅkarācārya, is the "honoured renunciation of the great" and is "immediate liberation" (sadyaḥ mokṣa-mayaḥ).⁷² Renunciation is not simply a "giving up" of action and falling into a state of inactivity; it is a positive realization of Ātman everywhere so that one desires nothing else at all.⁷³

Mauna (silence) is that goal attained by Yogis "wherefrom words together with the mind turn back (nivartante)⁷⁴ without reaching it." All language and concepts are inadequate to express the reality of the Self discovered in transcendental consciousness. It is sui generis. Silence is inevitable if

72

Ibid., 106, p.56.

73

Ibid., 106, p. 56 Note by Swamī Vimuktānanda

74

Ibid., 107, p.57.

one tries to describe the nature of the phenomenal world, since it is neither Sat (existent) nor Asat (non-existent), but truly inexpressible (anirvacanīya): How much more so is Brahman⁷⁵

Deśa (space) is that "solitude" (vijānah) "wherein the universe does not exist in the beginning, end or middle, but whereby it is pervaded (vyāptam) at all times."⁷⁶

Phenomenology shows that the concept of space is meaningful only in relation to bodies. Spatiality is an extension of body-consciousness. But, since in transcendental consciousness there is a total absence of bodies and space, how is it that Śaṅkarācārya speaks of space (deśa)? It is symbolic of a trans-empirical state of affairs beyond relativity that is all-pervasive.

Kāla (time) denotes non-dual Brahman "since it brings into existence all beings from Brahmā downwards in an instant (nimesatah)"⁷⁷ Śaṅkarācārya means to imply that creation, preservation, and destruction of the world are non-temporal "events" in transcendental consciousness. The concept of

75

Ibid., Note by Swāmī Vimuktānanda, on 108-109, p.58

76

Ibid., 110, p.58.

77

Aparokṣānubhūti, 111, p.59.

time is more subtle than "space" and results from one's identification with mind. Why does Śaṅkarācārya speak of time (kāla) to denote the "Bliss indivisible"? He is using an empirical concept to symbolize what is trans-empirical. He is "constituting" time for the purpose of communication with those in bondage to time, even as he previously "constituted" space. The alternative is silence.

Mūlabandha (restraining root) is "the root of all existence (sarva-bhūtānaṃ-mūlaṃ) on which the restraint of the mind (citta-bandhanam) is based."⁷⁸ Śaṅkarācārya adapts the name of another Yogic posture (mūlabandha) to teach that posture is entirely secondary to the merging of mind in Brahman, for one who wishes to restrain the mind's modifications (vr̥ttis) permanently.

Dehasāmya (equipoise of the body) is "absorption (līnatāṃ) in the homogeneous Brahman" and not something merely physical and mechanical.⁷⁹ It is a merging of body-consciousness in the one, part-less Ātman or Transcendental Consciousness.

Dr̥k-sthitiḥ (steadiness of vision) is seeing the entire

78

Ibid., 114, p.60.

79

Ibid., 115, p.61.

phenomenal world as Brahman alone. It is not directing one's gaze at the tip of the nose as prescribed by Yoga.⁸⁰

Śaṅkarācārya says "one should direct one's vision to That (i.e. Pure Consciousness) alone where all distinction of the seer, sight, and seen (draṣṭṛ-darśana-drśyānām) ceases".⁸¹ All consciousness of external things like body detract from the vision of Ātman and prevent Self-realization.

It has been shown above how Śaṅkarācārya consistently and systematically reinterprets the well-known steps of Pātañjali's Yoga to harmonize with Advaita. The genius of Advaita was, and is, its ability to "swallow" all rival philosophies and to unify them in Nirguna Brahman. Śaṅkarācārya "digests" the eight steps of Pātañjali's Yoga and in the process "reduces" and simplifies them to their essence in transcendental consciousness. Virtually nothing in the universe escapes the "digesting" power of Advaita Vedānta, as space, time, causality, action, personality, gods, etc. are "reduced" to Brahman-Ātman.

80

Ibid., 116, p.61.

81

Ibid., 117, p.62.

75A
anubhūto'pyayaṁ loka vyavahāraśamo'pi saṁ asadrūpo vathā svapna
ottaraksanabādhatah

This world, though an object of our daily experience and serving all practical purposes, is, like the dream world, of the nature of non-existence, inasmuch as it is contradicted the next moment.

svapno jāgaraṇe'likāḥ svapne'pi jāgaro na hi dvayameva laye nāsti
layo'pi hyubhayorna ca

The dream (experience) is unreal in waking, whereas the waking (experience) is absent in dream. Both, however, are non-existent in deep sleep which, again, is not experienced in either.

trayamevaṁ bhavenmithyā guṇatraya vinirmitam asya draṣṭā guṇātīto
nityo hyekaścidātmakah

Thus all the three states are unreal inasmuch as they are the creation of the three Gunas; but their witness (the reality behind them) is, beyond all Gunas, eternal, one, and is Consciousness itself.

- Aparokṣānubhūti, 56,57,58.

CHAPTER 2

THE THREE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Waking, Dreaming, Deep Sleep Analysis

Śaṅkarācārya begins his depth analysis of experience by distinguishing three states (avasthā-traya) of consciousness: the waking state (jāgarasta-avasthā), the dream state (svapna-avasthā), and the deep sleep state (susupti-avasthā). The waking state (jāgarasta-avasthā) is when the body, through its sense organs, perceives gross objects (sthūla-arthaṃ)¹. The dream state (svapna-avasthā) is when the mind, independently (svayam-eva) of the "objective" world, assumes the role of an agent (kartā) because of "latent impressions of the waking state" stored up in the mind (buddhi)². The state of deep sleep (susupti-avasthā) is when we experience bliss (ānanda) independently of sense-objects (nirvisaya)³. In

¹ Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, 88, p.32.

² Ibid., 98, p.36 Buddhi in this verse stands for internal organ (antahkarana) which includes mind (manas).

³ Ibid., 107, p.38.

deep sleep, moreover, all the functions (vṛttih) of the mind and its organs (indriya) are temporarily suspended (pralīna).⁴

The above-mentioned three states (avasthā-traya) correspond to three of the four "quarters" of Brahman described in the Māndūkya Upanisad, namely: Vaiśvānara, Taijasa, and Prājña.⁵ The purpose of describing the three states is to establish their changeable natures, their mutual contradictoriness and relative "non-reality". The final step is to intuit the one immutable Real or Self (Ātman) that is witness (draṣṭā) of the three states.⁶ It is rightly called the Fourth (caturtham).

To explain the cosmological "origin of the three states (avasthā-trayam) of consciousness, Śaṅkarācārya borrows freely from the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy.⁷ According to it, there are three strands or components (gunas) of primeval matter (prakṛti), namely: rajas, tamas, and sattva. Rajas has "projecting power" (viksepa-śakti) and is the source of all

4

Ibid., 120, p.44.

5

Māndūkya Upanisad 3-5, In this Upanisad the mystic, esoteric syllable AUM is analyzed in four parts to show the origin of speech itself in Brahman.

6

Śaṅkarācārya, Aparokshānubhūti 58, p.33

7

The Sāṅkhya classification of components (gunas) of matter (Prakṛti) is based on Chāndogya Upanisad.

activity in the phenomenal world, whether physical or mental.⁸
Tamas has "veiling power" (āvṛti) and "makes things appear other
 than what they are."⁹ Sattva is "transparent" (viśuddhaṁ) to
 the Self (Ātman), and free from both veiling and projecting
 powers. Yet, in combination with rajas and tamas, it contributes
 to transmigration.¹⁰ The theory of three components (gunas) of
 primeval matter gives a convenient account not only of the origin
 but also of the destruction of the three states of conscious-
 ness.¹¹ It is important to notice that the cosmological
 explanation, based on Sāṅkhya philosophy, is not central
 but peripheral to Śaṅkarācārya's whole intention. He
 offers it here as a "concession" to those who must think
 cosmologically; but for him it is a methodological or
 pedagogical act of "deliberate superimposition".¹² The real
 focus of attention here is on the changing kaleidoscope
 of awareness, or the transitions from one state of consciousness

⁸ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, 111, p.40.

⁹ Ibid., 113, p.41.

¹⁰ Ibid., 117, p.43

¹¹ Swāmī Vimuktānanda in a note on Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 58, p.33, writes
 "But whatever is a compound must disintegrate and be des-
 troyed...and so it is unreal, as reality implies indestruct-
 ibility."

¹² See my Introduction, Śaṅkarācārya's method of adhyāropāpavāda.

to another. Careful analysis of these phenomena is crucial in Advaita Vedānta for one's progress through an ascending scale of consciousness to the final realization of the Self (Ātman). This is the significance of Śaṅkarācārya's method¹³ and brings him into relation to modern Phenomenology. We turn our attention to it now.

In the waking state, the phenomenal world (lokaḥ) demands our attention and fills our thought. We experience it as the environment in which we act. We accept it implicitly, though not "thematically" as "real", as existent. We experience it as "necessary" for all practical purposes (vyavahāraḥ).¹⁴ Our body, through its sense organs, enjoys a variety of objects such as "garlands, sandal paste, and woman" (śrak-candana-strya).¹⁵ Our ego (Jīva) feels happy or sad, according to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations of the body and mind. Our mind (manas) frames hypotheses to explain the "facts" of science and the "objective" events of history. Our intelligence (buddhi) evaluates the truth of our personal experience.

13

I mean that Sāṅkhya's three gūnas, when reinterpreted by Śaṅkara, are no longer three components of matter but structures of consciousness.

14

Aparokṣānubhūti, 56, p.31

15

Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, 89, p.32.

We plan for the future on the basis of what is stored up in the memory (citta).¹⁶ All of this experience of the "external" world is carried on by the instrumentality of the gross body or sheath (annamaya kośa).¹⁷ We seldom question the validity of our sense-impressions or mental perceptions. The "waking state" ceases abruptly when we fall asleep. We are transported by dream (svapna) to a strange new world of places, things, and people. What was impossible in our waking hours, now appears possible. For example, we travel thousands of miles in an instant. We find ourselves in bizarre circumstances that amuse or frighten us. Sometimes dream-events are so vividly "real", we wake up with a start. On waking we discover it was "only a dream", a figment of the imagination. We conclude, "it was nothing (alīkah)".¹⁸ The dream-events were "real" just so long as we remained in the dreaming state (svapna-avasthā); they lost their "reality" the moment we returned to the "waking state" (jāgarasta-avasthā). In an analogous way, the "real" world of wakeful experience is found to be non-existent

16

Ibid., 93-4, p.34.

17

See my chapter 3 for a discussion of the five kośas or "covering" of the Self.

18

Aparokshānubhūti, 57, p.32.

(asadrūpah) in dream because of subsequent contradiction¹⁹
 (uttarakṣana bādhatah).

In deep sleep, both kinds of experience - waking and dreaming - are non-existent (nāsti).²⁰ There is no world of "objects" for the bodily senses to enjoy. There is no ego to create ideas or to do any action. There is, instead, a content-less void. Consciousness is present, but it is undifferentiated. On waking from deep sleep, we remember nothing. We say, "I slept soundly; I knew nothing." A feeling of relaxation in body and mind is the only residue of that state of blissful consciousness when, temporarily, we were free from all desire for gross and subtle objects, free from the anxiety of egoism, free from phenomena of every kind.

Śaṅkarācārya concludes his analysis of experience with the judgment that all three states - waking, dreaming, and deep sleep - are not real (mithyā).²¹ They are non-eternal because they change, mutually contradict each other, and ultimately, cancel each other out. They introduce

19
Ibid., 56, p.31-2.

20
Ibid., 57, p.32.

21
Ibid., 58, p.33.

discontinuity into the stream of consciousness. But the continuity of our experience is a stubborn fact. The source of that continuity must be Something superior to the three states. It is the one, eternal witness of the three states and their modifications. It is "pure" Consciousness, unaffected by the three components (gunas) of matter (prakṛti) that "cause" the states. ²² The Self (Ātman) alone really exists; the three states of consciousness are its "appearances" caused by primal ignorance (avidyā).

2. Some Parallels in the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya:

The brevity of the references to the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states in Aparokṣānubhūti and Vivekacūḍāmaṇi makes it desirable to supplement them with fuller descriptions by Śaṅkarācārya in his major commentaries. This will afford us an opportunity to examine any discrepancies which may seem to appear between the major and minor writings, and provide evidence for or against Śaṅkarācārya's authorship of the minor works. It will also furnish additional illustrations of the Advaita method by which we can determine to what extent the procedures of Phenomenology are at work.

Let us begin with references to the three states of

consciousness in Śaṅkarācārya's Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣyas. In commenting on B.S. 1.1.9, he describes deep sleep as a merging or "resolving into" the Self (Ātman) of the individual "I" (Jīva). The context implies that the merging is progressive as one moves from the waking state through the intermediate state to deep sleep:

The individual soul (Jīva) is called awake as long as being connected with the various external objects by means of the modifications of the mind - which thus constitute limiting adjuncts of the soul - it apprehends those external objects, and identifies itself with the gross body, which is one of those external objects. When, modified by the impressions which the external objects have left, it sees dreams, it is denoted by the term "mind". When, on the cessation of the two limiting adjuncts (i.e. the subtle and the gross bodies), ... it is, in the state of deep sleep, merged in the Self as it were, then it is said to be asleep (resolved into the Self).²³

The waking and the dream states are considered "gross and subtle bodies" or "limiting adjuncts" to be discarded as one "moves" progressively towards identity with the Self.

Śaṅkarācārya vigorously rejects the notion that deep sleep is a resolving or merging back into inert, non-intelligent matter (pradhāna). It is exactly the reverse, for the soul is merged into an intelligent entity denoted by the word Sat.²⁴

If the reduction of the "gross and subtle bodies" in

23

The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya, XXXIV, Trans. George Thibaut, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1904, p.59, line 13 ff.

24

Ibid., p.59-60.

deep sleep results in greater intelligence (by virtue of proximity to the Self, defined as Knowledge) it is not surprising to find Śaṅkarācārya attributing the "waking up" phenomenon to Ignorance (avidyā): "That the rising from deep sleep is due to the existence of potential avidyā, Scripture also declares, "Having become merged in the True they know not that they are merged in the True."²⁵ This implies a drastic loss of intelligence (or Self-knowledge) as the empirical ego and its world of objects re-emerge from deep sleep. The mind engages in its old habit of "superimposing" objectivity on the transcendental Self.²⁶ This happens partially even in the dream state which is midway between deep sleep and waking states.²⁷ The mind, as an instrument of the Self, occupies itself with (mental) objects even though the senses are disengaged from (physical) objects. The wandering of the mind in dream is due to mental impressions (vāsanā) and is wholly unreal.²⁸ Ignorance (forgetfulness of Self) comes into its own with the emergence of the "waking state"

²⁵ Ibid., XXXVIII, p.48, line 7 ff. The Scripture cited is Chand. Up. VI:9:2.

²⁶ See my Chapter 3 dealing with Śaṅkara's mind-ignorance equation.

²⁷ Ibid., p.133, line 18 ff. dream is called "intermediate place" between two worlds.

²⁸ Ibid., p.56, line 7 ff.

and its preoccupation with the external world perceived by bodily senses.

When speaking from the empirical point of view, Śaṅkarācārya is careful to discriminate between the objects of the waking and dreaming states. He is not a subjective idealist. This is brought out clearly in his debate with the Buddhists:

We now apply ourselves to the refutation of the averment made by the Bauddha, that the ideas of posts, and so on, of which we are conscious in the waking state, may arise in the absence of external objects, just as the ideas of a dream, both being ideas alike. The two sets of ideas, we maintain, cannot be treated on the same footing, on account of the difference of their character. They differ as follows - The things of which we are conscious in a dream are negated by our waking consciousness..... Those things on the other hand, of which we are conscious in our waking state, such as posts and the like, are never negated in any state.²⁹

He cites another reason for the distinction, namely, the difference in experience between an act of memory and of direct perception:

Moreover, the visions of a dream are acts of remembrance, while the visions of the waking state are acts of immediate consciousness; and the distinction between remembrance and immediate consciousness is directly cognized by every one as being founded on the absence or presence of the object.³⁰

29

Ibid., XXXIV, p.424, line 27 to p.425, line 6.

30

Ibid., p.425, line 6 ff.

He concludes with the sarcastic comment that "fire, which is felt to be hot, cannot be demonstrated to be cold, on the ground of its having attributes in common with water."³¹

With equal sarcasm, he dismisses an argument of one of the Buddhist schools (Vijñānavādin) that external objects do not really exist but consist of a "stream of consciousness" or mental impressions, like dreams:

The non-existence of external things cannot be maintained because we are conscious of external things.....
Why should we pay attention to the words of a man who, while conscious of an outward thing...affirms that he is conscious of no outward thing, and that no such thing exists, any more than we listen to a man who while he is eating and experiencing the feeling of satisfaction avers that he does not eat and does not feel satisfied?³²

Always, his analysis of consciousness (prior to the introduction of the Self and the absolute or transcendental point of view) is based squarely on the facts of empirical experience. He meets the "radical empiricist" on his own ground, so to speak. But this does not prevent him from making the "transcendental turn" to the Self when evidence requires it.

When an opponent raises the objection that the whole body of Vedāntic doctrine referring to "final liberation" collapses if the teacher-student distinction and all other

31
Ibid., p.425, line 28 ff.

32
Ibid., p.420, line 27 ff.

distinctions are held to be unreal, Śaṅkarācārya replies:

These objections, we reply, do not damage our position because the entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true as long as the knowledge of Brahman being the Self of all has not arisen; just as the phantoms of a dream are considered to be true until the sleeper wakes.³³

In other words, the Fourth (turiya) of "transcendental consciousness" or "Self-realization" supercedes but does not doubt or deny the existence of the empirical order i.e. the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. Phenomenal existence (samsāra) is the ladder, one may say, by which we can climb, rung by rung, to the final intuition or "realization" of the Self (Ātman). The best way to "climb" the ladder is to participate fully in life's experience and then to meditate on it with detachment. This involves the mental process of "phenomenological reduction". Most important of all, it involves the recovery of the one, eternal Self out of which the universe "appears" and into which it "disappears" by the cosmic power of illusion (māyā).

There are passages in the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya where Śaṅkarācārya seems to blur the distinction between the deep sleep state and "final liberation" (mukti), as though they

33

Ibid., p.324, line 7 ff. (underlining is mine. Dream is cited here expressly as an analogy.)

34
 were identical. This is puzzling if one remembers the sharp distinctions drawn by him between the three empirical states of consciousness³⁵ and again, between them and the Fourth (turiya). The seeming contradiction can be resolved only on the principle that he alternates between the empirical and transcendental modes of thinking and speaking.³⁶ Two examples of how he makes the transition from dreamless sleep to "final release" or identity with Brahman-Ātman follow below:

By 'entering into one's own Self' is meant dreamless sleep.... What the texts say about absence of specific cognition is said with reference to either³⁷ of those two states, dreamless sleep or final release.

That that which is (sat) and the intelligent Self (prājña) are only names of Brahman is well known; hence scripture mentions only three places of deep sleep, viz, the nādis, the pericardium, and Brahman. Among these three again Brahman alone is the lasting place of deep sleep; the nādis and the pericardium are mere roads leading to it It cannot, moreover, be said that the soul is at any time not united with Brahman - for its true nature can never pass away -; but considering that in the state

34

The ambiguity is traceable to the Upaniṣadic statements themselves, c.f. Br. Up. 4.3.16.

35

See Chapter One for a description of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. Reflection (in waking state) on dreaming and deep sleep states is phenomenologically more important than deep sleep which is a state of ignorance.

36

He alternates with methodological awareness.

37

The Vedānta Sūtras, op. cit., XXXVIII, p.414, line 32 ff.

of waking and that of dreaming it passes, owing to the contact with its limiting adjuncts, into something else, as it were, it may be said that when those adjuncts cease in deep sleep it passes back into its true nature.³⁸

The phrase "as it were" signals the fact that he is speaking temporarily as if the empirical mode were real; but it signals, simultaneously, the meaning that "limiting adjuncts" such as waking and dreaming states are products of ignorance having no reality from the ultimate point of view. He deliberately "superimposes" the states of consciousness and then subsequently "rescinds" them according to convenience. All this is in perfect harmony with the Vedāntic method of adhyāropa-apavāda³⁹ outlined earlier.

If Śaṅkarācārya can speak at times in the empirical mode, he can also speak in cosmic terms implying "causality". We saw this previously in his use of the three components (gunas) of matter (prakṛti) posited by Sāṅkhya philosophy to explain the "origin" and "dissolution" of the three states of consciousness.⁴⁰ Now, at this stage, he is concerned to explain the unevolved condition of the world without resorting to the Sāṅkhya doctrine of non-intelligent matter (pradhāna) as the independent "cause" of the world. He does

38

Ibid., p.144, line 35 ff., p.145, line 16 ff. (my underlining)

39

See my Introduction, last section.

40

See early part of this chapter.

it by equating "causal potentiality" with nescience (avidyā):

If we admitted some antecedent state of the world as the independent cause of the actual world, we should implicitly admit the pradhāna doctrine. What we admit is, however, only a previous state dependent on the highest Lord, not an independent state.....
For that causal potentiality is of the nature of Nescience; it is rightly denoted by the term 'undeveloped'; it has the highest Lord for its substratum; it is of the nature of an illusion; it is a universal sleep in which are lying the transmigrating souls destitute for the time of the consciousness of their individual character.⁴¹

This view of "causal potentiality" is a logical and cosmological extension of Śaṅkarācārya's phenomenology of the self in deep sleep. For example, in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi he equates the "undifferentiated" or unevolved state of the universe with the "causal body" of the soul.⁴² Furthermore, he equates the "undifferentiated" with ignorance (avidyā) or illusion (māyā)⁴³ as the "power of the Lord."⁴³ This differentiates his view of māyā from the Sāṅkhya view of Prakṛti, because it is conscious⁴⁴ and dependent on Brahman. It follows that Brahman is "the Essence of Bliss Absolute - transcending all the

41

Vedānta Sūtras, op. cit., XXXIV, p.242, line 35 f., p.243, line 11 f.

42

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 120, p.44.

43

Ibid., 108, p.39.

44

Ibid., 108, p.39, note 2 by Swāmī Madhavānanda.

diversities created by Māyā or nescience...." ⁴⁵ Of course, it is important to remember that cosmological views of the universe based on cause-effect relations are unreal from the transcendental point of view. In Aparokṣānubhūti, Śaṅkarācārya makes this point clear:

The nature of the cause inheres in the effect and not vice versa; so through reasoning it is found that in the absence of the effect the cause, as such, also disappears. ⁴⁶

Methodologically speaking, the two terms are correlative; as long as there is an effect, there is a cause. But if the effect were absent, the cause also would be absent. ⁴⁷ The method of rescinding the cause-effect relation is spelled out: "One should first look for the cause by the negative method and then find it by the positive method, as ever inherent in the effect." ⁴⁸ An alternative method is suggested by

⁴⁵ Ibid., 238, p.92.

⁴⁶ Aparokṣānubhūti, 135, p.72.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 135, p.72. Note 1 by Swāmī Vimuktānanda.

⁴⁸ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, 138, p.73. Swāmī Vimuktānanda explains what is meant by the "negative" and "positive" methods: "The positive proposition is: "Where there is an effect, there must be a cause"; and the negative one is: "Where there is no cause, there is no effect". From either proposition we come to the conclusion that there is Brahman which is the cause of the world-phenomenon."

Śaṅkarācārya for rescinding causality: "One should verily see the cause in the effect, and then dismiss the effect altogether. What then remains, the sage himself becomes." 49

One may naturally conclude that, after the negation of both cause and effect, only a Void (Śūnya) remains. But absolute negation is impossible. One cannot negate one's own Self. 50

Śaṅkarācārya refutes the argument in favour of the Void, in his Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya:

We read, Br. Up. 11, 3, 'Two forms of Brahman there are indeed, the material and the immaterial, the mortal and the immortal..... It is impossible that the phrase, 'Not so, not so:' should negative both, since that would imply the doctrine of a general Void. Whenever we deny something unreal, we do so with reference to something real; the unreal snake, e.g. is negated with reference to the real rope. If everything is denied, no entity is left, and if no entity is left, the denial of some other entity which we may wish to undertake, becomes impossible, i.e. that latter entity becomes real and as such cannot be negated. 51

Śaṅkarācārya's "deliberate superimposition" and "subsequent rescission" of the cause-effect relation, though necessitated by the cosmological question, is legitimate from the transcendental point of view. Why? Because it serves the "phenomenological reduction" of the world to the one reality, namely Consciousness (Cit). Ultimately, the fourth "state"

49

Aparokṣānubhūti, 139, p.74.

50

Ibid., 139, p.74. Note by Swāmī Vimuktānanda.

51

Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, op. cit., XXXVIII, p.167, line 3 ff. and p.168, line 4 ff.

(turiya) includes the whole cosmos in its perspective.

It appears to me that the mediating role played by "constitutive intentionality" in Husserl's Phenomenology is played by "primordial ignorance" (avidya) or cosmic illusion (mayā) in Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita. In Husserl's philosophy, "intentionality" bridges the gap between the "immanence" of Absolute Being and the "transcendence" of Phenomenal Being.⁵² He resolves the dualism by assigning "necessary" and "indubitable" reality to the Transcendental Ego, and mere "contingent" reality to the world.⁵³ In Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy, the phenomenal world (samsāra) "created by primal ignorance (avidya) exists only so long as a man remains hypnotized by the seeming "reality" of existence. From the dawn of Self-realization i.e. intuitive knowledge of one's own identity with Brahman-Ātman, the phenomenal world is seen to be "false" (mithya), i.e. largely a projection of one's mind. In both philosophies the cosmological problem of the world's origin is solved by locating all creativity, all power of "constituting" entities, in "transcendental subjectivity".

52

Edmund Husserl, Ideas, Trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, London: Collier-MacMillan Ltd., 1962, p.124 ff.

53

Ibid., p.130-1.

3. Some Parallels in the Brhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya

We turn now to Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the Brhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad where there is an abundance of interesting material on the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. The language is more picturesque and popular than in the technical and somewhat abstruse commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, but no less important for an understanding of Śaṅkarācārya's "transcendental phenomenology".

I begin with a passage that depicts the transcendental Self (Ātman) as a "great fish" or whale swimming freely back and forth between the waking and dreaming states. The image is appropriate for several reasons. It emphasizes the freedom of the Self to "move" unhindered from one state of consciousness to another. It defines the differentia of the waking and the dreaming states i.e. consciousness of body:

Now it has been said that the same self-luminous Ātman moves unattached like a great fish between the dream and waking states. As it moves like the great fish between these two states, alternately relinquishing and taking up the body and organs, which are the forms of death and birth it is alternately disconnected from and connected with those very forms of death.⁵⁴

A further point of interest is the way Śaṅkarācārya depicts the body and its organs as "the forms of death" which cause

⁵⁴ Śaṅkarācārya, Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya, Trans. Swami Mādhavanāṇḍa, Māyāvati, Almorā, Himalayas: Advaita Ashrama, 1950, p.691, line 29 ff to p.692, line 4.

the misery of rebirth. To translate into the phenomenological key, we may say that body-consciousness spells death, absence of body-consciousness spells life. Physical matter, by and of itself, has no "evil power", but the ignorance (avidyā) that causes one to attribute "reality" falsely to the body and the world is the source of all evil. It binds one to rebirth in phenomenal existence (samsāra). The Self (Ātman), of course, is never bound because it is "freedom" by definition, but the ego-sense (Jīva) that accompanies body-sense binds. The freedom of the Self residing "latently" in the phenomenal self enables it to conquer ignorance and achieve liberation through knowledge.

In Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 75-87, there is a similar depreciation of "attachment" to the body and body-senses. The fool (mūḍha) who is bound (baddhā) by the strong rope⁵⁵ of attachment or desire for sense-objects comes and goes, up and down, like an animal in captivity. He is the hapless victim of his own past intentions and deeds (sva-karma-dūtena)⁵⁶. He is more to be pitied than the creatures of nature that die through attachment to one or other of the sense⁵⁷. He is victim

55

The word guṇa in the text means both "rope" and "tendency".

56

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 75, p.27.

57

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 76, p.28. The deer, elephant, moth, fish, and black-bee are named especially. Swami Chinmayananda

58

of all five senses! The "shark of hankering" snatches violently at those trying to cross the ocean of relative existence (samsāra) without detachment (vairāgya), and drowns them. Only the wise man who is free from the "infatuation" of the body achieves liberation (mukti) from the bondage of ignorance, death, rebirth, and the miseries of phenomenal existence. This passage demonstrates the principle that one moves from bondage to freedom, from ignorance to knowledge, from phenomenal states (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep) to transcendental consciousness by systematic mental "reduction" of phenomenal objects like the body.

explains: "The deer like melodious sound and the deer-hunter sings to charm the deer.... The elephants, especially in their mating season, become extremely attached to the sense of touch; rubbing against each other and walking without caution, they fall into the pits got ready to catch them. The moth is attracted irresistibly by form, and charmed by the brilliance of a flame...gets itself burnt in the flame. The fishes, ravenously hungry at all times, in their gluttony, swallow the worm along with the hook which the angler had thrown.... The poor honey-bee, pursuing its industrious vocation, collects honey from the flowers...until at last the heartless man reaches the hive and sets fire to the entire colony in order to loot the honey-wealth of the bee." Swami Chinmayananda, Talks on Vivekacūdāmani, Madras: Chinmaya Pub. Trust, no date. p.137-8.

58
Vivekacūdāmani 76, p.28.

59
See Chapter One for a description of Vairāgya as one of the Four Qualifications for Self-Realization.

50
Vivekacūdāmani, 79, p.29.

61
Ibid., 85, p.31.

One achieves liberation, not by suicide, nor by doubting or denying the existence of the body, but by realizing one's identity with the Self that lies concealed in the "appearance" called the body.

Commenting on Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.9, Śaṅkarācārya discusses the dream state as the "junction" between this world and the next. A man in dream "surveys" the sufferings and joys of previous lives and gets glimpses of "merits and demerits" that are accumulating results in future lives. He discards some of the impressions of the "all-embracing world" (waking state), puts the gross (physical) body aside, and "creates" a subtle dream body for his use. In that state the man himself becomes the "light" by which he "sees" everything. This sounds very much like a psychological description, and a good one when we consider how long ago it was written! But the purpose is not merely to describe an empirical state of consciousness, but to establish the reality of transcendental consciousness:

In that way alone can the man be shown to be himself the light, when there is no object to be revealed as in profound sleep. When, however, that lustre consisting of the impressions of the waking state is perceived as

62

Br. Up. Bhāṣya, p.632-3.

63

Ibid., p.634-5.

an object, then, like a sword drawn from its sheath, the light of the self, the eternal witness, unrelated to anything and distinct from the body and the organs such as the eye, is realised as it is, revealing everything.⁶⁴

He goes on to deny that the activities of the dream state are due to the direct agency of the immutable Self. They are mental impressions remembered from the waking state and illumined⁶⁵ by the light of pure Intelligence.

The state of deep sleep (susupti) is described in the same commentary as a state of bliss "when it does not know anything." At first this sounds like a denial of the Self's intelligence; but the intention, rather, is to deny knowledge of anything other than the Self. There is a total emptying of "objective content" while at the same time retaining⁶⁶ intelligence. It is a temporary state of tranquillity and, as such, a valuable clue to ordinary experience to the permanent tranquillity and bliss of transcendental consciousness or "Self-realization". Śaṅkarācārya describes the empirical self going into sleep as a "hawk or falcon" that fatigued from activity in the waking and dreaming states, stretches its wings and flies towards its nest that is "his own self, distinct

64

Ibid., p.635, line 21 ff.

65

Ibid., p.638, line 14 ff.

66

Ibid., p.285, line 12 ff.

from all relative attributes and devoid of all exertion caused by action." ⁶⁷ In deep sleep, all craving for objects, all dreaming ceases, and one is alone with oneself.

It is obviously impossible in this thesis to refer to all the commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya touching on the theme of the three states of consciousness. Thus far we have taken samplings from the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya and the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya and found nothing inconsistent with the position set forth in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti. Let us consider one more work, the commentary on the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad which deals quite directly and fully with the three states.

4. Some Parallels in Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad Bhāṣya

In his preface to the commentary, Swami Nikhilānanda warns against the opinion of some scholars that a fundamental difference of interpretation exists between Gaudapāda and Śaṅkarācārya on the status of the waking and dreaming states. That is based, I believe, on a confusion of the empirical and transcendental view-points. Actually, the two commentators are remarkably similar in their approach, finding difference

67

Ibid., p.655, line 15 ff.

between the waking and dreaming states from the empirical point of view, but no difference at all from the absolute standpoint of Ultimate Reality.⁶⁸ We distort the position of both men if we neglect this important distinction.

In the first Upaniṣadic chapter (Āgama Prakaraṇa) Śaṅkarācārya sums up the three states of consciousness with the observation that is crucial to Advaita Vedānta, namely, the unity or non-duality of consciousness underlying experience in all the states:

In the three states, namely, waking etc., the one and the same object of experience appears in threefold forms as the gross, the subtle and the blissful. Further, the experiencer (of the three states) known (differently) as Viśva, Taijasa and Prājña has been described as one on account of the unity of consciousness implied in such cognition as, 'I am that'...as well as from the absence of any distinction in respect of the perceiver.⁶⁹

The first quarter (pāda) of Ātman and its corresponding syllable Aum is Vaiśvānara. Śaṅkarācārya defines the waking state (jāgaritāsthāna) in terms similar to what we found elsewhere: "The meaning is that consciousness appears, as it were, related to outward objects on account of Avidyā."⁷⁰

The second quarter is the Taijasa. Śaṅkarācārya relates the dream state (svapnāsthāna) to the waking state in the following way:

⁶⁸ Māndūkyopaniṣad with Gaudapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary, Trans, Swami Nikhīlananda, Mysore: Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1955, Preface, p. xxiii, line 8 ff

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.36, line 9 ff

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.13 line 31 ff.

Waking consciousness, being associated as it is with many means, and appearing conscious of objects as if external, though (in reality) they are nothing but states of mind, leaves in the mind the corresponding impressions. That the mind (in dream) without any of the external means, but possessed of the impressions left on it by the waking consciousness, like a piece of canvas with the pictures painted on it, experiences the dream state also as if it were like the waking, is due to its being under the influence of ignorance, desire and their actions.⁷¹

The third quarter (pāda) is the Prājña or state of deep sleep. Śaṅkarācārya describes it as undifferentiated consciousness, free from the subject-object duality which is so characteristic of the waking and dreaming states:

He is called the 'Suṣuptasthāna' because his sphere is this state of deep sleep. Similarly it is called Ekībhūta, i.e., the state in which all experiences become unified - a state in which all objects of duality, which are nothing but forms of thought, spread over the two states (viz., the waking and the dream), reach the state of indiscrimination or non-differentiation without losing their characteristics, as the day, revealing phenomenal objects, is enveloped by the darkness of night.⁷²

It is particularly interesting to see how Śaṅkarācārya comments on Gaudapāda's Kārikā where it is written: "The nature of objects is the same in the waking state and dream" namely,⁷³ illusory. He comments in the form of a syllogism:

The proposition to be established (Pratijñā) is the illusoriness of objects that are perceived in the waking state.

71
Ibid., p.18, line 19 ff.

72
Ibid., p.22, line 11 ff.

73
Ibid., p.90, line 17-18.

'Being perceived' is the 'ground' (Hetu) for the inference. They are like the objects that are perceived in dream is the illustration (dr̥stāntah). As the objects perceived to exist in dream are illusory so also are the objects perceived in the waking state. The common feature of 'being perceived' is the relation (Upanaya) between the illustration given and the proposition taken for consideration. Therefore the illusoriness is admitted of objects that are perceived to exist in the waking state. This is what is known as the reiteration (Nigamanam) of the proposition of the conclusion. The objects perceived to exist in the dream are different from those perceived in the waking state in respect of their being perceived in a limited space within the body, The fact of being seen and the (consequent) illusoriness are common to both.⁷⁴

This logical argument reflects the experience that the difference between objects in the waking and dreaming states is noted only in the waking state. To the objection that objects perceived in the waking state are real because they serve some purpose (i.e. food satisfies hunger), whereas objects perceived in dream are illusory, and therefore the argument above must be dismissed as illogical, Śaṅkarācārya replies:

74

Ibid., p.90, line 20 ff. C.D. Sharma explains the structure of Nyaya syllogism: "There are five members in the Nyaya syllogism. The first is called Pratijñā or proposition. It is the logical statement which is to be proved. The second is Hetu or 'reason' which states the reason for the establishment of the proposition. The third is called Udaharana which gives the universal concomitance together with an example. The fourth is Upanaya or the application of the universal concomitance to the present case. And the fifth is Nigamana or conclusion drawn from the preceding propositions.... The following is a typical Nyaya syllogism: 1. This hill has fire (pratijñā); 2. Because it has smoke (hetu); 3. Whatever has smoke has fire..(udaharana); 4. This hill has smoke which is invariably associated with fire (upanaya); 5. Therefore this hill has fire (nigamana). C.D. Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960, p.198 (underlining is mine).

It is because the serving as means to some end or purpose which is found in respect of food, drink etc. (in the waking state) is contradicted in dream. A man in the waking state, eats and drinks and feels appeased.... But as soon as he goes into sleep, he finds himself (in dream) afflicted with hunger and thirst.... And the contrary also happens to be equally true. A man satiated with food and drink in dream finds himself, when awakened, quite hungry and thirsty.... Therefore both these objects are undoubtedly admitted to be illusory on account of their common feature of having a beginning and an end.⁷⁵

The mutual contradiction involved in transferring objects from one empirical state to another proves their falsity or illusoriness, from the transcendental point of view. The refutation of Realism and Idealism is carried out conclusively by Śaṅkarācārya in reference to the famous rope-snake illustration:

The imagination characterised by the appearance of the snake in the rope cannot be produced from nor dissolved in the rope (i.e. in any external object), nor is produced from the imaginary snake or dissolved in the mind, nor even in both.... Thus duality is not perceived when one's mental activities are controlled (as in Samādhi) or in deep sleep. Therefore, it is established that duality is a mere illusion of the mind.⁷⁶

The illusion which perceived the snake in the rope (during the waking state) does not exist in the rope. If an explanation is sought for the illusion from the empirical point of view, it is said that the rope produces the illusion. This explanation is satisfactory only if the illusion is admitted to be a fact.

75 Māndūkyaopaniṣad, op. cit., p.93, line 20 ff.

76 Ibid., p.120, line 18 ff.

But from the absolute or transcendental point of view, illusion does not exist; so it is illogical to predicate a beginning or an end to a non-existent rope-snake. This is the rejection of the realistic contention.⁷⁷ From the empirical point of view, it is said (by idealists) that the mind produces the illusion of the snake in the rope. But from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality, mind with its subject-object duality has no reality. This is the argument advanced by Śaṅkarācārya⁷⁸ against idealism in the passage noted above.

If the phenomenological analysis of the waking and dreaming states reveals that all objects cognized, whether internal (subjective) or external (objective) to the mind, are devoid of reality, who imagines them? How does Śaṅkarācārya account for the phenomenon of memory and knowledge? Obviously, to deny the reality of a Witness Consciousness (Sākṣi) in this context is tantamount to Nihilism.⁷⁹ Śaṅkarācārya meets the objection by attributing all three states and their objects to the transcendental Self (Ātman) who improvises or 'constitutes' everything by its cosmic power (māyā):

77

Ibid., p.123, note 4, line 21 ff.

78

Ibid., p.123, note 5, line 30 ff.

79

Ibid., p.98, line 31 ff.

The self-luminous Ātman himself, by his own Māyā, imagines [sic]⁸⁰ in himself the different objects, to be described hereafter. It is like imagining of the snake etc., in the rope etc. He himself cognizes them, as he has imagined them. There is no other substratum of knowledge and memory. The aim of Vedānta is to declare that knowledge and memory are not without support as the Buddhistic nihilists maintain.⁸¹

It follows that the empirical self (Jīva) is the first product of Māyā and, in turn, "constitutes" various entities, both 82 subjective and objective, in the waking and dreaming states.

We have seen previously that Śaṅkarācārya is willing to indulge in cosmological speculation. How, then, does he account for the origin and dissolution of the universe from the standpoint of transcendental consciousness? Is there "creation" or "evolution" of variety in the cosmos? No, his phenomenological analyses of dreams and illusory experiences 83 leads him to reject as "unreal" all duality, all plurality. It is even more astonishing that he reaches the same conclusion regarding "bondage" and "liberation":

When duality is perceived to be illusory and Ātman alone is known as the sole Reality, then it is clearly established that all our experiences, ordinary or religious (Vedic), verily pertain to the domain of ignorance. Then one perceives that there is no dissolution...no birth or creation...

80 The verb kalpayat translated by Nikhilānanda as "imagines" may better be translated "projects" or "creates" or "constitutes" to avoid the connotation of subjective idealism.

81 Māndūkyaopaniṣad, op. cit., p.99, line 23 ff.

82 Ibid., p.106, line 14 ff.

83 Ibid., p.118, line 14 ff.

84

no one in bondage...and no one free from bondage.

Lest the conclusion here be interpreted as a reductio ad absurdam, it is important to remember that the sole reality of Ātman could never have been realized, had not the phenomenal universe been seen as the product of Ignorance (avidyā) and Illusion (māyā). Man can return to Ultimate Reality only by negating or sublating all that appears to be existentially (and "existentially") real. That is accomplished by "phenomenological reduction" and by intuitional knowledge of the one, eternal, transcendental Self that lies concealed in all consciousness of the microcosm and macrocosm.

We return to Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti after a long excursus in the commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya. Nothing has been found to impugn the possibility, or even the probability of Śaṅkarācārya's authorship of the two minor works. On the other hand, much has been found to supplement and enhance the general thesis advanced.

5. The Three States of Consciousness in the Context of Transcendental Phenomenology

We are now in a position to summarize the subject-matter of this chapter in the context of Phenomenology.

According to J.N. Mohanty, a leading phenomenologist of India, the two main concerns of Husserlian phenomenology are to establish a self-contained, self-sufficient realm of "pure subjectivity" and to explicate the "constitution" of objectivity in terms of "intentionality".⁸⁵ He thinks the conciliation of these two concerns requires a solution along the lines of Śaṅkarācārya's "extreme variety of Idealism".⁸⁶ Defining after Husserl "noesis" as a general term covering "all objectifying acts" and "noema" as the name for "all objects of such acts" of consciousness, he observes that the relation between the two is not one of "equal partnership"; "noesis" has primacy over "noema".⁸⁷ An "objectifying act" does not become "visible" until it has been separated from the object "intended" and the objectivity of any object cannot really be defined except in terms of an "objectifying act".⁸⁸ A point of the greatest significance, however, is the way Husserl brings together the

85

J.N. Mohanty, Phenomenology and Ontology, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1970. Chapter XIII, "The Object in Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology", p.138.

86

Ibid., p.139.

87

Ibid., p.140.

88

Ibid., p.140.

different "nuclei" (noematic meanings) of the different noemata (objects intended). They "close up together in an identical unity, a unity in which the 'something', the determinable which lies concealed in every nucleus, is grasped as self-⁸⁹ identical." This self-identity raises a problem for reason which can best be resolved by transcendental phenomenology. In Husserl's view, objects are not independent entities but are "intentional correlates" of consciousness. No problem arises concerning those objects which are given in immanent perception, but objects given in transcendent perception,⁹⁰ are "infinitely determinable". This "margin of indeterminacy" causes such a problem for Reason that it "prescribes" an a priori idea to account for the "continuum of appearances".⁹¹ One such idea is infinity. Reason cannot grasp it, but only an idea of it. Immanuel Kant's Ideas of Reason were of this ~~kind~~⁹². Husserl's functional concept of the "constitution of objectivity" bypasses the need for an ontologically "real" or objective world. "Phenomenological reduction" brackets all "transcendence" i.e. all objects of the external and internal

89
Husserl, Ideas, p.338.

90
Mohanty, op. cit., p.142.

91
Ibid., p.143.

92
Ibid., p.144.

world, in a relentless quest for immediate, indubitable, transcendental subjectivity.⁹³ The transcendent objects of the world are readmitted to philosophy under a "change of signature" i.e. as "constituted" by the intentional acts of transcendental subjectivity.⁹⁴

In Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita we have an astonishingly parallel approach to understanding the self and the world. It is probably not incorrect to call his philosophy a transcendental-phenomenological idealism, although there is an element of realism too. What could be more real than Brahman-Ātman? The phenomenological analyses of the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states are acute, differentiating between body and thing-consciousness in the waking state, and image-consciousness in the dream state, or between consciousness of mental impressions (vāsanā) in dreams and absence of such in deep sleep. One may mention too the subtle analysis of illusory experiences like the "rope-snake". The purpose of all these analyses of consciousness is, ultimately, to show the changing, non-eternal nature of these states and their dependence on Something else. That is, the relativity of the empirical states, combined with the indubitable experience of self-identity, signifies the existence of Something transempirical

93

Ibid., p.147.

94

Ibid., p.150.

and absolutely permanent. The witness role of transcendental consciousness in relation to the external world, the body, the mind, the ego, and even the gods, points to an intelligent Entity. The unity of body, mind and soul points to a non-dual Reality at the heart of man's existence. The spiritual unity of the microcosm is extended to include the macrocosm as well. The phenomenal self, and the universe, are "reduced" systematically to non-existence. All objectivity, all duality, all "transcendent entities" are perceived to be illusory and false. All reality is assigned to the transcendental Self (Ātman). The seeming reality of the phenomenal self and its world is attributed to the structure of mind called primal ignorance (avidyā). On the cosmic scale, this power to make things appear "real" that are false is attributed to Brahman's wonderful and indescribable māyā. One passes from "bondage" to ignorance and phenomenal existence (samsāra) by intuitional knowledge of the eternal Self. The "Self-realization" experience is man's "liberation" from the shackles of mental illusion, a return to the infinite bliss and freedom of Brahman-Ātman.

It is always risky to compare two systems of thought as widely separated in time and space as Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita and Husserl's Phenomenology. They speak a very different kind of language, one conditioned by the religious vocabulary of Upaniṣadic Hinduism, the other neutral towards empirical religion. Nevertheless, they appear to be working on the same fundamental

project: to free men from the mental abberation of "objectivity", to release the infinite powers of transcendental subjectivity. Both men proceed by the analysis of human experience. Both men have ways of subordinating the empirical world (Husserl "brackets" it; Śaṅkarācārya "negates" it) in order to realize the transcendental Ego or Self. Husserl's notion of "constitutional intentionality", though it appears to give the world a positive evaluation, does not differ much from Śaṅkarācārya's concept of the world existing by the ignorance of the mind. For Śaṅkara, it is quite legitimate to "superimpose" the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states on the Self for practical (vyavahārika) purposes. It is necessary, indeed, to "superimpose" the world of objects, the body, the mind, the ego, and the gods etc. to communicate "Self-realization" to other men. But, from the absolute point of view, the empirical states of consciousness and the entities of the empirical world have no reality at all. They belong to the realm of flux and lack existence in comparison with the non-dual, eternal and immutable Self.

Husserl's "eidetic reduction" of the various "nuclei" of objectivity (noemata), if carried to its logical conclusion, results in an "identical unity" in which the "determinable" items vanish into insignificance. Though the language differs, the final result of the "phenomenological reduction" is similar, but not identical, with the non-dual Self of Śaṅkarācārya.

The latter negates the "qualities" and "attributes" superimposed on Reality by Ignorance (avidyā) in order to realize the quality-less (Nirguna) Brahman. Is this different from a full-scale "eidetic reduction" of the noematic "nuclei" that qualify or "determine" the meanings we experience in finite existence? Similarly, if all objectivity (noemata) in the waking and dreaming states is "constituted" by the "objectifying acts" (noesis) of transcendental consciousness, then the primacy of the latter is established. The empirical selves and their worlds are caused by "intentionality". Husserl, as a neutral analyst, is concerned only to describe phenomena with accuracy. Śaṅkarācārya, on the other hand, because he is interested in communicating "Self-realization", sharply contrasts the absolute reality of the Self (Ātman) with the falsity of the world created by mental ignorance.

1074
dehātmadhīreva nruṇāmasaddhivāṃ
janmādi dukkhaprabhavasya bōjam
vatastatastvam jāhi taṃ prayatnā-
ttyakte tu cētte na punarbhavāsā

Identification with the body alone is the root that produces the misery of birth etc. of people who are attached to the unreal; therefore destroy thou this with the utmost care. When this identification caused by the mind is given up, there is no more chance for rebirth.

na hyastyavidyā manaso' tiriktā
mano hyavidyā bhavabandhahetuh
tasminviniṣṭe sakalam viniṣṭam
vijrumbhite' sminsakalam vijrumbhate

There is no ignorance (Avidyā) outside the mind. The mind alone is Avidyā, the cause of the bondage of transmigration. When that is destroyed, all else is destroyed, and when it is manifested, everything else is manifested.

tasmanmanah karanamasya jantor-
bandhasya mokṣasya ca va vidhane
bandhasya heturmalinam rajoguṇair-
mokṣasya śuddham virajastamaskam

Therefore the mind is the only cause that brings about man's bondage or liberation: when tainted by the effects of rajas it leads to bondage, and when pure and divested of the rajas and tamas elements it conduces to liberation.

- Vivekacūdāmani, 164, 169, 174

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIVE SHEATHS OF THE SELF

1. Preamble

In Vivekacūḍāmaṇi verses 124 through 210, Śaṅkarācārya undertakes a phenomenological description of the empirical self (jīva) in terms of five "sheaths" (kośas) or coverings of the Self (Ātman). His ultimate purpose in so doing is to demonstrate the falsity of the sheaths, and simultaneously the reality of the Supreme Self concealed by them and confused with them. The seriousness of the enterprise is apparent when he writes that "realization" or intuitive knowledge of the Self alone frees man from the bondage of ignorance and secures liberation (kaivalya)¹. He undertakes the analysis with the conviction that Something (kaścit-svayaṁ), namely, "the eternal substratum of the consciousness of egoism" exists to be discovered. The latter, which is the ontological Ground for empirical subjectivity and objectivity, may be identified as "transcendental subjectivity" or more simply as "pure Consciousness". The Supreme Self is "witness of the

1, Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Trans. Swami Madhavānanda, Calcutta: Advaita Āshrama, 1970, śloka 124, p.46.

three states" (avasthā-traya-sākṣi) - waking, dreaming, and deep sleep - and must be discriminated from the five sheaths² (kośas). These are, in their order from gross to subtle: annamaya-kośa (matter or material body, consisting of food); prāṇamaya-kośa (vital force or life-principle, consisting of breath); manomaya-kośa (mind, consisting of thought); Viññāna-maya-kośa (understanding, consisting of wisdom); and ānanda-maya-kośa (bliss). The prāṇamaya, manomaya and viññānamaya sheaths, taken collectively, make up what is called the "subtle body" (sūkṣma sarīra) and the ānandamaya sheath, taken by itself, is called the "causal body" (kāraṇa sarīra).³

As products of Ignorance, the sheaths have a double function. The "veiling power" (Āvṛti or Āvarana-Śakti) of Ignorance hides the glory of the Infinite Self just as the demon Rāhu hides the sun.⁴ The "projecting power" (Vikṣepa-Śakti) of Ignorance causes a man to identify himself falsely

2. Ibid., śloka 125, p.46. Kośa is a covering or sheath in the phenomenological sense of that which conceals what is there by 'projecting' what is not really there. A spatial image is used to signify a structural condition.

3 The "subtle body" is unmanifested (avyakta) in relation to the "gross body" which is manifested (vyakta) or evolved. The "causal body" is that seminal or potential state devoid of any evolved distinctions of name and form.

4 Ibid., śloka 139, p.52. Rāhu is the name of a mythological demon who is supposed to overpower the sun (during solar eclipses).

with the body and so to suffer, through action, the "binding fetters" of lust, anger, etc.⁵ Śaṅkarācārya employs the analogy of a water tank to illustrate the "relation" of the Self (Ātman) to the five sheaths (kośas). Just as the clear water of a tank or pond is covered by an accumulation of algae, and appears only if the algae is removed from the surface, so the Atman is concealed by primal Ignorance (avidyā) that constantly confuses it with the sheaths of the empirical self (Jīva). But when the algae or sedge is removed, the clear water underneath comes into view. On taking it, a man's thirst is quenched. Similarly, when one removes Ignorance by correct knowledge, his real identity appears. The intuitive discovery of the Supreme Self satisfies his thirst for Ultimate Reality.⁶ The analogy is extremely apt, because it illustrates at one stroke the unveiling function of knowledge i.e. the removal of ignorance by systematic negation or reduction of the sheaths that are constitutive of the false, empirical self (Jīva), and the simultaneous emergence of the true Self (Ātman) that is always present though hidden from view.

Śaṅkarācārya's approach to the reality of the Self is more than deductive and perhaps more truly "reductive" in a

⁵ Ibid., śloka 111, p.40 and śloka 140, p.53.

⁶ Ibid., śloka 149-50, p.57.

phenomenological sense than either "inductive" or "deductive". It is based on evidence that is available to every man through meditation on daily experience. He writes, for example, that the Self is That (in immediate awareness) which knows all that happens in the three states of consciousness. It knows not only the presence of mind and its operations (vṛttis) but also its absence. As the Kena Upaniṣad says: "That which man does not comprehend with the mind, that by which, they say, the mind is encompassed, know that to be Brahman and not what people worship as an object."⁷ Śaṅkarācārya comments as follows: "The word manas, derived from the root man in the sense of that by which one thinks, is common to all organs, since it embraces all objects.... The mind can think only when it is⁸ illuminated by the light of Consciousness within."

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad there is Yājñavalkya's famous reply to Usaṣṭa's request for information about the "self that is within all":

You cannot see that which is the witness of vision; you cannot hear that which is the hearer of hearing; you cannot think that which is the thinker of thought; you cannot know that which is the knower of knowledge. This is yourself that is within all; everything else but this

7

Eight Upaniṣads With the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Trans. Swami Gambhirananda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, Vol. 1, Kena Up. 1,6; p.55

8

Ibid., commentary on Kena Up. 1,6, p.56.

is perishable.⁹

Śaṅkarācārya's commentary is written to uphold the immutability of the Witness (Drasṭr) Consciousness in spite of all appearance of change and mutation:

It is therefore that the eternal vision of the self is metaphorically spoken of as the witness, and although eternally seeing, is spoken of as sometimes seeing and sometimes not seeing. But as a matter of fact the vision of the seer never changes.¹⁰

How is that known? Is it a mere dogma? Not for Śaṅkarācārya. The pervasive experience of self-identity through all the empirical states of consciousness indicates the presence and reality of "transcendental subjectivity". It is a fact of daily experience which may be verified by reflection. All intellectual disciplines, including science, depend on It for their existence. To assert its reality is to be immune from the criticisms levelled at the non-verifiable utterances of mystics and metaphysicians alike.

According to Śaṅkarācārya, the five sheaths (kośas) are pervaded and illumined by the Self's pure consciousness. The intellect (buddhi) is illumined by the Self, though it appears to illumine everything by its (buddhi's) own power.¹¹

9

The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Trnas: Swami Madhavananda, Mayavati, Almora, Advaita Ashrama, 1950, Br. Up. 3.4.2, p.469, line 13 ff.

10

Ibid., commentary on Br. Up. 3.4.2., p.469, line 27 ff.

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Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 127, p.47.

All "parts" of man - his body, organs, mind, intellect, and ego - are servants and instruments (prerita iva) of the Self. They have no autonomy or independence but act, as it were, on orders.¹² Everything in experience, including the ego, body, mind, sense objects, pleasures and sorrows are known to the Self "as palpably as a jar" for It is the "essence of Eternal Knowledge" (nitya bodha svarūpīnā).¹³ In his commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, Śaṅkarācārya illustrates the "self-luminous vision" of the Ātman by appeal to the dreaming state:

We observe also that those who have had their eyes removed keep the vision that belongs to the self intact in dreams. Therefore the vision of the self is imperishable, and through that imperishable self-luminous vision the Atman continues to see in the state of profound sleep.¹⁴

He calls the Ātman "the innermost Self" (antarātma), the primeval Puruṣa prefigured in Sāṅkhya, whose essence is "realization of infinite Bliss."¹⁵ Where is one to find the Ātman? In the gross body? In the mind (manas)? In the intellect (buddhi)? Or, in the causal body known as the

¹² Ibid., śloka 129, p.47.

¹³ Ibid., śloka 130, p.47.

¹⁴ Br. Up., Ś. B., op. cit., p.675, line 15 ff.

¹⁵ Vivekachūḍāmani, śloka 131, p.48.

Unmanifested (ākāśa)? Ātman pervades the transcends all three bodies - gross, subtle, and causal - because It is beyond all duality.¹⁶ It is however, permissible to "locate" the Ātman in the innermost sheath (kośa) for either (Ākāśa) is used frequently in Scripture to denote Brahman.¹⁷

The Self, though one and immutable, appears in a variety of forms i.e. as mind, ego, body, organs, etc. just as fire, which is formless, takes on the shape of a red-hot ball of iron without any change of its nature.¹⁸ A more generalized fire analogy occurs in Katha Upaniṣad:

Just as fire, though one, having entered the world, assumes separate forms in respect of different shapes, similarly, the Self inside all beings, though one, assumes a form in respect of each shape; and (yet) It is outside.¹⁹

We find here a phenomenological recovery of the sense of "inside" and "outside". Śaṅkarācārya, commenting, writes: "sarvabhūtāntarātmā, the Self that is "inside" all beings - by virtue of Its subtleness like fire in fuels...has become pratirūpah, formed in accordance with the individual shapes

¹⁶ Ibid., śloka 132, p.48 and Note by Madhavānanda, p.48-9.

¹⁷ B. S., S. B., op. cit., 1.1.2. p.81-4.

¹⁸ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 133, p.49

¹⁹ Katha U., II, ii, 9, Eight Upaniṣads, I. p.200, line 29 ff.

in respect of all bodies...." ²⁰ The Self is independent of all conditions limiting phenomenal beings: birth, death, growth, decay, and change. It continues to exist if the body dies, just as space in a jar is broken. ²¹ The Supreme Self, "modified" by egoism (Jīva), "manifests" the gross and subtle universe in the waking and dreaming states. ²²

The role of Ignorance (avidyā) must be regarded as crucial for understanding how the Self is "modified" by names and forms. The manifestation of the gross and subtle bodies, from the absolute point of view, is false and non-existent. But, from the pragmatic point of view, the sheaths (kośas) composed of their various entities are surely real or existent. Śaṅkarācārya "descends", one may say, to the empirical plane by the process which he describes as "deliberate superimposition". He assumes, for methodological and pedagogical reasons, the posture of the "realist". It is significant that, in Vivekacūḍāmani, he prefaces his discussion of the five sheaths (kośas) with about thirty verses enunciating the thesis of the reality of the Witness-Self and also simultaneously of Ignorance (avidyā) that "hides" the Self. This is,

²⁰ Katha U. Ś. B., op. cit., I. p.200, line 29 ff.

²¹ Vivekacūḍāmani, śloka 134, p.49.

²² Ibid., śloka 135, p.50.

incidentally, in remarkable conformity with the practice of later Vedānta writings of demonstrating by the same set of arguments (1) the reality of the Witness-Self and (2) that of Ignorance. His purpose, from the beginning, is to lead his readers to the absolute point of view from which the five sheaths (kośas) can be "rescinded" as products of Ignorance.

Śaṅkarācārya says man's bondage to birth and death and all the miseries of phenomenal existence is due to ignorance, the false identification of the Self with non-Self. This can take many forms. It can take the form of self-identification with the body and subsequent preoccupation with physical pleasures like eating, sleeping, bathing, sex, etc. As a caterpillar is bound by its own cocoon, so an ignorant man is enslaved to the world of objects by his own body. Ignorance is defined by Śaṅkarācārya as the failure to discriminate what is Real (Self) from what is merely phenomenal (world). The absence of discrimination, and its attendant danger, is experienced in daily life. For example, a man who mistakes a snake for a rope (a reversal of the usual example) may grab it, and thereby imperil his life. But, says Śaṅkarācārya, the danger is far greater when one mistakes transitory things for eternal Reality. It "hurls a man into

24
bondage. In a graphic metaphor, he pictures the "shark of Ignorance" swallowing a man of "perverted intellect" as he floats up and down on the vast ocean of relative existence (samsāra). The victim is utterly incapable of escaping his fate, having foolishly identified himself with the intellect (25 buddhi). Mere intellectualism is of no avail for liberation. Śaṅkarācārya is very explicit in denying that anyone who is "clever in discussing about Brahman", yet remains "attached to worldly pleasures" and lacks Self-realization, can be liberated from the bondage of Ignorance. Such people are doomed to undergo repeated births and deaths. (26 Identification with one's ego (Jīva) is another insidious form of Ignorance. The Self is obscured by egoism just as the sun is hidden by thick clouds on a stormy day. (27 Śaṅkarācārya compares empirical existence (samsāra) to a tree. Its seed is ignorance; its sprout, false identification with the body; its leaves, attachment; its flowers, sense-objects; its fruits, various miseries arising from actions; the bird sitting on it,

24
Ibid., śloka 138, p.52.

25
Ibid., śloka 141, p.53.

26
Aparokshānubhūti, śloka 133, p.70.

27
Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 143. p.54.

28

the individual soul. Ignorance (avidyā) is the "seed" giving rise to the entire complex of relative existence projected by the individual soul.

In Mundaka Upaniṣad, there is the famous image of "two birds" sitting on the "self-same tree". One eats fruit, and the other "looks on without eating":

Two birds, companions (who are) always united, cling to the self-same tree. Of these two, the one eats the sweet fruit and the other looks on without eating. On the self-same tree, a person immersed (in the sorrows of the world) is deluded and grieves on account of his helplessness. When he sees the other, the Lord who is worshipped and his greatness...then being a knower, shaking off good and evil and free from stain, he attains supreme equality with the Lord.²⁹

Śaṅkarācārya comments on this passage and on Śvet. Up. IV:6 in his Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya:

Both texts intimate one and same matter viz. the Lord together with the individual soul. In the Mundaka text the clause: 'The other looks on without eating', intimates the highest Self which is raised above all desire.... They mention the individual soul not as a new object of instruction but merely to show its identity with the highest Self.³⁰

28
Ibid., śloka 145, p.55

29
Mund. Up. III, I, 1-3, Trans. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p.686

30
The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya, III: 3, 34, in Sacred Books of the East, XXXVIII, Ed. Max Mueller, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Trans. G. Thibaut, 1904, p.241, line 9ff.

The meaning is clear: as knowledge matures, the two birds which represent the Ātman and the Jīva merge into one. In "transcendental consciousness" the Self alone remains, and the individual ego is known to be illusory. This is final liberation from the ignorance of duality.

Śaṅkarācārya insists that the bondage of the non-Self is destroyed by nothing except the sword of discriminating knowledge, sharpened by the serenity of the mind (dhātu-³¹prasādāt). He derides the foolish man who sacrifices to the gods as if they were separate or different from himself:

That the performers of sacrifices are objects of enjoyment for the gods follows, moreover, from their quality of not knowing the Self. For that those who do not know the Self are objects of enjoyment for the gods the following scriptural passage shows: 'Now, if a man worships another deity, thinking the deity is one and he is another, he does not know. He is like a beast for the Devas (Bri. Up. I,4,10)³²

What irony! It is noteworthy that Śaṅkarācārya is not denying the existence of the gods. They exist, like the world, as relative and contingent "facts" for the man of Self-realization. It is essential, however, to negate the reality of the five sheaths (kośas) ranging from matter (annamaya) to bliss (ānandamaya) - so that the Self can be revealed as

³¹ Vivekachūḍāmani, sloka 147, p.56. An alternative reading is "grace of the Lord" (dhātuh prasādena) but Śaṅkara in his commentary on Katha Up. 1.2.20 prefers "serenity of these Organs".

³² Brahman Sūtra S. B. III.1.7., Sacred Books, XXXVIII, p.111, line 23 ff.

it really is, pure, eternal, supreme, indwelling, self-
³³effulgent bliss. By discrimination between the Self and
the non-Self, the wise man realizes his true identity as
Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss (Sacchidānandam) and removes
³⁴his bondage. Freedom comes to him who is able to extract
the indwelling Self (Ātman) from the body and its organs
as one pulls out a stalk of grass from its enveloping
sheath, and having done that, to merge everything in It,
³⁵including his own individual identity. A similar idea is
found in the Katha Upanisad where it is written:

The person of the size of a thumb, the inner self, abides
always in the hearts of men. Him one should draw out
with firmness, from the body, as (one may do) the wind
from the reed. Him one should know as the pure, the
immortal.³⁶

2. Homologue: Microcosm and Macrosom

In Vivekachūdamani, verses 154-210, Śaṅkarācārya
³⁷surveys the five sheaths (kośas) in detail. The structure

³³ Vivekachūdamani, śloka 151, p.58.

³⁴ Ibid., śloka 152, p.58.

³⁵ Ibid., śloka 153, p.58.

³⁶ Katha Up, II, 3,17. Trans. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p.647-8.

³⁷ There is really no extensive description of the five sheaths
in Aparokshanubhūti..

of this section resembles the second chapter of the Taittirīya Upanisad, called Brahmananda Valli (Bliss of Brahman).

It also resembles Taittirīya 3 or Bhrgu Valli, where the evolutionary process of the universe is described. We shall have occasions to refer to the parallels below. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has noted the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm in Indian religion:

It is an axiom of mystic religion that there is a correspondence between the microcosm and macrocosm. Man is an image of the created universe. The individual soul as the microcosm has affinities with every rung of the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven.³⁸ Mircea Eliade has called attention to the same phenomenon in ancient religion, terming it a homologue or "structural identity" between man and the cosmos:

This is why, beginning at a certain stage of culture, man conceives of himself as a microcosm. He forms part of the gods' creation; in other words, he finds in himself the same sanctity that he recognizes in the cosmos. It follows that his life is homologized to cosmic life; as a divine work, the cosmos becomes the paradigmatic image of human existence.... Clearly his life has an additional dimension; it is not merely human, it is at the same time cosmic, since it has a trans-human structure.³⁹

I shall have many occasions in the following pages to note this anthro-cosmic homologue in operation. It is expressed by the Vedāntic contraction Brahman-Ātman.

38

S. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p.543.

39

Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Trans. Willard Trask, New York: Brace and World Inc. 1957, p.165-6.

3. Material Sheath (Annamaya Kośa)

Śāṅkarācārya begins his phenomenological analysis of man with the body which belongs to the outer, material sheath (annamaya-kośa). It is the product of food; it lives by digesting food: it dies for lack of food. The material sheath is a conglomeration of flesh, blood, muscle, bone and filth. It is neither eternal nor self-existent like the Self (Ātman).⁴⁰ The Brahmānanda Valli calls food the "eldest born of beings" and assigns it primacy in the evolution of life: "From food, verily, are produced whatsoever creatures dwell on the earth."⁴¹ The Bhṛgu Valli, on the cosmological side, begins by defining Brahman as matter: "He knew that matter is Brahman. For truly, beings here are born from matter, when born, they live by matter, when departing they enter."⁴² This is the materialistic thesis. Śāṅkarācārya, from his observations of birth and death, deduces that the body is transient, changeful, inert, a mere sense-object. It is, therefore, not the Self (Ātman) that is eternal Witness of all change.⁴³ If you dismember the body i.e. sever an arm or

⁴⁰ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 154, p.59.

⁴¹ Taitt. Up. II,2,1., Trans. Radhakrisnan, op. cit., p.543.

⁴² Taitt. Up. III,2,1., op. cit., p.554.

⁴³ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 155, p.59.

a leg, it continues to live. This shows that the body is under the control of Another. It cannot be the Self which is the Ruler of all.⁴⁴ It is evident in experience that a man retains his identity in spite of various changes in his body, its characteristics, its activities, its stages of life. This can be accounted for best by a Reality immanent in the body,⁴⁵ yet different from it, namely the Self (Ātman). A stupid man identifies himself wholly with the body, that mass of skin, flesh, fat, bones and filth. He is a naive realist, unable to discriminate that Reality, the Self, from his body.⁴⁶ An average man, because of some book-learning, identifies himself with a duality of body and soul acting and interacting. But a wise man, possessed of realization through discrimination (viveka-vijñāna) knows the eternal Ātman as himself and thinks,⁴⁷ "I am Brahman" (brahma-aham). He is an Advaitin or "critical realist". Emancipation from relative existence (samsāra) and its root-cause Ignorance (avidyā) is impossible for a man of mere book-learning, even though he is erudite in Vedānta philosophy.⁴⁸ Just as it is erroneous to identify

⁴⁴ Ibid., śloka 156, p.60.

⁴⁵ Ibid., śloka 157, p.60.

⁴⁶ Ibid., śloka 159, p.61.

⁴⁷ Ibid., śloka 160, p.61.

⁴⁸ Ibid., śloka 162, p.62.

with the shadow of one's body (chāya-śarīra), or its reflection (prati-bimba) or dream body (svapna-deha) or imaginary body (kalpitāṅga), so it is with the living body (jīva-śarīra).⁴⁹

This false identification of the self with body is caused by the mind and, unless abandoned, continues to produce the misery of rebirth. Destroy this mental error, Śaṅkarācārya⁵⁰ says, and you destroy phenomenal existence root and branch.

According to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the experience of pleasure and pain derives from the evil of the incarnate self:

O Maghavan, mortal, verily, is this body. It is held by death. But it is the support of that deathless, bodiless self. Verily, the incarnate self is held by pleasure and pain. Verily, there is no freedom from pleasure and pain for one who is incarnate. Verily, pleasure and pain do not touch one who is bodiless.⁵¹

The upshot of Śaṅkarācārya's phenomenological analysis of the material sheath (annamaya kośa) is both positive and negative. It denies ultimate reality to the body-complex; but affirms ultimate reality to the Self (Ātman). The body is viewed as an object and instrument of transcendental consciousness. The positive affirmation of the Self implies, of necessity, the complete negation of the body. As there can be only one Ultimate Reality, all difference is eliminated

⁴⁹ Ibid., śloka 163, p.62.

⁵⁰ Ibid., śloka 164, p.63.

⁵¹ Chānd. Up. VIII,12.1., Trans. S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 508.

as false. This is the "transcendental method" of Advaita (Non-dualism). G.R. Malkani writes:

As a result of the false identification of the Self with the body, and through the body to the rest of the world, the Self assumes the fictitious form of the enjoyer-self or jiva who both acts and suffers.... But behind it stands the unrelated Self, also called saksin. The saksin does nothing, is related to nothing, and suffers nothing. It is a pure awareness that reveals everything.⁵²

"Pure awareness" comes into focus by the systematic "reduction" of all the sheaths (kośas), beginning with the body.

We see the same process at work in Aparokṣānubhūti. The Ātman is one, whereas the gross bodies are innumerable

(anekatam). So how can this body be the Supreme? asks

⁵³ Śaṅkarācārya. When we speak of the body in ordinary

conversation we say "This is mine" as if it were an object

of perception (dr̥śatayā) and external. So how can this body be the Supreme? ⁵⁴

The Ātman is immutable by definition, whereas the body is always undergoing changes (vikāraṇam).

⁵⁵ So how can this body be Puruṣa (pūman)? "The Puruṣa is completely unattached" (asaṅgaḥ) i.e. unaffected by good

⁵² G.R. Malkani, Metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta, Amalner, Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1961, p.127.

⁵³ Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 31, p.18.

⁵⁴ Ibid., śloka 32, p.19.

⁵⁵ Ibid., śloka 33, p.19.

and evil, so how can this body, defiled by "innumerable impurities" be Puruṣa?⁵⁶ Again, "the Puruṣa is self-illuminated", (svayam-jyotih)⁵⁷ so how can this inert (jadah) body be Puruṣa? The Ātman is permanent (nityah) and survives the body (dehapātād-anantaram),⁵⁸ so how can this body be Ātman? Śaṅkarācārya concludes this series of rhetorical questions with a summary question and answer. I paraphrase: "What purpose is served by making a difference between the Ātman and the Body? Does it assert, like the Tarkaśāstra (science of Nyāya logic) the reality of the phenomenal world?"⁵⁹ No, a thousand times no! The view that the body has "reality" has been denounced by Śaṅkarācārya over and over again. The difference between Ātman and body is enunciated to clarify the unreality of any difference whatsoever between the two! The Ātman alone is eternally real, and the "body" is merely an appearance of the Ātman caused by Ignorance.⁶⁰ So there is consistency in the works of Śaṅkarācārya

56
Ibid., śloka 36, p.21.

57
Ibid., śloka 37, p.21.

58
Ibid., śloka 38, p.22.

59
Aparokṣhānubhūti, śloka 41, p.23. "the logic of Nyāya represents, as it were, the essence of the "natural standpoint" as defined by Husserl.

60
Ibid., śloka 42, p.24. "body" is the correlate of bodily consciousness with its claim to be the Self.

on the "falsity" of the material sheath (annamaya kośa).

4. Vital Sheath (Prānamaya Kośa)

There are comparatively few references to the vital sheath in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparoksānubhūti. Perhaps it is fair to surmise that its role is either less apparent or more mysterious than the other sheaths. Prāna is what permeates the material sheath (annamaya kośa), giving it the appearance of life. The vital sheath, by its association with the brain centres controlling speech, manual activity, locomotion, excretion, and reproduction, vitalizes the whole body.⁶¹ As a modification of air (vāyu) it is manifested in the in-breathing and out-breathing of the body.⁶² In combination with the other sheaths, its functions are "inhalation, exhalation, yawning, sneezing, secretion" etc; by itself, it manifests "hunger and thirst".⁶³ The Brahmānanda Valli (second chapter of Taittirīya Upanisad) points out that gods and beasts share the vital sheath (prānamaya kośa)

⁶¹ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, śloka 165, p.63.

⁶² Ibid., śloka 166, p.64.

⁶³ Ibid., śloka 102, p.37.

with men, for it is the breath of all beings. It is to be distinguished alike from the body and the mind: "This (life) is indeed the embodied soul of the former (physical sheath). Verily, different from and within that which consists of life is the self consisting of mind."⁶⁴ On the cosmological level, the Bhrgu Valli (third chapter of Taitt. Up.) refers to it as one of the evolutes of Brahman: "He knew that life is Brahman. For truly, beings here are born from life, when born they live by life, and into life, when departing they enter."⁶⁵ The same idea is expressed in Aparokṣānubhūti: "Just as a thing made of gold ever has the nature of gold, so also a being born of Brahman has always the nature of Brahman."⁶⁶ In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad an interesting dispute breaks out among the various organs of the body with respect to their relative greatness. Brahman, as mediator of the quarrel, suggests that each organ depart from the body, by turn, to find out who is most essential for the body's functioning. So the mouth, eye, ear, mind and sex organ depart by turns and remain separate from the body for a year's duration. On their return, each one discovers that the body,

64

Taitt. Up. II,3,1. Trans. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p.544 line 22 ff.

65

Taitt. Up. III,3,1, op. cit., p.554, line 29 ff.

66

Aparokṣānubhūti, sloka 49, p.28 and sloka 51, p.29.

though inconvenienced, has managed nicely without them - as dumb, blind, deaf, idiotic, and sexless. But, when the life-force (prāna) prepares to leave, all the organs protest and realize how dependent they are upon it.⁶⁷ This parable, of course, has its limitations, because the vital sheath, though greater than the sense-organs, is definitely inferior to and dependent on the Self (Ātman). Śaṅkarācārya discriminates, provisionally, between the vital sheath (prānamaya kośa) and the Ātman in order to establish its ultimate identity with Brahman-Ātman:

Further, it is by being revealed by the light of the Atman that is Pure Intelligence, its own Self, that the vital force functions, therefore It is the Vital Force of the vital force. Those who have known the Vital Force of the vital force, as also the Eye of the eye, the Ear of the ear etc...have realized, known with certainty the ancient or eternal, and primordial Brahman...."⁶⁸

5. Mental Sheath (Manomaya Kośa)

The relative importance of the mental sheath (manomaya kośa) is indicated by the greater amount of attention devoted to it in Vivekacūḍāmani. It permeates the preceding sheath, i.e. the vital sheath (prānamaya kośa), as its soul.

67

Br. Up. 6.1.7-13, Trans. Madhavānanda, op. cit., p.873-8.

68

Br. Up. 4.4.18, op. cit., p.943-4.

Śaṅkarācārya describes it as "powerful and endowed with the faculty of creating difference" of name and form.⁶⁹ It consists of mind (manas) and "organs of knowledge" (jñānendriyani)⁷⁰ such as ears, eyes, nose and tongue. The mind projects the entire phenomenal universe, both in the waking and dreaming states.⁷¹ It resembles a sacrificial fire ablaze with the fuel of sense-objects offered as oblations by the five sense-organs that serve as priests.⁷² In stanza 169 of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Sankaracarya states unequivocally that the mind itself is Ignorance (mano bandha-hetuh). The destruction of the mind by knowledge (vidyā) is simultaneously the destruction of Ignorance and its product, the phenomenal universe.⁷³ This is a very bold idea and it is doubtful whether Śaṅkarācārya says it so forthrightly anywhere in his major commentaries. It summarizes succinctly what a host of Vedāntic passages say more ambiguously: that Ignorance belongs to the structure of the mind itself, and that liberation from bondage depends on the very act of

69 Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, śloka 167, p.64.

70 Ibid., śloka 92, p.33

71 Ibid., śloka 170, p.66.

72 Ibid., śloka 168, p.65.

73 Ibid., śloka 169, p.65.

transcending the limitations of mind. How? Through Self-realization. There is evidence in the major commentaries to corroborate this "transcendental" point of view. In the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, Śāṅkarācārya writes "finally, there is the manas which has all things for its objects and extends to the past, the present, and the future."⁷⁴ That statement indicates the comprehensive role of mind in creating the time-structure and objectivity of phenomenal existence. In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya, he implies that the subtle body (sūksma śarīra) complex including mind (manas) is the agent of the illusion called world:

It consists of impressions and is produced by the union of the intellect and the impressions of gross and subtle objects; it is variegated like pictures on a canvas or wall, is comparable to an illusion, or magic, or a mirage, and is puzzling to all.⁷⁵

Śāṅkarācārya, in his Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad Bhāṣya, gives a close parallel to the "mind equals Ignorance" equation noted in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi:

The proposition is that all this duality perceived as such by the imagination of the mind is, in reality, nothing but the mind. The reason for such inference is that duality is perceived when the mind acts and it vanishes when the mind ceases to act....⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Brahma Sūtra Ś. B., II, 4, 6, op. cit., XXXVIII, p. 81, line 17 ff.

⁷⁵ Brhad. Up. Ś. B. II, 3, 6, Trans. Mādhavānanda, op. cit., p. 337, line 10 ff.

⁷⁶ Māṇḍ. Up. Ś. B. III, 31, Trans. Nikhilananda, op. cit., p. 188, line 9 ff.

The cessation of mind on the realization of the Self (Ātman) is made explicit in the commentary on Mānd. Up. III: 32. The verse (śloka) follows immediately:

When the mind does not imagine on account of the knowledge of the truth which is Atman, then it ceases to be mind and becomes free from all idea of cognition, for want of objects to be cognised.⁷⁷

And Śāṅkarācārya comments:

The mind having attained to that knowledge does not imagine, as there remains nothing to be imagined. The mind then is like fire when there is no fuel to burn. When the mind thus does no longer imagine, it ceases to be mind, that is, the mind, for want of any object to be cognised, becomes free from all cognition.⁷⁸

The freedom from objectivity mentioned here is reminiscent of Husserl's efforts to recover "transcendental subjectivity" and to reduce everything else to correlates of "intentionality". His "bracketing" of the world, and subsequent inclusion of it in the totality of the Transcendental Ego's "constituted intentionality" does not appear to be similar to Śāṅkarācārya's "destruction" of the mind and its ignorance-structure. But, on deeper reflection, we understand that Śāṅkarācārya's talk about "destruction" of the mind is only a manner of speaking. There is no real "thing" called mind (manas) to be destroyed"; it is a product of Ignorance. One must always remember that

77

Mānd. Up. S. B. III, 32, op. cit., p.189, lines 1-4.

78

Mānd. Up. S. B., III, 32, op. cit., p.189, lines 11 ff.

Śaṅkarācārya's method is "deliberate superimposition" (adhyāropa) followed subsequently by "deliberate rescission" or abrogation (apavāda).⁷⁹ He "rescinds" mind after superimposing it. Swami Madhavananda observes that only Ignorance (avidyā) attributes limitation, change and process to the Self, and only abrogation of this perversion of the mind through discipline (sādhanā) brings freedom:

According to the Vedānta, there is no actual change in the Self, which is by nature pure and perfect. It is ignorance or Avidyā that has covered its vision, so to say, and It appears as limited and subject to change. Now this ignorance is imbedded in the mind, and when the mind is thoroughly purified through sadhana or discipline, the glory of the Atman manifests itself. This is said to be liberation.⁸⁰

The "mental sheath" (manomaya kośa) has a central role to play in the states of both bondage and liberation. Mind is like the wind that covers the sun with clouds, and again reveals it by driving the clouds away.⁸¹ How does this occur? The mind creates in man an "attachment" or fondness for the body and all sense-objects. It "binds" a man like a beast to a rope (pasuvad-guṇena).⁸² The same mind, however, is capable of

79

See my Introduction, last section.

80

Swami Madhavananda, Note on Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 169, p.65.

81

Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 172, p.67.

82

Ibid., śloka 173, p.67. "The word guṇa has the double meaning of "tendency" and "rope".

non-attachment or positive dislike or sense-objects as if they were poison ⁸³ (visavat). Why should man learn to hate the world of objects like poison? It seems very odd, if not impossible. The meaning is, surely, that one must not be fooled by mind and senses into attributin reality and permanence to what is merely relative, contingent, and non-eternal. One must "see through" the illusion of the temporal world to Ultimate Reality, and One Eternal Spirit, and love only That. One attains "purity" of mind by cultivating discrimination (viveka) and renunciation ⁸⁴ (vairāgya). One "discriminates" between the Self and Not-Self, the eternal and the temporal, the absolute and the relative, the real and the false. Having done so, one "renounces" the false. Liberation is attained by this transcending movement of the mind, this "transcendental consciousness."

All superimposition is traceable to the ignorance-structure of the mind. It projects all sense-objects, whether perceived in waking or dreaming states. It projects all social ⁸⁵ and racial differences, all actions, menas, and results.

⁸³ Ibid., sloka 173, p.67.

⁸⁴ Ibid., sloka 175, p.68.

⁸⁵ Ibid., sloka 178, p.69.

The mind alone deludes and imprisons the ego (Jīva) with attachment to body, mind, and ideas of "I" and "MINE".⁸⁶

The mind alone causes the evil of transmigration by superimposing the miseries of birth and death.⁸⁷ Swami Madhavānanda explains:

"The whole thing is a mistaken identity, a self-hypnotism...and the way out of it lies in de-hypnotising ourselves."⁸⁸ Sages who know the truth designate the mind as ignorance (avidyā).⁸⁹

If ignorance (avidyā) resides in the mind, and if superimposition (adhyāsa) is the evil that binds man to phenomenal existence, how can there be any liberation?

Sankaracarya replies that the seeker must "purify" his mind by single-minded devotion to the Brahman-Atman within.⁹⁰

This requires much listening to the Vedāntic truth from the lips of a "realized" master (guru), much reflection and meditation, "non-attachment" to sense-objects, renunciation of all actions, until identity of Jīva and Ātman is realized,

⁸⁶ Ibid., sloka 178, p.69.

⁸⁷ Ibid., sloka 179, p.69.

⁸⁸ Ibid., sloka 179, p.70.

⁸⁹ Ibid., sloka 180, p.70.

⁹⁰ Ibid., sloka 181, p.70

and the rājasika nature of the intellect is "purged".⁹¹
 The mental sheath (manomaya kośa) can be discriminated from the Self because it has birth and death along with the self (Jīva), is subject to change, experiences pain and suffering, and is cognisable as an "object" to the Self.⁹² The Ātman, on the other hand, is eternal, changeless, without suffering, completely devoid of objectivity because there is nothing else to perceive it.

The same kind of "reduction" we saw in operation with respect to the material sheath (annamaya kośa) and the vital sheath (prānamaya kośa) is also seen to be carried out on the mental sheath (manomaya kośa). Along with its disappearance goes the Ignorance-structure which superimposes the body and many other entities of the Not-Self on the Self. The "phenomenological reduction" reaches a critical point; but there remains other aspects of the embodied self to be reduced: the knowledge sheath (Vijñānamaya kośa) and the blissful sheath (ānandamaya kośa). These so-called entities are deliberately superimposed on the Self and then rescinded by Sankaracarya in order to teach their non-reality in comparison with the Eternal Self (Ātman). From the empirical, everyday

91
Ibid., sloka 182, p.70.

92
Ibid., sloka 183, p.71.

point of view, they exist; but from the transcendental point of view, they are non-existent. The "sheaths" (kośas) exist for the "ignorant" man (the man of the "natural attitude" in Husserl's terminology) and keep him in bondage to phenomenal existence; but they disappear for the man of Self-realization who knows them for what they are, mere figments of the imagination. The Self (Ātman) does not emerge in all its glory until all "objectivity", all otherness, all "transcendence" is abolished.

6. Knowledge Sheath (Vijñānamaya Kośa)

Śaṅkarācārya describes the structural characteristics of the knowledge sheath (vijñānamaya kośa) in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi verses 184-206. Its main components are intellect (buddhi), ego (Jīva) and memory (citta). Taken together with mind (manas), they constitute what is termed the "inner organ":

The inner organ (antahkarana) is called manas, buddhi, ego or citta, according to their respective functions: Manas, from its considering the pros and cons of a thing; Buddhi, from its property of determining the truth of objects; the ego, from its identification with this body as one's own self; and Citta, from its function of remembering things it is interested in.⁹³

The intellect, along with its modifications the ego (Jīva) and sense-organs, constitutes the knowledge sheath with its

⁹³ Ibid., sloka 93-4, p.34.

sense of being an "agent". (pūṁsah).⁹⁴ The sense of "agency" is the cause of man's transmigration. The knowledge sheath, though in itself a modification of primal matter (prakṛter-vikārah) and inert, is a "reflection" (pratibimba) of Cit or Ātman.⁹⁵ It borrows, as it were, its intelligence from the Self. The knowledge sheath (vijñānamaya-kośa), when modified by egoity, is called Jīva. It engages in activities both good and evil, and reaps the results in action in innumerable rebirths. It experiences the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states.⁹⁶ The knowledge sheath (vijñānamaya kośa) identifies itself invariably with the body and its functions, and suffers transmigration through delusion.⁹⁷ Its proximity to the self-effulgent Ātman lends it the effulgence of "pure consciousness". The Ātman, on the other hand, appears as an agent (kartā) and experiencer (bhokta). This confusion of the intellect and its attributes with the immutable and attributeless Atman is due to "mutual superimposition".⁹⁸ Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, describes how the intelligence of the Self is "reflected" by the knowledge sheath to the other sheaths:

⁹⁴ Ibid., śloka 184, p.71.

⁹⁵ Ibid., śloka 185, p.72.

⁹⁶ Ibid., śloka 186-7, p.72.

⁹⁷ Ibid., śloka 188, p.73.

⁹⁸ Ibid., śloka 189, p.73.

The intellect, being transparent and next to the Self, easily catches the reflection of the intelligence of the Self. Therefore, even wise men happen to identify themselves with it first; next comes the Manas, which catches the reflection of the Self through the intellect; then the organs through contact with the Manas; and last by the body, through the organs.⁹⁹

A few pages later in the same commentary, Śaṅkarācārya illustrates the "illuminating" function of Self and the "reflecting" function of intellect by the analogy of light and colour in daily experience;

The intellect is that which is illumined, and the light of the Self is that which illumines like light.... It is because light is pure that it assumes the likeness of that which it illumines.... When, for instance, it illumines something green, blue or red, it is coloured like them.¹⁰⁰

The discrimination of Self from intellect is not for the purpose of establishing the reality of both. It is intended to establish the ultimate reality of Self and the falsity of intellect as an independent entity. The seeming reality of the knowledge sheath (vijñānamaya-kōśa) results when the Self (Ātman) assumes the limitations of the knowledge sheath conditioned by name and form. The Supreme Self, though eternal and immutable, takes on the qualities of the superimpositions and appears to act "like the changeless fire

99

Bṛihad Up. Ś. B. 4.3.7., Trans. Madhavananda, op. cit., p.612, line 18ff.

100

Ibid., 4.3.7., p.614, line 20 ff.

101

Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, sloka 190, p.74.

assuming the modifications of the iron which it turns redhot." 102
 In Vivekacūḍāmani 189-91, Śaṅkarācārya seems to shift the emphasis from superimposition on the Self by ego (Jīva) or mind (manas) to superimposition by Self on the five sheaths. It is vital to remember that both kinds of super-imposition are false, and equally due to Ignorance (avidyā). The Self is said (metaphorically) to "assume" the limitations of buddhi and to "identify itself" with the knowledge sheath; but strictly speaking, the Self never acts, and is never modified by name and form. Śaṅkarācārya makes this point clear in his Brhad Up. Bhāṣya 4.3.7:

Those who explain the word 'Vijñānamaya' as a modification of the consciousness that is the Supreme Self, evidently go against the import of the Srutis, since in the words 'Vijñānamaya', Manomaya' ect. the suffix 'mayat' denoted something else than modification...the word 'Vijñānamaya' ought to mean 'identified with the intellect.' 103

At the level of the knowledge sheath (vijñānamaya kośa), phenomenological reflection emerges for the first time and makes conscious awareness of Ignorance and superimposition (adhyāsa) possible. The final result of this reflection is the "reduction" of the bliss sheath (ānandamaya kośa) and the realization of a pure ontological Self Transcending the five sheaths.

102

Ibid., śloka 191, p.74.

103

Brihad, Up., S. B. 4.3.7., Trans.. Madhavānanda, op. cit., p.611, line 2-15.

A question arises concerning superimposition. If the delusion by which the Self identifies itself with the individual soul (Jīva) is beginningless, must it not also be endless? And if endless, must not Jīva and its transmigration continue for ever without any hope of liberation?

Śaṅkarācārya replies to the effect that no mere adjunct (upādhi) conjured up by imagination and applied to the Self can be permanent.¹⁰⁴ The Self is unattached (sva-saṅgasya), beyond activity (niskriyasya) and formless (nirā-krteḥ). Its connection with the empirical world is no more real than the blue colour attributed to the sky by our minds!¹⁰⁵ Egoity (Jīva) is superimposed on Ātman by the delusion of the mind. It ceases to exist the moment delusion is destroyed.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps it is correct to say that, for Śaṅkarācārya, the empirical self and its "world" are valueless except as the medium for "Self-realization". That gives the Jīva a very great value, for how is it possible to conceive of "realization" in any other context or with any other starting-point, phenomenologically speaking? With the dawn of Knowledge (Vidyā), all the effects

¹⁰⁴ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 192-3, p.75.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., śloka 194, p.75.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., śloka 195, p.76.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., śloka 196, p.76.

of beginningless Ignorance (Avidyā) are destroyed root and
¹⁰⁸ branch. Is not this principle used by psychotherapy to
demolish the symptoms of mental illness? Śaṅkarācārya employs
it to "destroy" nescience, that universal structure of mental
Ignorance that projects illusion. The phenomenal universe,
he says, is no more eternal than "previous non-existence"
¹⁰⁹ (prāgabhava). Jīva, though beginningless like prāgabhava
(previous non-existence), and superimposed by intellect,
ceases to exist when knowledge dawns. Perfect knowledge is
defined as realization of the identity of the individual soul
¹¹⁰ (Jīva) with Brahman-Ātman. This liberating knowledge is
attained by careful discrimination between the Self and the
¹¹¹ not-Self, and subsequent negation of all that is not-Self,
¹¹² especially egoism. Śaṅkarācārya sums up his section on

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., śloka 198, p.77.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., śloka 199, p.77. Swami Madhavānanda explains the
term Prāgabhava as used in Nivāya logic: "When we say a
thing comes into being at a definite point of time, we
imply also that there was non-existence of that particular
thing prior to that moment. And this "non-existence"
is obviously beginningless. But it ceases as soon as the
thing comes into being. Similarly, Avidya, even though
beginningless, disappears when realization comes."

¹¹⁰ Ibid., śloka 200-1, p.78.

¹¹¹ Ibid., śloka 203, p.78.

¹¹² Ibid., śloka 205, p.79.

the knowledge sheath (vi^jñānamaya-kośa) by warning his readers not to identify it with the Self (Ātman) for five reasons: the knowledge sheath is changing, insentient, limited, and object of the senses, and not constantly present.¹¹³

There is nothing explicit in Aparokṣanubhūti about the knowledge sheath. Śaṅkarācārya recommends the method of enquiry (vicāra) for obtaining knowledge, by which he means asking questions like, "Who am I?", "How is this world created?", and "Who is its creator?" etc.¹¹⁴ His answers are revealing: "Everything is produced by Ignorance, and dissolves in the wake of Knowledge. The various thoughts...must be the creator."¹¹⁵ The material cause (upadānam) of both Ignorance and thought is the same: the one, subtle, unchanging Sat, (Brahman).¹¹⁶ The efficient cause must be taken, by implication, to be the "inner organ" (antahkarana) which includes mind (manas), intellect (buddhi) and memory (citta). Now comes the conclusion of the enquiry: "As I (aḥam) am also the One, the Subtle, the Knower, the Witness, the Ever-Existent, and the Unchanging, so there

113
Ibid., śloka 206, p.80.

114
Aparokṣanubhūti, śloka 11-12, p.7-8.

115
Ibid., śloka 14, p.9.

116
Ibid., śloka 15, p.10.

is no doubt that I am "That" (i.e. Brahman).¹¹⁷

In Aparokṣānubhūti, Śāṅkarācārya argues for the falsity of the individual self on the basis of the unity of consciousness in experience:

No division in Consciousness is admissible at any time as it is always one and the same. Even the individuality of the Jiva must be known as false, like the delusion of a snake in a rope.¹¹⁸

The contents of consciousness may vary significantly, but that which cognizes objects (whether gross, as in the waking state; or subtle, as in the dream state) remain always the same. It is one and indivisible. Therefore it is impossible to entertain the idea of two selves, one eternal and one empirical. The individual self (Jīva) must be recognized as a false and illusory superimposition on the Self by the intellect. It fades into nothingness on the advent of Knowledge, i.e. of Self-realization.

The passages cited above from Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Aparokṣānubhūti and Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhaṣya show how Śāṅkarācārya "reduces" the knowledge sheath, like all preceding sheaths, to unreality. If the mental sheath (manomaya kośa) is the "locus" of Ignorance, the knowledge sheath (viññānamaya-kośa) is the "locus" of egoity. Both appear intelligent

117

Ibid., śloka 16, p.10. Swāmī Vimuktānanda offers the following helpful comment: "When I say, 'I know that I exist', the 'I' of the clause 'that I exist' forms a part of the predicate and as such it cannot be the same 'I' which is the subject. This predicative 'I' is the ego, the object. The subjective 'I' is the supreme Knower."

118

Ibid., śloka 43, p.25.

owing to their "proximity" to, and ability to "reflect" the light of Pure Consciousness which is the Self (Ātman),¹¹⁹ The knowledge sheath, because of its intelligence and egoity, is most often confused with the Self by intellectual persons. The notion of egoity is very stubborn, making "phenomenological reduction" of the knowledge sheath problematic. But Śāṅkarācārya insists that, short of complete negation of the individual ego (Jīva) and its intellect (buddhi), there can be no liberation, for liberation consists of freedom from Ignorance, and Ignorance results from attributing reality to the Not-Self i.e. the sheaths (kośas).

7. Bliss Sheath (Ānandamaya Kośa)

The fifth and last sheath to be described by Śāṅkarācārya is the bliss sheath (ānandamaya kośa). It is a "modification" (vr̥tti) of primal Ignorance, a "reflection" (prati-bimba) of the Self that is Bliss Absolute. The attributes of the bliss sheath are pleasure etc.¹²⁰

Śāṅkarācārya gives a fuller description of the various degrees of pleasure in his commentary on the Taittiriya Upanisad:

....the priyam, joy - arising from seeing such beloved objects as a son; is the sirah, head - comparable to a head, because of its pre-eminence. Modah, enjoyment - the joy that follows the acquisition of an object of desire. When that enjoyment reaches its acme it is pramodah exhilaration.¹²¹

119

"proximity" is a spatial metaphor used to indicate a high degree of disclosure or transparency to Reality.

120

Vivekachudāmani, śloka 207, p.80.

121

Taitt. Up. Ś. B. II, v.1, Trans. Gambhirānanda, op. cit., I, p.337.

In imitation of the Upanisad, Śaṅkarācārya pictures the bliss sheath or blissful self (ānandamaya ātmā) as a great bird. Priya is the head, deriving pleasure from seeing and knowing; Moda is the right side, deriving pleasure from possession; Pramodha is the left side, deriving pleasure from using; Ānanda (Absolute Bliss) is the tail that stabilises (puccham pratisthā) the body in flight.¹²² The bliss sheath manifests itself in all experiences of joy during wakeful and dreaming states, but its maximum manifestation is during profound sleep (susupti).¹²³ Deep sleep is always associated with a state of intense Ignorance because a man, on waking, says: "I slept soundly, I knew nothing at all." There are four additional reasons why the blissful sheath cannot be identified with the Absolute Bliss or Ātman: it is endowed with changing attributes, is a modification of primal matter (prakṛti), is the effect of past good deeds, is embedded in the other sheaths as the innermost.¹²⁴ Ānanda, on the other hand, is without any taint of Ignorance, unchanging, devoid of attributes or modifications, fully sentient, beyond cause and effect, and unrelated to the five sheaths.

According to Śaṅkarācārya, when all five sheaths have been eliminated (kośānāṃ nisedhe) by meditation on Śruti passages (primarily

122

Ibid., II, vi.1, p.339.

123

Vivekachūḍāmani, śloka 208, p.81.

124

Ibid., śloka 209, p.81. Taitt. Up. speaks of the five sheaths as being of similar shape and one inside the other. Material sheath is outermost, bliss sheath innermost.

those that follow the negative method, neti neti, "not this, not this"), what remains is the Witness (Saksi) of Absolute Knowledge (Bodharūpo).¹²⁵ Here again we see the Advaitin method of deliberate imputation (adhyāropa) and rescission (apavāda) illustrated.¹²⁶ First, Śaṅkarācārya imputes or superimposes the bliss sheath; second, he analyzes and describes its phenomenological characteristics; third, he discriminates between the bliss sheath and the Self; fourth, he rescinds or cancels the bliss sheath like all previous sheaths; last, he affirms the transcendental reality of the Self (Ātman). The culmination of the "phenomenological reduction" of the sheaths is not emptiness, a mere Void (sarvabhāvam vīna kinchinna)¹²⁷ - as taught by the Nihilists and Buddhist Sūnyavādins. The result is the "realization" of a positive Entity - the self-effulgent Ātman which is distinct (vilakṣaṇah) from the five sheaths, the Witness (Saksi) of the three states of consciousness, the eternal Bliss (sadananda).¹²⁸ Knowledge of modifications like egoism and their subsequent absence in deep sleep necessarily implies a Pure Consciousness that is eternally present in all experience as Witness and Knower. This may be known only through the "sharpest intellect" (buddhya susukṣmāya).¹²⁹ The latter statement reflects a passage in the Katha Upanisad: "The Self, though hidden in all beings, does not shine forth but can be seen by those subtle

125
Ibid., śloka 210, p.81.

126
See Introduction, last section.

127
Vivekachudamani, śloka 212, p.82.

128
Ibid., śloka 211, p.82.

129
Ibid., ślokas 213-14, p.83.

seers, through their sharp and subtle intelligence.... Sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to cross, difficult to tread is the path (so) sages declare."¹³⁰

8. Recapitulation of the Five Sheaths

We return now to the concept of the homologue discernible between the microcosm of man's inner self and the macrocosm of the universe. In the Bhrgu Valli (third chapter of Taittiriya Upanisad) the correspondence is striking. To begin with, the universe is explained in terms of materialism. Everything is reduced to matter.¹³¹ This corresponds to Śaṅkarācārya's analysis of man in terms of material sheath (annamaya kośa). Next, the principle of vitalism is invoked to explain the transition from inert matter to plant and animal life.¹³² This corresponds to the vital sheath (prānamaya kośa) in Vivekacūdamani. But vitalism is not sufficient to account for mental phenomena, so Brahman is identified next with mind.¹³³ This corresponds with the mental sheath (manomaya kośa). Mind does not, however, account for man's higher forms of intelligence. So Brahman is equated next with intelligence.¹³⁴ This corresponds with

¹³⁰ Katha Up. I.3.12,14 Trans. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., pp.627-8.

¹³¹ Taitt. Up. III.2.1, Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p.554.

¹³² Taitt. Up. III.3.1, Ibid., p.554.

¹³³ Taitt. Up. III.4.1, Ibid., p.555

¹³⁴ Taitt. Up. III.5.1, Ibid., p.556.

the knowledge sheath (vi^jnānamaya kośa). The categories of matter, life, mind, and intelligence carry us every higher in scale of being, each one more comprehensive and subtle than the previous one, just as the sheaths (kośas) were found to be in man. As matter contains life, and life contains mind, and mind contains intelligence, so intelligence is not ultimate but contains spirit. This spiritual or deified consciousness is described as blissful.¹³⁵ It corresponds to the bliss sheath (anandamaya kośa) in man. St. Augustine describes a similar "ascent of the soul" in his Confessions:

Step by step was I led upwards, from bodies (anna) to the soul which perceives by means of the bodily sense (prana); and thence to the soul's inward faculty which is the limit of the intelligence of animals (manas); and thence again to the reasoning faculty to whose judgment is referred the knowledge received by the bodily senses (vi^jnāna). And when this power also within me found itself changeable it lifted itself up to its own intelligence, and withdrew its thoughts from experience, abstracting itself from the contradictory throng of sense-images that it might find what that light was wherein it was bathed when it cried out that beyond all doubt the unchangeable is to be preferred to the changeable; whence also it knew that unchangeable; and thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That which is (ananda).¹³⁶

Śankarācārya harmonizes the five sheaths not by affirming their independent realities, but rather by "reducing" them to the status of abstractions from the One Reality (Ātman). His method of phenomenological reduction proceeds to the point where only a "transcendental turn" of mind can affirm the existence of anything at all. Existence (Sat), Knowledge (Cit), and Bliss (Ananda) is Brahman-Ātman. The phenomenal universe

135

Taitt. Up. III, 6.1, Ibid., p.557.

136

St. Augustine, Confessions VII, 23, quoted by S. Radhakrishnan in

exists in a relative sense only. It exists for him whose mind is in bondage to Ignorance. It ceases for him whose mind has realized its Ground, Pure Consciousness. The experience of identity with Brahman destroys all other entities. It transcends the structure of Ignorance (avidyā) which includes subjects, objects, space, time, causality etc. It transcends empirical existence, knowledge, and pleasure, to realize its identity with Being (Sat), Knowledge (Cit) and Bliss (Ānanda). Far from being the loss of anything, it is the gain of the All. It is the final liberation (mokṣa).

The Principal Upanisads. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., New York: Humanities Press, 1953, p.557. (The Sanskrit words are introduced into the text by Radhakrishnan).

brahmānandanidhirmahābalatā haṁkāradhorāhinaṁ saṁvestayātmani rakṣyate
guṇamayaiśca^{va}laistribhirmastakaiḥ vijñānakhyamahāsiṁ śrutimatā
vicchidyā śīrṣatravāṁ nirmūlyahimimāṁ nidhiṁ sukhakaraṁ dhīro^{va} mubhoktuṁ
ksamāḥ

The treasure of the Bliss of Brahman is coiled round by the mighty and dreadful serpent of egoism, and guarded for its own use by means of its three fierce hoods consisting of the three guṇas. Only the wise man, destroying it by severing its three hoods with the great sword of realization in accordance with the teachings of the Śrutis, can enjoy this treasure which confers bliss.

tatastu tau lakṣanayā sulakṣyau
tayorakhaṇḍaika^{va}rasatvasiddhaye
nālam jahatvā na tayā^{va} jahatvā
kintūbhayārthātmikayaiva bhāvyaṁ

Hence those two terms (Īśvara and Jīva) must be carefully considered through their implied meanings, so that their absolute identity may be established. Neither the method of total rejection nor that of complete retention will do. One must reason it out through the process which combines the two.

astīti pratvayo yaśca yaśca nāstīti vastuni buddhereva guṇāvetau
na tu nityasya vastunah

The idea that bondage exists, and the idea that it does not, are, with reference to the Reality, both attributes of the buddhi merely, and never belong to the Eternal Reality, Brahman.

na nirodho na cotpattirna baddho na ca sādhakah na mumuksurna
vai mukta ityesā paramārthatā

There is neither death nor birth, neither a bound nor a struggling soul, neither a seeker after liberation nor a liberated one - this is the ultimate truth.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-REALIZATION

1. Archery Analogy

Śankarācārya's philosophy of Self-realization may be illustrated by lessons in archery. If a man wishes to learn how to use bow and arrows skilfully, he must first of all find a teacher who has perfected the sport. Likewise, to learn the art of Self-realization, one requires a guru who is already Self-realized. The simple act of watching someone hit the bullseye of the target with grace and accuracy inspires a beginner with enthusiasm and confidence. He believes in the final outcome of his lessons, even though at first he misses the target again and again. The next requirement is a strong and flexible bow, one that sends the arrows flying through the air. A candidate for Self-realization uses the Scriptures (Śrutis) selected for him by his guru, in full confidence that they have been tested by tradition and found useful. The arrows too are selected carefully to give maximum results. They must have excellent feathers to guide them, and sharp points to pierce the target and merge with it. A Self-realized

¹ Compare Mund. Up. 2.2.4, Eight Upanisads II, p.132: "Om is the bow; the sōul is the arrow; and Brahman is called its target. It is to be hit by an unerring man. One should become one with It just like an arrow."

guru too insists on excellent "feathers" (the Four Qualifications, Chapter 1) and a "sharp intellect" before commencing instruction of his student. No one can learn to shoot arrows at a target accurately without long and persistent practice. The same kind of diligence is required to discern the Ātman. The next requirement for the archery lessons is a target board, on which are painted concentric circles of various colours around a central bullseye. The numbers superimposed on the coloured circles increase in value as they approach the bullseye. The material of the whole board is homogeneous. Now, in Vedānta, the "substratum" of everything that exists is the homogeneous Brahman, whether located in the external (objective) or internal (subjective) worlds. The concentric circles of the target board with their various colours and numerical values represent the "superimposed" sheaths (kośas) that make up the empirical self (Jīva). In archery, the purpose of the game is to shoot the arrows so that they hit the central bullseye. There is satisfaction when the arrow hits the bullseye, and dissatisfaction when it misses the target area altogether. There is some satisfaction when the arrow hits and scores points inside the concentric circles. Likewise, in Advaita Vedānta, one's aim is to "realize" the Bliss of Brahman-Ātman. But the sheaths (kośas) that "cover" and "surround" the Self imply a mixed experience of joy and sorrow, depending on their proximity to or distance from the Self. When the mind is dull

through Ignorance (avidya), one identifies with the gross body. The practice of discrimination (viveka) brings one to the dimension of the subtle (sukṣma) body, i.e. the mental sheath (manomaya kośa) or perhaps even the knowledge sheath (viññānamaya kośa). Often, at recurrent intervals one comes by the bliss sheath (ānandamaya kośa) also and is more naturally tempted to identify with that. A beginning archer is often tempted to give up hope of ever hitting the bullseye. But in rare cases, he perseveres and attains the satisfaction of hitting the bullseye over and over again. That brings wonder and joy, not only to the archer, but to the spectators as well. He earns the status of an instructor, and shares his skill with beginning archers.

An archery student learns from manuals and from his instructor. But, in the final analysis, his success in the sport depends on his own persistent effort, concentration, and practice. Theoretical knowledge, though helpful in certain ways, is a poor substitute for direct experience. Similarly, a man who aims at Self-realization follows the advice of his guru, studies the Scriptures and commentaries, and theorizes² about the Self. But, ultimately, he has to "realize" his own identity with the Self through "one-pointedness" of the intellect. No one else can do that for him.

2

Compare Chānd. Up. VI, xiv, 1, Trans. Ganganatha Jha, Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1942, p.351-2. A man with his eyes, hands, feet bound finds his way home to Gāndhara by first taking the help of others.

2. Reduction of the Body

The "path" to Self-realization is primarily negative, though its result is very positive. One must conduct a mental "reduction" or negation of all entities that masquerade as the Self but are in fact the not-Self. They must be known at last as non-entities, as mere products of Ignorance (avidya).³ The first entity to be "reduced" or negated is the material sheath (annamaya kośa), being the most obvious candidate for selfhood. One must cease to identify with the gross body for body-consciousness is what enslaves us to birth, disease, and death.⁴ The "incarnate self" has no freedom from the pleasure and pain of phenomenal existence, as the Chāndogya Upaniṣad teaches:

O Maghavan, mortal, verily, is this body. It is held by death.... Verily, the incarnate self is held by pleasure and pain. Verily, there is no freedom from pleasure and pain for one who is incarnate. Verily, pleasure and pain do not touch one who is bodiless.⁵

The same idea is reflected in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi where Śaṅkarācārya writes: "Pleasure or pain, or good or evil, affects only him who has connections with the gross body etc., and identifies

³ Aparokṣhānubhūti, śloka 69-70, p.38-9.

⁴ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi śloka 396, p.150.

⁵ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VIII, 12,1, Principal Upaniṣads, p.508.

himself with these." ⁶ Body-consciousness is the source of all fear. It causes one to fear other embodied selves, or else to suffer the loneliness of their absence. It causes the life-long fear of "extinction" or death of the body. The projection, by ignorance, of a "second entity" (body) is what produces all this misery, according to Śaṅkarācārya in his Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya:

He, Viraj, who has been presented as the first embodied being of a human form, was afraid, just like us, says the text. Because this being with a human form, possessing a body and organs, was afraid owing to a false notion about his extinction, therefore, being similarly situated, people to this day are afraid to be alone.....
Because it is from a second entity that fear comes; and that second entity is merely projected by ignorance.⁷

If the "delusion of the body" (deha-adhyāsa) arises through ignorance (avidyā), it disappears through knowledge of the Self (ātma-pariññānāt).⁸ There is nothing to be gained by destroying the body i.e. through suicide, since it would only reappear by another birth. One must rather "die" to body-consciousness. A wise man, though possessed of a body, does not identify himself with it (śarīrapya-śarīryeṣa).⁹ He lives

⁶ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi śloka 546, p.203.

⁷ Brihad. Up. Ś. B. 1.4.2, Trans. Madhavānanda, p.96, line 7 ff. and line 24 ff. (my underlining of phrase "false notion..")
Note re "second entity": the notion of spatiality is an extension of body-consciousness.

⁸ Aparokṣānubhūti śloka 87, p.44.

⁹ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 544, p.203.

always without the consciousness of body (aśarīram sadā).¹⁰

He discards the body like a snake sheds its slough.¹¹

Śaṅkarācārya, commenting on Brhadāraṇyaka 4.4.7 writes:

Just as in the world the lifeless slough of a snake is cast off by it as no more being a part of itself, and lies in the anthill...so does this body, discarded as non-self by the liberated man, who corresponds to the snake, lie like dead.¹²

When the gross body is negated as "non-self", so are the subtle (sūksma) and causal (kāraṇa) bodies associated with it -

the dreaming and deep sleep states.¹³ All action, all change, all birth and death belong to superimposed attributes (upādhis),¹⁴ whereas the Self (Ātman) remains unaffected and disembodied.

Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā concludes that it is impossible for a "body-wearer" (deha-dhṛtā), i.e. one who has body-consciousness, to renounce the way of works (karma-yoga) in favour of the way of knowledge (jñāna-yoga) and Self-realization. He makes it very clear that negation or "reduction" of the body and all its attributes is a necessary step for gaining freedom from primordial Ignorance (avidyā):

¹⁰ Ibid., śloka 545, p.263.

¹¹ Ibid., śloka 549, p.204.

¹² Bṛihad. Up. Ś. B. 4.4.7. Trans. Madhavānanda, p.729, line 12 ff.

¹³ Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 500, p.186.

¹⁴ Ibid., śloka 501, p.186.

An embodied being: a body-wearer, i.e. he who identifies himself with the body. No man of discrimination can be called a body-wearer, for it has been pointed out...that such a man does not concern himself (in actions) as their agent. So the meaning is: it is not possible for an ignorant man to abandon action completely.¹⁵

Accordingly, a complete abandonment of all works is possible for him alone who has attained to Right Knowledge, inasmuch as he sees that action and its accessories and its results are all ascribed to the Self by Avidya: but, for the unenlightened man identifying himself with the body, etc., which constitute action, its agent and accessories, complete abandonment of action is not possible.¹⁶

The unique characteristic of Ignorance, which belongs to the very structure of the mind itself, is to confound knowledge

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at its source. It does this by confusing the transcendental

subject (Atman) with the transcendent realm of "objectivity",

18

i.e. the body and all other objects, whether physical or mental.

The two "realms" are as different as night and day. For example,

the body has parts, is transient (anityah), and in essence,

non-existence (asanmayah); it has only relative reality

(vyavaharika sattā). The Self, by contrast, is without parts

15

The Bhagavad-Gītā with the Commentary of Sri Śāṅkarāchārya,
Trans. A. Mahādeva Sāstri, 5th Ed., Madras: V. Ramaswamy
Sastrulu and Sons, 1961, p.452, line 13 ff.

16

Ibid., p.453, line 23 ff.

17

The mind-equals-Ignorance equation is more fundamental than body-equals-Ignorance because there would be no body-consciousness without mind. Primordial Ignorance constitutes the naturalistic attitude.

18

Aparokshānubhūti 17, p.11.

(viniskalah), eternal (nityah), and pure Existence (sadrūpah).¹⁹
 It is absolute existence (paramārthika sattā). All these
 adjectives used to describe the Self are arrived at negatively,
 that is, they acquire positive meaning only in opposition to
 the body's defects, and non-reality.

The negation or reduction of the "body" is accompanied
 simultaneously by the positive "realization" of the Self.
 The removal of Ignorance (avidyā) leaves only Knowledge (vidyā).
 The Self exists as the eternal and ontological Ground or
 Substratum of Knowledge (Vidyā) before the negation of "body"
 is possible or even meaningful. The transcendental consciousness
 is that which witnesses the "reduction" of the ignorance-
 structure of the mind called "body". It exists before, during
 and after the "reduction" because it transcends empirical time.
 It is not an object of logical investigation because it is the
 very Ground of rationality itself. It is definable simply
 as Existence-Knowledge Bliss Absolute (Sat-Cit-Anandam).²⁰

Śaṅkarācārya's "path" to Self-realization is necessarily
 a negative one because only the removal of primal Ignorance
 (avidyā) permits the positive Entity called Knowledge (vidyā)
 to shine forth unimpeded in all its glory. The removal of the

19

Ibid., 21, p.13.

20

Vivekachūdamani śloka 412, p.156.

gross and subtle bodies is part of his technique of "phenomenological reduction". The gross (sthūla) and subtle (sūkṣma) bodies are, of course, false entities "constituted" (kalpita) by the mind and superimposed on the Self like cycles, years, seasons, and other periods of time. The subtle body's five sensory organs, five motor organs, five Prāṇas or Tanmātras, and mind (manas), intelligence (buddhi), ego (Jīva) and memory (citta) must likewise be negated or "reduced". These are false entities constituted by the projecting power (vikṣepa-śakti) of rajas that simultaneously obscure the Self by the veiling power (āvṛti or āvarana-śakti) of tamas. Pure sattva reflects the Ātman, but in conjunction with rajas and tamas gets involved in matter and phenomenal existence. The entire complex of gross (sthūla) and subtle (sūkṣma) bodies has to be negated in order to realize

21

Ibid., śloka 497, p.185.

22

Ibid., ślokas 92-96, p.33-34. The five functions of Prāṇa are Prāṇa, Apāṇa, Vyāna, Udāna, and Samāna which are, respectively, the vital function controlling breathing, excretion, metabolism, expiration, and nutrition. Tanmātras are the five elements or constituents of all material things.

23

Ibid., śloka III, p.40.

24

Ibid., śloka 113, p.41.

25

Ibid., śloka 117, p.43.

26

Brahman as eternal Bliss. Let us see how Śaṅkarācārya "destroys" or rescinds the mind (manas), the intelligence (buddhi) and ego (Jīva) in order to discover the Atman that lies "veiled" by these superimpositions.

3. Reduction of the Mind

The annihilation of the mind (manas) and its modifications (vr̥ttis) is of fundamental importance to Śaṅkarācārya for attaining liberation from Ignorance. He writes less ambiguously about the mind-ignorance equation in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi than in his major commentaries:

There is no ignorance (Avidyā) outside the mind. The mind alone is Avidyā, the cause of the bondage of transmigration. When that is destroyed, all else is destroyed, and when that is manifested, everything else is manifested.²⁷

The mind, because of its primal Ignorance, superimposes all the diverse forms of the universe (sakalaṃ viśvaṃ nanārūpaṃ) on Brahman, which is absolutely free from the diversity of

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human thought. If the various entities perceived by the mind are false, it follows that their systematic negation returns the

²⁶ Ibid., śloka 395, p.150.

²⁷ Ibid., śloka 169, p.65.

²⁸ Ibid., śloka 227, p.88.

mind to its pristine "purity". Śāṅkarācārya compares the "outgoing" (bahir-mukhaṁ) mind, i.e. the mind preoccupied with various sense-objects, to a play-ball dropped accidentally on a staircase that keeps on bouncing downward. The mind, if "attached" to sense-objects, desires them; and desiring them, sets the body in motion to obtain them. "Attachment" triggers a whole series of events that drag a man down to a sub-human level:

Attachment for objects arises when a man thinks of them specifically. Wrath arises when desire is frustrated by some cause or other.....
 From wrath arises delusion, a lack of discrimination between right and wrong.... From infatuation follows failure of memory.... From failure of memory follows loss of conscience (buddhi) - the inability of the inner sense (antah-karāṇa) to discriminate between right and wrong.... Thus by loss of conscience (antah-karāṇa, buddhi) he is ruined, he is debarred from attaining human aspirations.³¹

Such a man "deviates from his real nature" (svarūpa-vibhramso).³²

If the mind, with its propensity for objectivity, is the cause of man's bondage to phenomenal existence, it is

²⁹ Ibid., śloka, 325, p.123.

³⁰ Ibid., śloka 326, p.123 "the mind that is attached" is the translation of avisaccetaḥ, from root vis meaning "enter, go into", The mind merges with and is affected by its objects.

³¹ B. G., S. B. II, 62-3, Trans. Sastry, op. cit., pp.73-4.

³² Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 328, p.124.

also the instrument of liberation. ³³ One must train the mind to give up sense-objects, and to concentrate its vision ³⁴ on Brahman. The rescinding of the external world superimposed (constituted) by the mind prepares one for liberation:

When the external world is shut out (bāhya niruddhe), the mind is cheerful, and cheerfulness of the mind brings on the vision of the Paramatman.... Hence the shutting out of the external world is the stepping-stone to liberation (vimukteh).³⁵

For Sankarācārya, there is no liberation for one who lives identified with the body, or whose mind is "attached" to sense-objects, or who undertakes the performance of various (religious) duties or actions to win liberation. ³⁶ He alone is truly liberated who identifies the whole universe with the Self and gives up all superimpositions of the mind. ³⁷ As gold, when heated over a fire gives up its impurities, so the mind, through meditation, gives up sattva, rajas, and tamas, and attains its true identity as Brahman. ³⁸ When all mental

³³ Ibid., śloka 174, p.67.

³⁴ Ibid., śloka 327, 329, p.124.

³⁵ Ibid., śloka 335, p.127.

³⁶ Ibid., śloka 340, p.129.

³⁷ Ibid., śloka 338, 339, p.128.

³⁸ Ibid., śloka 361, p.137. Sattva, rajas, tamas are the three gunas or constituents of primal matter (Prakṛti) out of which the universe is constituted, according to Sāṅkhya philosophy.

modifications (citta-vrttau) are merged (samāhitayām) in the Undifferentiated (nirvikalpe) the phenomenal world is seen no more (na drsyate); it is "reduced" (pariśisyate)³⁹ to mere talk. The apparent variety (vikalpo) of the universe has its root in the mind (cittamūlo); it disappears when the mind is "annihilated" (cittābhāve na kaścana)⁴⁰ Śāṅkarācārya is not advocating mental suicide, but rather a purification of the mind. The cancellation of the "contents" of the mind, of the so-called "objective" and "subjective" worlds, brings the latent intelligence of the Self (Ātman) to "pure" self-awareness. In Aparokṣānubhūti he calls this mental abandonment (tyāgaḥ) of the illusory universe (prapañca-rūpasya) the genuine or honored renunciation (pūjyaḥ tyāgaḥ),⁴¹ that by which immediate liberation (sadyaḥ mokṣamayaḥ) comes. We are reminded, here, of Husserl's famous epoché or suspension of judgment concerning the reality of the world; it is an attitude of "detachment" which enables transcendental subjectivity to realize its freedom. The world is reduced to phenomenon (coGITatum) and is viewed as "constituted by the intentionality of the Transcendental Ego. The world, in other words, is a

39 Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 398, p.151.

40 Ibid., śloka 407, p.154.

41 Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 106, p.56.

fully "contingent" appearance and subordinate to transcendental consciousness which is "necessary" for its existence. The world has no independent reality or existence of its own. Śāṅkarācārya, though he speaks of the "destruction" of the universe, does not imply or intend the annihilation of the natural world. He implies, rather, the destruction of all that bogus "reality" and "objectivity" superimposed as the world of facts and events by the primal Ignorance (avidyā) of the mind. His goal is the elimination of all that primordial Ignorance that underlies and even "constitutes" the "naturalistic attitude" towards the world, and the simultaneous "realization" of the transcendental consciousness or Self (Ātman). Though he speaks of "destroying" the mind, his real intention is to "transcend" the mind and to realize its identity with Brahman as Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. This is accomplished in Nirvikalpa Samādhi by the negation of all duality or variety caused by the limiting adjuncts (upādhi-bheda) of the mind.⁴²

4. Reduction of the Intellect

The mind (manas) is only one facet of the "subtle body". The "reduction" has to be extended to include the intelligence

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Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 427, p.162 and, śloka 337, p.136.

(buddhi) and the ego (Jīva) as well. The intellect, though a modification of primal matter (prakṛti) and inert by nature, "reflects" the intelligence of the Self because of its close "proximity"⁴³. It manifests itself as intelligent through contact with Brahman just as dull iron manifests sparks (mātra-ādi) through contact with fire.⁴⁴ The ideas of "I", "you" and "this" occur because of an inherent defect of the intellect - what Śaṅkarācārya calls the "heart's knot of ignorance" (ajñāna-hṛdaya-gran̄thi).⁴⁵ Liberation consists of destroying this knot which is nescience (avidyā).⁴⁶ The destruction or reduction of the limiting adjuncts (upādhis) such as body, organs, mind, ego, intellect, etc. is like destroying the leaves, flowers, and fruits of a tree. It does not affect in any way the immutable Ātman which is one's real nature.⁴⁷ The ideas of agency (kartr̄tva), experience (bhoktr̄tva), and even bondage (baddhatva) and freedom (vimuktata-ādayah) are but notions of the intellect (buddher-vikalpa)⁴⁸ which come and go. Their constantly changing nature

43

Ibid., śloka 188, p.73 "proximity" is a spatial metaphor for phenomenological "transparency".

44

Ibid., śloka 349, p.132.

45

Ibid., śloka 353-4, p.134.

46

Ibid., śloka 558, p.207.

47

Ibid., śloka 560, p.208.

48

Ibid., śloka 510, p.190.

show that they do not belong to the Self which is unchanging, eternal, One without a second. The bondage-liberation pair of opposites (bandha-moksau) are "conjured up" by Maya (māyā-klptau) in the intellect. We know their unreality by their appearance and subsequent disappearance in consciousness, just as we know the illusory appearance and disappearance of a snake in a rope.⁴⁹ Talk of bondage and liberation is valid only in the presence and absence of a "covering veil" (āvṛteḥ); Brahman is always uncovered (navṛter-brahmanah) for want of a second thing (anyābhāvād) because it is non-dual (dvaitam no saḥate śrutih).⁵⁰ Bondage and liberation are qualities of the intellect which ignorant people "superimpose" on the Reality (vastuni kalpayanti). They have no ultimate reality.⁵¹ How can there be consciousness of parts or activity or imperfection with respect to the Supreme Self which is without parts (niskale), without activity (niskriye), without blame (niravadye), One without a second (advitiye)?⁵² And now, Śaṅkarācārya summarizes one phase of his "reduction"

⁴⁹ Ibid., śloka 569, p.211.

⁵⁰ Ibid., śloka 570, p.212.

⁵¹ Ibid., śloka 571, p.212.

⁵² Ibid., śloka 573, p.213.

of intellect with a statement that is truly astonishing when viewed against the background of Śrutis and the orthodox tradition of India:

There is neither death nor birth, neither a bound nor a struggling soul, neither a seeker after liberation nor a liberated one - this is the ultimate truth.⁵³

The corresponding Sanskrit reads as follows:

na nirodho na cotpattirna baddho na ca sādhanah
na mumukshurna vai mukta ityesa paramārthata

The great significance Śaṅkarācārya assigns to this statement is apparent in the next verse where he calls it "this excellent and profound secret" (siddhānta-rūpam paramidaṁ atiguhyaṁ) and revealed as the inmost purport of all Vedānta (darsitam te).⁵⁴ How can we reconcile this conclusion with Śaṅkarācārya's earlier and very extensive discussions of man's bondage to ignorance and liberation by knowledge? Or, more importantly, how can we reconcile it with the revealed Scriptures (Śrutis) of which he is an acknowledged and authoritative commentator? The answer is to be found in the Vedāntic method of "deliberate super-imposition and subsequent rescission" (adhyāropa-apavāda).⁵⁵ It is virtually impossible for a "realized" man (one who is in command of transcendental consciousness) to communicate

⁵³ Ibid., śloka 574, p.213.

⁵⁴ Ibid., śloka 575, p.213.

⁵⁵ See my Introduction, last section, on the Advaitin method of "deliberate superimposition and subsequent rescission" as a technique of transcendental phenomenology.

with "unrealized" mortals without resorting to empirical modes of thinking and talking. Śaṅkarācārya deliberately adopts the mental and intellectual modifications of the "natural attitude" in order to subvert it and "transcend" it. He knows that "bondage" and "liberation" are meaningful terms for men at certain stages or levels of consciousness short of "Self-realization". He knows they can advance to "liberation" or inward freedom only by the negative method of "cancelling" the false, because unexamined, superimpositions "constituted" by the Ignorance of their minds. In other words, there is no contradiction at all between the absolute point of view adopted at the end of the series of "reductions" and the relative point of view adopted at the beginning, or in the midst of the series of "reductions" aimed at "Self-realization". It is interesting to find modern phenomenologists expressing a similar problem of communicating transcendental reality to "dogmatists" i.e. those who approach the world through the "natural attitude" of common-sense, or scientism.

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56

Eugen Fink summarizes the problem in terms of paradoxes. Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in The Phenomenology of Husserl, Ed. R.O. Elveton, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970, pp.142-4: "There is first "the paradox of the position from which statements are made" to the dogmatist. The transcendental attitude is not shared by the dogmatist, so a "provisional" communication of it is accomplished by inserting the "reduction" in the "natural attitude". Secondly, there is the "paradox of the phenomenological statement". The phenomenologist who wishes to communicate with a dogmatist has only worldly concepts at his disposal,

5. Reduction of Egoity

The "phenomenological reduction" of the "subtle body" (sūkṣma śarīra), otherwise known as the līṅga śarīra, is not complete until all sense of egoity (jīvatva) is annihilated from consciousness. Śaṅkarācārya calls ego-sense (ahaṅkārah) the root cause of transmigration (samsāra-hetavo), the first modification (prathama-vikāro) of nescience. ⁵⁷ The treasure of Brahman-Bliss is coiled round by "the dreadful serpent of egoism" and its three hoods consisting of the three constituents (gunas) or qualities of matter (prakṛti), namely, rajas (the principle of activity), tamas (the principle of inertia) and sattva (the principle of balance). Only a wise man who severs the three hoods (the material universe) with the "sword of realization" in accordance with Scripture (Śruti) ⁵⁸ merges in Bliss Absolute. The value of the serpent metaphor is obvious: it indicates the death-dealing power of egoism and the extreme difficulty to be encountered in destroying it.

the language of the "natural attitude". There is, thirdly, the "logical paradox of transcendental determinations". Transcendental relations cannot be mastered by natural logic, for example the identity of the transcendental and human egos in ontic terms is simply absurd."

57 Vivekachūdamani, śloka 298, p.114.

58 Ibid., śloka 302, p.115. The three gunas of Prakṛti (matter) are cosmological terms of the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy. Śaṅkara reinterprets them in phenomenological terms. As "hoods" of the serpent of egoism, they are "reducible" and known to be ultimately false entities "constituted" (kalpita) by the mind.

It illustrates, furthermore, the absolute necessity of "Self-realization" if one is to slay the serpent and attain the Bliss of Brahman-Atman "guarded" by it. Śāṅkarācārya implies that a man must attack egoism with the same zeal and courage he would muster to destroy his enemy (sva-satrum). Egoism is like a sharp fish-bone (kaṅṭaka) stuck in the throat of a man while eating his meal (bhoktur-gale). He must use "the sharp knife of realization" to extract it, or else forfeit the bliss of his own Self.⁵⁹ Even after the mighty serpent of egoism is rooted out (samūla-kṛtto), if it is entertained again in the mind, even for a moment, it returns to life like a dried-up citron tree when watered.⁶⁰ The vividness of Śāṅkara's metaphors in this connection indicates the importance he assigns to the ego and its "annihilation". He urges men to release themselves (muñca) from their identification with egoism the agent (kartā) for it is nothing but a modification (vikāra) of nescience, a reflected image (pratiphala) of the Self that diverts one from knowledge of the Self. Identification with the ego plunges a man, as it were, into the bondage of relative existence (samsāra) where birth, death and suffering are inevitable.⁶¹ Even wise men find it difficult to destroy

⁵⁹ Ibid., śloka 307, p.117.

⁶⁰ Ibid., śloka 309,310, p.118.

⁶¹ Ibid., śloka 305, p.116.

ego-consciousness once it has been established in the mind by habit. They transcend egoism and realize the Self (Ātman) only in the state of Nirvikalpa Samādhi.⁶² The projecting power (viksepa-śakti) infatuates a man with the egoistic idea (aham-buddhaya) and it is almost impossible to conquer unless the veiling power (āvarana-śakti) is first rooted out.⁶³

In phenomenological terms, the projecting power associated with rajas is akin to the "constitutive" activity of Husserl's Transcendental Ego. The veiling power (āvṛti) associated with tamas is similar in function to that "natural attitude" of the mind which causes unreal things to appear real, and mistakes "transcendent" entities for the transcendental consciousness that alone "constitutes" objects and supports them in existence. It requires a conversion of sorts to the non-natural or transcendental attitude to overcome the "dogmatism" of naive realists and even idealists. There is nothing in the history of recent philosophy to indicate that this radical change of consciousness is either popular or easy. It goes against the trends of modern empiricism, naturalism, psychologism, materialism, vitalism, idealism, and religious dogmatism. Husserl and Śāṅkarācārya seem to agree that

62
Ibid., śloka 342, p.130.

63
Ibid., śloka 343-344, p.130.

egoism is one of the major obstacles to philosophic wisdom and that its "reduction" is essential for the realization of the Supreme Reality.⁶⁴

6. Reduction of Agency and Action

Śaṅkarācārya's negation of egoity necessarily involves the rejection of the notion of agency. In his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, he makes it clear that the notion "I am the doer" is associated with egoism (ahamkāra) and belongs only to a man under the delusion of primal Ignorance (avidyā):

The man whose mind (antahkarana) is variously deluded by ahamkāra, by egoism identifying the aggregate of the body and the senses with the Self, i.e., who ascribes to himself all the attributes of the body and the senses and thus thoroughly identifies himself with them - he, by nescience, sees action in himself; as regards every action, he thinks "I am the doer".⁶⁵

64

Edmund Husserl in his article on "Phenomenology" in The Encyclopedia Britannica (14th Ed.) p.701 writes: "The transcendental problem is eidetic. My psychological experiences, perceptions, imaginations and the like remain in form and content what they were, but I see them as "structures" now, for I am face to face at last with the ultimate structure of consciousness." In other words, Husserl reduces the "human ego" (eidetically) to the "intentional structures" of the Transcendental Ego.

65

Bh. G. Ś. B III, 27, Trans. Sastry, op. cit., p.108-9.

One of the main motives animating Śāṅkarācārya's commentary on the Gīṭā is to wean men from the way of action (karma-yoga) to the way of knowledge (jñāna-yoga). Both action (pravṛtti) and inaction (nivṛtti) presuppose the ego's agency and so, strictly speaking, are false and irrelevant for the attainment of liberation (mukti) from bondage to Ignorance:

In fact, all our experience of such things as action and agent is possible only in a state of avidyā, only when we have not yet attained to the Real (vastu). He who sees inaction in action and who sees action in inaction; - he is wise among men, he is devout (yukta, yogin), and he has done all action.⁶⁶

Śāṅkarācārya justifies his radical reduction of "action" and ego-consciousness in the world by appealing to that One Divine Being or transcendental consciousness which is actionless and devoid of egoity:

Indeed, all activity in the world...arises by way of forming an object of consciousness; it has its being in consciousness and has its end in consciousness.... Accordingly, as there is no conscious entity other than the One Divine Being, there cannot be a separate enjoyer;....⁶⁷

7. Reduction of Prārabdha Karma

Śāṅkarācārya's thoroughgoing reduction of "action" in Vivekacūdamani and Aparokṣānubhūti appears to be in conflict

66

Ibid., IV, 18, p.129, line 3 ff.

67

Ibid., IX, 10, p.245, line 8 ff.

with Śruti and Śaṅkarācārya's major commentaries on Śruti with respect to the law of karma. Three kinds of karma are said to be operative in man: prārabdha, actions done in past lives that "constitute" or form the present body; sañcita, the accumulated actions of all previous cycles; agāmi, deeds yet to be done. The continuance of the body after Self-realization is attributed to a residue of prārabdha karma in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad: "The delay in his (i.e. Jñānin's) case is only so long as his body lasts, after which he becomes one with Brahman.⁶⁸ Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on this text writes:

...the delay is only so long as that Karmic Residue is not exhausted, by experience, by virtue of which his body has been brought about, and so long as...that body does not fall off; and then...he becomes merged...there is no interval of time between the falling off of the body and the merging....⁶⁹

In other words, he supports the view that prārabdha karma remains in force for a jñānin (knower of Brahman) so long as his body lives, and that a complete "merging" with Brahman is delayed until the body's death. The same interpretation is offered in his Bhagavad-Gītā Bhāṣya, where he comments on the verse that reads: "As kindled fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does wisdom-fire (jñāna-agniḥ) reduce all actions

⁶⁸ Chānd. Up. VI, xiv, 2.

⁶⁹ Chānd Up. S. B. VI, xiv, 2 Trans. Jha, op. cit., p.353, line 23 ff.

70

(sarva-karmanī) to ashes:

Accordingly we should understand that right knowledge is the cause which renders all actions impotent. But the actions by which this body has been brought into existence will come to an end only when their effects will have been fully worked out.⁷¹

The way Śāṅkarācārya excepts prārabdha karma from "reduction" to ashes by the "wisdom-fire" indicates his faithfulness to Śruti but does not, apparently, prevent him from making a further "reduction" when the "logic" of transcendental phenomenology requires him to do so. So long as cosmological and metaphysical considerations are paramount, he is obliged to maintain the literal meaning of śruti; but the intentional meaning of śruti is fulfilled by reinterpreting the literal meaning. In his Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, we find Śāṅkarācārya defending prārabdha karma against the objection of an opponent to the effect that Self-knowledge necessarily destroys all works:

But, an objection is raised, the knowledge of the Self being essentially non-active does by its intrinsic power destroy (all) works; how then should it destroy some only and leave others unaffected?...The origination of knowledge, we reply, cannot take place without dependence on an aggregate of works whose affects have already begun to operate...we must - as in the case of a potter's wheel - wait until the motion...comes to an end, there being nothing to obstruct it in the interim.⁷²

70

Bh. G. IV, 37, Trans. Sastry, op. cit., p.150, line 10 ff.

71

Bh. G., Ś. B. IV, 37, loc. cit., line 17 ff.

72

Vedānta Sūtra Bhāṣya IV, 1,15, Trans. G. Thibaut, op. cit., p.358, line 6 ff. (underlining my own).

Is it possible that the objection raised here, as if by an opponent, arose in Śāṅkarācārya's own very fertile mind, and that the reply (in terms of the "potter's wheel") failed to satisfy his doubt? Yes, indeed, it is possible. And if so, do we find the resolution of this inner dialectic in the so-called minor works, Vivekacūḍamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti, where Śāṅkarācārya, free from the "burden" of commenting systematically on the Śruti texts, is able to press the "logic" of "phenomenological reduction" to its ultimate conclusion in "transcendental consciousness"? In the opinion of the writer, this explanation is not only possible but probable, and reconciles the apparent discrepancy between the commentaries and the "minor" works attributed to Śāṅkarācārya on the continuance or discontinuance of prārabdha in "realization".

In Aparokṣānubhūti there is a bold and candid acknowledgment by Śāṅkarācārya that he intends to refute the theory of prārabdha, even though it is derived from Scripture (Śruti).⁷³ Prārabdha, he says, does not exist (naiva vidyate) after the dawning of Self-Knowledge because the body, mind, intelligence, etc. are non-existent (asat).⁷⁴ This body of the waking state is superimposed (adhyastah) on the Atman no less than

73
Aparokṣānubhūti, sloka 90, p.46.

74
Ibid., Sloka 91, p.47.

a body in dream. In the absence of real bodies, what scope is there for talk of prārabdha karma?⁷⁵ Vedāntic texts declare primal ignorance (ajñānam) to be the material cause (upādānam) of the phenomenal world (prapañcasya). If that ignorance is destroyed,⁷⁶ how can the universe subsist?

Brahman is the substratum of the illusory world. If the substratum is known (adhiṣṭhane jñāte),⁷⁷ the phenomenon disappears. The body belongs to the realm of phenomenality, so how can prārabdha karma truly exist? It is for the understanding of ignorant people (ajñāni-jana-bodhayam)⁷⁸ alone that Śruti speaks of Prārabdha! Men of realization have no body-consciousness because they are established in Ātman. It is only "unrealized" men who have consciousness of a Jñāni's body and who talk about his physical behaviour. Śaṅkarācārya quotes a text from the Mundaka Upaniṣad: "When that Self, which is both high and low, is realized, the knot of the heart gets untied, all doubts become solved, and all one's actions (karmanī)⁷⁹ become dissipated." He says that the use of

⁷⁵ Ibid., śloka 93, p.48.

⁷⁶ Ibid., śloka 93, p.48.

⁷⁷ Ibid., śloka 96, p.50.

⁷⁸ Ibid., śloka 97, p.50.

⁷⁹ Mund. Up. II, ii, 8, Trans. Gambhīrananda, op. cit., II, p.138.

the plural word "actions": here negates not only sāncita and kriyamāna but also prārabdha karma.⁸⁰ Those who ignorantly maintain prārabdha involve themselves not only in a double absurdity (anartha-dvayaḡamah),⁸¹ but also risk abandonment of the Vedāntic conclusion (vedānta-mata-hānam).⁸²

In Vivekacūdamani Śāṅkarācārya is equally insistent on the need for negating prārabdha karma. If there is any perception of emotion such as happiness (sukha-ādi-anubhavo) or sadness, it must be understood as the result of prārabdha karma.⁸³ Sāncita, that accumulated action of a "hundred crore of cycles" ceases instantly on the realization of one's identity with Brahman.⁸⁴ Agami, or action yet to be performed, does not touch one who has realized the Self.⁸⁵ All three karmas -

80 Aparokshānubhūti, śloka 98, p.51.

81 Swāmī Vimuktānanda explains the two absurdities in footnote 3 to Aparokshānubhūti, śloka 99, p.52: "In the first place, Moksha or liberation from the bonds of duality will be impossible for them, as there will always remain a second thing, Prārabdha, along with Brahman; and in the second place liberation, the sole aim of knowledge, being impossible, there will hardly remain any utility of knowledge, and in that case they have to give up the Śruti on which they build their theory as useless, since the Śruti has no other function but to lead to knowledge."

82 Aparokshānubhūti, śloka 99, p.52. Those who maintain Prārabdha Karma uphold a sort of duality in the final stage, and therefore sacrifice the Vedāntic truth of absolute non-duality.

83 Vivekachūdamani, śloka 446, p.168.

84 Ibid., śloka 447, p.168.

85 Ibid., śloka 449, p.168.

sāncita, āgami, and prarabdha are destroyed by the "fire of perfect knowledge", because a Self-realized man is truly identical with Nirguna Brahman.⁸⁶ The question of the existence of prarabdha karma is as meaningless to a "realized" sage as the question of a man's connection with dream-objects after he has awakened from sleep.⁸⁷ The body is fashioned (nirmito)⁸⁸ by karma but the Atman exists without any relation to it. How can a man who is identified with Atman be affected by prarabdha since it is written in Śruti: "The Atman is birthless, eternal, undecaying, and ever new (ancient),⁸⁹ and is not destroyed when the body is destroyed."⁹⁰ The notion of prarabdha can be maintained only so long as one lives identified with the body. The man of realization identifies himself with Atman, so rejects prarabdha along with all other action.⁹¹ It is an error to attribute prarabdha

86 Ibid., śloka 453, p.170 Nirguna means "quality or attributeless" as opposed to Saguna, meaning "with qualities, or attributes". This equation of the "realized man" with Nirguna Brahman is surely one of the boldest statements about the exalted status of a Jivan mukta.

87 Ibid., śloka 454, p.170.

88 Ibid., śloka 458, p.172.

89 The word is puranaḥ and means "new indeed even from of old".

90 Kath. Up. I, ii, 8 quoted in Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 459, p.172.

91 Vivekachūḍāmaṇi śloka 460, p.172.

even to the body. How can a superimposed entity have existence⁹² or birth or death? How can prarabdha affect an unreal entity? Śāṅkarācārya concludes with a statement to "justify" the Śrutis in their persistent talk of prarabdha karma (and incidentally, his own use of the term in his commentaries): "it is to convince those fools who entertain a doubt" (about the existence of the body) "that the Śrutis, from a relative standpoint (bāhya-dr̥stya) hypothesize (vadati) Prarabdha work..."⁹³ All the entities "constituted" by the intellect are, from the perspective of transcendental consciousness, "reduced" to relativity. They have no independent reality, but exist only so long as Ignorance (avidyā) remains to "hide" the Supreme Self. Action of every kind is seen to be false and of no ultimate worth for the attainment of freedom. The reduction of egoity, along with its sense of agency and action of every kind, is a vital step in Śāṅkarācārya's elimination of the non-Self.

8. Reduction of Īsvara and Jiva

One of the subtlest objects "constituted" by the intellect is Īsvara (the Lord). The incompatibility or logical

⁹² Ibid., sloka 461, p.173.

⁹³ Ibid., sloka 462-3, p.173.

inconsistency (virodho) between Īsvara and Jīva is caused by superimposition (adhyāsa) and is not real (na vāstavaḥ). This "erroneous predication" in the case of Īsvara is caused by Mahat (cosmic intelligence) which is Māyā (cosmic illusion); and in the case of the Jīva (individual soul), consists of the five sheaths (kośas), which are effects of Māyā.⁹⁴ When these two conditioning adjuncts (upādhi) are eliminated as false, there remains neither Īsvara nor Jīva.⁹⁵ Only Brahman-Atman remains as the "essence" of both. Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad justifies the description of Brahman in completely negative terms:

How through these two terms 'Not this, not this' is it sought to describe the Truth of truth? By the elimination of all differences due to limiting adjuncts, the words refer to something that has no distinguishing mark such as name, or form, or action, or heterogeneity, or species, or qualities.... But Brahman has none of these distinguishing marks.⁹⁶

It is proper, therefore, on the authority of the Śrutis to eliminate all duality, all adjuncts superimposed on Brahman.⁹⁷

The entire gross and subtle universe is to be denied (vyapohya)

⁹⁴ Ibid., śloka 243, p.94.

⁹⁵ Ibid., śloka 244, p.94

⁹⁶ Br. Up., Ś. B. 2.3.6, Trans Madhavanānda, op. cit., p.344, line 12ff.

⁹⁷ Vivekachūḍamāni, śloka 245, p.95.

to realize the oneness underlying Īsvara and Jīva.⁹⁸ The two terms (tau) must be carefully considered (su-lakṣya) for their "implied" meanings (lakṣanāya) so that their absolute identity (akhandāika) can be established. Neither the method of total rejection nor that of total retention will do. One must reason in a way that combines both meanings (ubhayārtha)⁹⁹ Śaṅkarācārya describes here a method parallel to modern Phenomenology's "eidetic reduction", the extracting of the "essence" from a pair of opposites and their subsequent identification. He applies the method to the famous Śruti sentence, "That thou art" (Tat-Tvam-asi): "a wise man must give up the contradictory elements on both sides and recognize the identity of Īsvara and Jīva, noticing carefully the essence of both, which is Cit., or Knowledge Absolute.¹⁰⁰ Transcendental Consciousness is the "essence" common to both conditioning adjuncts (upādhi), Īsvara and Jīva - so the "reduction" of the adjuncts superimposed by ignorance (avidyā) leaves only Brahman (Cit). Śaṅkarācārya explains that "it is the

98
Ibid., śloka 246, p.95.

99
Ibid., śloka 247, p.96. Swāmī Madhavānanda, in Note to Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 247 explains that there are three kinds of Lakṣana or implied meaning: - Jahati, Ajahati, and Bhaga. "The first is that in which one of the terms has to give up its primary meaning.... The second kind is that in which the primary meaning is retained, but something is supplied to make it clear.... In the third kind of Lakṣana each of the terms has to give up a part of its connotation."

100
Ibid., śloka 248-9, p.97.

identity of their implied, not literal meanings which is sought to be inculcated" by the Vedāntic method, since their attributes or literal meanings are "contradictory to each other" or mutually exclusive.¹⁰¹

9. Reduction of the Causal Body

We have followed Śāṅkarācārya through the "reduction" of the gross (sthūla) and subtle (sūkṣma) bodies, the latter involving the negation of mind, intellect, egoity, action, and Īsvara. There remains only the "causal body" to be subject to the same process of reduction. It is the Undifferentiated (avyaktam), the compound of the three qualities (triguṇais), manifested in the state of profound sleep (susupti) as the suspension (pralīna)¹⁰² of intellect (buddhi-vṛttih). It is Nescience (Avidyā) or Illusion (Māyā), the power of the Lord (paramēśa-sakti), to be inferred only from the effects she produces.¹⁰³ It is the material cause of the manifested universe. It (the causal body) is neither existent nor non-existent but is wholly inexplicable and indescribable (anirvacanīya-rūpa).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid., śloka 241-2, p.93.

¹⁰² Ibid., śloka 120, p.44.

¹⁰³ Ibid., śloka 108, p.39.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., śloka 109, p.39.

The blissful sheath (ānandamaya kośa) is but a modification of Nescience and is experienced in deep sleep as a state of intense Ignorance. True, there can be no phenomenological introspection of the experience of ignorance during sleep but by means of what might be called "phenomenological retrospection" in the post-sleep state of wakefulness one can have an "immediate" awareness of it. The total elimination of this primal Ignorance by "reduction" is synonymous with "Self-realization" since it reveals the Ātman purified of all "constituted" entities of the phenomenal world, and purified even of the condition (Ignorance) that makes such constitution possible. The causal body (kāraṇa śarīra) is negatable because it is the material cause of phenomenal existence (samsāra), and so belongs to the relative order of things. Īśvara (the Lord) is negatable because He is the efficient as well as the material cause of the universe. Brahman-Ātman alone remains Absolute, transcending cause and effect, the Reality behind all appearances, One without a second, uncaused and uncausing. "Self-realization" is impossible without the total reduction of the gross, subtle, and causal bodies, the waking, dreaming, and sleep states, as well as Īśvara, Jīva, Karma, intellect, mind, and body. All these entities, being products of Māyā, obscure the reality of the Self (Ātman) and keep a man in bondage to phenomenal existence (samsāra).

10. The Consciousness of a Jīvan Mukta:"I Am Brahman"

In both Vivekacūdamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti, Śāṅkarācārya describes the consciousness of a Self-realized man in a series of verses beginning with the phrase "I am". These statements in the first person singular describe the "pure consciousness" of a Jīvan Mukta (one who attains final liberation while still embodied).¹⁰⁶ Since the "realized" man has no consciousness of either body or ego, the "I am" expression must be understood in its implied rather than its literal meaning. Śāṅkarācārya writes in this mode purely out of deference to "unrealized" mortals who, because they are "bound" to primeval Ignorance, always think and speak with reference to their "real" bodies, minds, egos, souls etc. For him, there is but one all-embracing Reality, Brahman-Ātman, with which he is totally identified. All other entities of the empirical world are but "modification" or "limiting adjuncts" (upādhis) superimposed on Brahman under the powerful influence of

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Videha Mukta is one who attains liberation only after decess of the body. Liberation is delayed, owing to the continued operation of Prārabdha Karma. This is the position upheld in the commentaries, provisionally. Jīvan Mukta, on the other hand, attains "release" while still embodied. Liberation is immediate, because of the absence of body-consciousness, and consequent immunity to Karma, whether accumulated in the past (sañcita) through another existence, operative in the present (prārabdha), or reserved potentially to be experienced in future (agāmi). This is the teaching of Vivekacūdamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti as the result of "reducing" prārabdha karma to nullity.

Ignorance (Avidyā) or Cosmic Illusion (Mayā). The "definitions" of Brahman, insofar as they use the language of the "natural attitude" are necessarily negative; but insofar as they "transcend" the thought-forms of relative existence (samsāra), they are positive. The uniqueness of the "I am" statements is directly attributable to the thoroughness of the method of Transcendental Phenomenology used in Vivekacūdamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti. There is nothing comparable in the "major" commentaries of Śāṅkarācārya, because he is limited there by the task of commenting on Scriptures (śruti) and elucidating their meaning.

Now let us examine the "I am" testimony of a Jīvan Mukta directly. In Vivekacūdamāni he begins: "I neither see nor hear nor know anything in this (Realization). I simply exist as the Self, the Eternal Bliss, distinct from everything else." ¹⁰⁷ All finite ideas, all objects of the empirical world cease. Nothing remains but the contentment of Pure Consciousness: "Blessed am I; I have attained the consummation of my life, and am free from the clutches of transmigration; I am the ¹⁰⁸ Essence of Eternal Bliss, I am Infinite..." The consciousness of the world with its round of births and deaths, and mixture

107
Vivekachūdamāni, śloka 485, p.181.

108
Ibid., śloka 488, p.182.

of joy and sorrow is no more. The Jīvan Mukta is free from the law of karma and transmigration. The meaning and essence of his life is realized as Infinite Bliss (nityānanda-svarūpa).

"I am unattached (asaṅgo), I am disembodied (anāṅgo), I am free from the subtle body (alīṅgo), I am undecaying (abhaṅgurah)."
The Jīvan Mukta no longer considers himself as a body or a mind. He is free (in consciousness) from all those conditions that bring on death and corruption: "I am serene, I am infinite, I am taintless, and eternal".

The Jīvan Mukta is free from the delusion of egoistic activity:

"I am not the doer, I am not the experience, I am changeless and beyond activity." This statement sounds ridiculous from the point of view of an embodied soul (Jīva); but from the view-point of a Jīvan Mukta it indicates the ego-less freedom of Self-realization. Of course, unrealized men see his body, and attribute action to him, but he himself sees only the changeless and actionless Ātman: "I am the Essence of Pure Knowledge, I am Absolute (kevalo) and identified with Eternal Good."
He does not identify himself with the activities of the finite body or mind: "I am indeed different from the seer, listener, speaker, doer, and experiencer; I am the Essence of Knowledge...beyond activity...infinite."
The Jīvan Mukta

109 Ibid., sloka 489, p.182.

110 Ibid., sloka 490, p.183.

111 Ibid., sloka 491, p.183.

boldly asserts his identity with Brahman: "I am indeed Brahman, the One without a second, matchless, the Reality that has no beginning, beyond such imaginations (kalpana) as thou or I, or this and that, the Essence of Eternal Bliss,¹¹² the Truth." This verse brings to mind the famous dictum¹¹³ of Jesus: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." I am well aware of the theological interpretation often given for this astonishing statement. But, is it not possible that he too was speaking out of "transcendental consciousness" and claiming for his own Self that Absolute Reality which his contemporaries and later interpreters attributed to the empirical man, Jesus of Nazareth? Whatever may be the case, the Jīvan Mukta is not averse to identifying himself with the Supreme Being,¹¹⁴ Narayana. As Nirguna Brahman, he is the Essence of all the gods: "I am Knowledge Absolute, the Witness¹¹⁵ (Sākṣī) of everything; I have no other Ruler but myself..." He has complete responsibility for himself. He is conscious of nothing greater than his own Self to which can give pay homage.

112
Ibid., śloka 493, p.183.

113
Gospel of John, 14:6.

114
Narayana is a patronymic for the personification of Purusa, often identified with the gods Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa.

115
Vivekachūḍāmaṇi, śloka 494, p.184.

He is conscious of being the Substratum of all superimpositions: "I alone reside as knowledge in all beings, being their internal and external support. I myself am the experiencer (bhoktā) and all that is experienced (bhogyam) - whatever I looked upon as "this" or the not-Self previously. That is, all the experiences of the world prior to Self-realization, whether subjective or objective in nature, are known to be nothing but Self (Ātman). "I am beyond contamination like the sky; I am distinct from things illumined, like the sun; I am always motionless like the ocean." The Jīvan Mukta, though free from the bondage of phenomenal existence, communicates his purity, self-effulgence, immobility and infiniteness by means of entities belonging to empirical consciousness i.e. sky, sun, mountain, ocean etc. "I am verily that Brahman...in which the whole universe from the undifferentiated (Avyakta, Prakṛti, Maya) down to the gross body, appears merely as a shadow." The phenomenal world - in all its manifested and unmanifested forms, is merely an appearance of Brahman-Ātman, just as a shadow in ordinary experience is relative and dependent on a body for its shape and size. The world is a product of

116 Ibid., śloka 495, p.184.

117 Ibid., śloka 499, p.186.

118 Ibid., śloka 512, p.190.

Nescience (Avidyā) or Cosmic Illusion (Mayā). "I am verily that Brahman, the One without a second, which is the support of all (sarvā-dhāram), which illumines all things (sarva-vastu-prakāsam), which has infinite forms (sarvā-kāram), is omnipresent (sarva-gam), devoid of multiplicity (sarva-sunyam)

119
 , , , " The Jīvan Mukta is conscious of being the one substratum (essence) of all entities in the phenomenal world, the one Witness (Sākṣī) knowing them with the light of Eternal Knowledge, though appearing in infinite names and forms due to superimpositions by the mind. "I am verily that Brahman, the One without a second, which transcends the endless differentiations of Maya, which is the inmost essence of all, is beyond the range of (empirical) consciousness, and which is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity, and Bliss Absolute. 120 This verse declares Brahman's essential nature (svarūpa lakṣana), not its indirect attributes (tatastha lakṣana). It is a description of transcendental consciousness (i.e. Nirguṇa Brahman) and not of consciousness of transcendence qualified by attributes (i.e. Saguṇa Brahman). "I am without activity, changeless, without parts...without any other support 121 (nirālambo)." Brahman-Ātman is final, absolute, beyond

119
 Ibid., śloka 513, p.191.

120
 Ibid., śloka 514, p. 191 (Bracket and underlining mine).

121
 Ibid., śloka 515, p.192.

which there is nothing else. "I am the Universal (sarvātmako),
 I am the All (sarvo)"¹²² It is important to recall that
 Śankarācārya, when he uses the formula "I am" does not speak
 egocentrically. Rather, he affirms the identity of his own
 and every other ego's "essence" to be Brahman-Ātman.

In Aparokṣānubhūti we find a parallel series of
 "I am" sayings, having both positive and negative features.
 "I am verily Brahman...by nature absolute Existence, Knowledge,
 and Bliss (Saccidananda-lakṣaṇaḥ)" This very positive statement
 is followed immediately by a negative one: "I am not the body
 which is non-existence itself."¹²³ The negation of the gross
 (sthūla) body is extended to include the subtle (sūkṣma)
 and causal (kāraṇa) bodies. These three are superimpositions,
 products of Ignorance, and belong to the non-Self. "I am
 without any change, without any form, free from all blemish
 and decay."¹²⁴ Transcendental consciousness transcends the flux
 of empirical existence. It is without the finitude, the
 ignorance, the objectifying and "constituting" activity of
 the empirical consciousness. The Jīvan Mukta says "I am
 beyond all comprehension (nirabhasaḥ)."¹²⁵ He cannot be

122
Ibid., śloka 516, p.192.

123
Aparokṣānubhūti, śloka 24, p.15, compare Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 465
 p.174.

124
Ibid., śloka 25, p.15.

125
Ibid., śloka 26, p.16.

comprehended by any thought of the mind, for mind thinks always in terms of duality, of subject and object. The Ātman, being non-dual by nature, is beyond the scope of mind and intellect and language. It is comprehended only in Self-realization. "I am without any attribute or activity. I am eternal, ever free, and imperishable."¹²⁶ Jīvan Mukta is conscious of no attribute at all with respect to its Self, but views all attributes or qualities as limiting adjuncts (upādhi) superimposed by ignorant minds on the one eternal Substratum. He is without a sense of agency or action of any kind, and is therefore not subject to prārabdha karma and the bondage of the body. "I am free from all impurity, I am immovable, unlimited, holy, undecaying, and immortal."¹²⁷

The "I am" statements of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti are not to be found anywhere in the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya, though one may say they are perhaps implied. They belong uniquely to a Jīvan Mukta, one who had attained liberation while still in the body. In my opinion, they belong to the maturest expression of the Advaita philosophy, and are possible only in a context that transcends the orthodox limitation of prārabdha karma, and the practical limitation

¹²⁶ Ibid., śloka 27, p.16.

¹²⁷ Ibid., śloka 28, p.17.

of giving an exposition on Śruti texts. Taken literally, the "I am" sayings can be construed as the mad ravings of a megalomaniac; but, understood in their "implied" meanings, they point beyond mere words and concepts to the reality of "transcendental consciousness". They are utter nonsense to the man who retains the "natural attitude", who assigns reality and permanency to the subjective or objective world of entities. And no less "nonsensical" to him is the question to which the "I am" statements provide the answer, namely, "Who am I?"

The sayings are gems of wisdom to the man who knows his identity with the Supreme Self and wishes to communicate that Reality, that Consciousness, that Bliss, to others yet in bondage. The "I am" statements are enigmatic and problematic for those who look at Reality through the lenses of their own individual body-senses, egos, minds, intellects etc.; but for men who have transcended the finitude, the ignorance, the duality of phenomenal selfhood, and "realized" the Infinite, Eternal, Non-Dual Self (Ātman), they are glorious declarations of spiritual freedom and human consummation.

All statements about Brahman, whether positive or negative, are ultimately indirect (paroksa) whereas the intuitional knowledge of Self in Samādhi is direct (aparoksa). The instruction of Gurus and Śrutis, though valuable, are only aids to an aspirant for direct and immediate Realization

(Aparoksa-anubhūti). Each man should stand "face to face"
 128
 (sammukham) with Ātman.

11 Some General Statements About
Brahman-Ātman by a Jīvan Mukta

We shall conclude this chapter by examining some general statements about Ātman in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣanubhūti. They are not cast in the familiar "I am" formula of the last few pages, but do reflect the transcendental consciousness of "Self-realization". "Ātman is all consciousness (jñāna-
 129
mayah)". The Self knows itself as Pure Consciousness, nothing more, nothing less. All other "objects" of the phenomenal universe are relative to it, and exist by it. "Ātman is the Illuminator (prakāśakah)".
 130 It shines the light of consciousness on all entities, whether internal or external, whether immanent or transcendent. "The luminosity
 131
 of Ātman consists in the manifestation of all objects".

128
Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, śloka 477, p.178.

129
Aparokṣanubhūti, śloka 19, p.12.

130
Ibid., śloka 20, p.12.

131
Ibid., śloka 22, p.13.

The light of Self is unlike any other light. It is omni-present and limited by nothing. Its presence as consciousness in man enables him to comprehend everything from the gods to the smallest molecule of matter. Atman is "the Self-effulgent Witness of everything, which has buddhi for its seat."¹³² The self "witnesses" the phenomenal world in its entirety, because it is the "essence" or substratum of man's intellect and mind. "Atman is eternal, since it is Existence itself..."¹³³ The phenomenal world's "existence" is relative, perishable' but the Self's existence is absolute, imperishable. The Self alone is the Being (Existence) of all beings (existent entities). Brahman is "the Essence of Existence, Knowledge, and Eternal Bliss".¹³⁴ Pure Consciousness exists without the need of anything else for its "enjoyment". The knower of Brahman is "satisfied with undiluted constant Bliss, he is neither grieved nor elated by sense-objects, is neither attached nor averse to them, but always disports with the Self and takes pleasure therein."¹³⁵ Having realized his identity with the Infinite Bliss, there is "cessation (nivṛttih) of the objective world, extreme satisfaction (parama trptis), and matchless bliss."¹³⁶ The annihilation of the phenomenal

¹³² Vivekachudāmani, śloka 380, p.144.

¹³³ Aparokshanubhūti, śloka 21, p.13.

¹³⁴ Vivekachudāmani, śloka 465, p.174.

¹³⁵ Ibid., śloka 536, p.199.

¹³⁶ Ibid, Śloka 420, p.159.

world (in consciousness) destroys all desires and all performance of works. A man of realization is peaceful and contented with Reality like " a child (who) plays with its toys forgetting hunger and bodily pains."¹³⁷ He is oblivious to place, time, posture, moral disciplines, objects of meditation etc. He no longer feels the need to go on pilgrimages to holy places, to pray at stated hours, to assume yogic postures, to undergo physical and mental disciplines, to meditate on images.¹³⁸ These are the "means" used by the "unrealized"; but the "realized" man enjoys the sovereign independence (svarājya-samrajya) of the Self.¹³⁹ As Ātman, he "bestows meaning" on the Vedas, the Purānas, and other Śrutis.¹⁴⁰ He no longer depends on other commentators and authorities for the correct interpretations. "The Self is Brahma, the Self is Visnu, the Self is Indra, the Self is Siva.... Nothing exists except the Self."¹⁴¹ Even the transcendent gods are not outside the sovereignty of the transcendental Self, since they are the creations and projections of the buddhi. Their continued reality would violate the principle of non-duality. "One should behold the Ātman, the Indivisible and Infinite, free from all limiting adjuncts such as body, organs, Pranas, manas, and egoism,...

¹³⁷ Ibid., śloka 537, p.200.

¹³⁸ Ibid., śloka 529, p.197.

¹³⁹ Ibid., śloka 376, p.142, and 517, p.192.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., śloka 534, p.199.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., śloka 388, p.147.

like the infinite sky."¹⁴² The infinite sky sometimes appears full of clouds of various shapes and sizes, even as the Infinite Self appears in a variety of manifestations through Ignorance: "The limiting adjuncts from Brahmā down to a clump of grass are all wholly unreal. Therefore one should realize one's own Infinite Self as the only Principle."¹⁴³ In transcendental consciousness the ego-sense loses its reality, whether in reference to one's self or another; "It is the deluded man who talks of "thou" and "I", as an effect of the wine of Maya."¹⁴⁴ The ego is "reduced" to impotence once we realize its essence or substratum to be the Self. This usually happens in ascending levels of consciousness: "The immutable Atman, the substratum of the ego...is the Purusha, the Isvara (the Lord of all), the Self of all; it is present in every form and yet transcends them all."¹⁴⁵ All illusions require a substratum of pure consciousness for their appearance. "Brahman alone is the substratum of all varieties of names, forms, and actions."¹⁴⁶ Brahman-Atman is the substratum of all experience (sakala-anubhūti) though it transcends the range of empirical knowledge.¹⁴⁷ It is impossible to describe the Self in

¹⁴² Ibid., sloka 384, p.145.

¹⁴³ Ibid., sloka 386, p.146.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., sloka 391, p.148.

¹⁴⁵ Aparokshanubhūti, sloka 40, p.23.

¹⁴⁶ Vivekachudamani, sloka 50, p.29.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., sloka 535, p.199.

ordinary language. It is impossible, furthermore, to conceive it with the mind. The mind in contact with the Self melts like a hailstone falling and merging in the ocean.¹⁴⁸ A man of realization knows, through Samādhi, the Infinite Brahman as "the positive Entity, which precludes all negations, which resembles the placid ocean and is without a name... which is eternal, pacified and One."¹⁴⁹ Though it appears at the end of a series of reductions, though it is unthinkable by the mind, though it is indescribable in words, though it transcends empirical existence, yet it is the Real, the Self of every being, the Self of everything that is. Tat tvam asi (That thou art)!

148
Ibid., śloka 482, p.180

149
Ibid., śloka 410, p.155.

CONCLUSION

There is insufficient evidence at the present time to either "prove" or "disprove" the tradition that attributes Vivekacūdamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti to Śāṅkarācārya's authorship. I have tried to show in Appendix 2 that Daniel Ingall's argument against the tradition, based on internal evidence of a philosophical nature, is not convincing. The alleged difference between Śāṅkarācārya and Gauḍapāda on the status of the waking and dreaming states, as well as the alleged absence of the category of "indescribable" (anirvacanīya) in reference to the empirical world in Śāṅkarācārya's philosophy, may be dismissed. Both arguments, it seems to me, are based ultimately on a misunderstanding of the orthodox methodology of Advaita Vedānta, namely, "deliberate superimposition and subsequent rescission" (adhyāropa-apavāda). I find no basic disagreement between Gauḍapāda and Śāṅkarācārya, both of whom use the phenomenological method of approach to the transcendental Self (Ātman). Nor do I find any good reason to deny the tradition that attributes Vivekacūdamāni and Aparokṣānubhūti to Śāṅkarācārya.

This thesis has been a sustained effort to show that Śāṅkarācārya used the method of transcendental phenomenology in his major and minor works alike. His methodology is seen more unequivocally in minor works like Vivekacūdamāni

and Aparoksānubhūti than in the commentaries. Several reasons for this may be suggested. He is consciously and deliberately writing instruction (upadeśa) to show his followers the way to Self-realization. Avowedly, the treatment keeps clear of the polemical style of prima facie view (pūrva pakṣa) and final truth (śiddhānta). The simplicity of his style and vividness of his metaphors suggest that he is writing for laymen, who are relatively unsophisticated in learning. In these original works, he is free from the onerous task of commenting on Śruti with the object of removing apparent contradictions, or of defending his interpretations against the attacks of opposing schools. It is doubtful whether Śāṅkarācārya could have distilled so much wisdom in so few words until a relatively late and mature period of his career - writings inculcating teaching (upadeśa-grantha) being considered more mature than polemical writings (vādagrantha). There are verses that summarize briefly and profoundly whole passages of the Upanisads, Brahma Sūtras, and Bhagavad-Gītā. Even to-day, in the Śāṅkara monasteries (maths) of India, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi is studied and regarded as one of the best introductions to his major works on Vedānta.

Śāṅkarācārya's philosophy proceeds by the method of "phenomenological reduction". i.e. the systematic and radical negation of all empirical entities. In Chapter Two we saw

him superimposing the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states as if real. His next step was to describe the characteristics of the states as phenomena in consciousness. His purpose was to show the transitory nature of these states and to carry out their reduction.

In Chapter Three the same basic procedure was followed. Śankarācārya enumerated, described, and compared the five sheaths (kośas) "covering" the Self - the material (annamaya), the vital (pranamaya), the mental (manomaya), the knowledge (vijñānamaya) and the bliss (ānandamaya) sheaths. At first the five sheaths were described as if real entities enclosed one within the other, and ranging from gross to subtle. Always the description was carried out to impugn the permanency or the eternality of the sheaths, and ultimately, to establish them as products of Ignorance (avidyā). The central role of the mind in creating the bondage of phenomenal existence as well as in winning liberation from it, was highlighted. The false identification of the self with body, or mind, or ego, was viewed as the main obstacle to "realization" of the transcendental Self or pure Consciousness that lies concealed in all empirical consciousness and existence. We noted that the microcosm-macrocosm homologue so prominent in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, although implied, is less prominent in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Aparokṣānubhūti because of the emphasis on Self-realization.

In Chapter Four we witnessed Śaṅkarācārya's radical "reduction" of entities in empirical consciousness - body, mind, intellect, egoity, agency and action, prārabdha karma, Īśvara and Jīva, and the "causal body". The elimination of prārabdha karma prepared the way for the unique series of first-person singular statements by a Jīvan Mukta, speaking out of "transcendental consciousness". This bold cancellation of prārabdha karma, not quite paralleled in the major commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya, and a seeming departure from orthodoxy, raises a legitimate doubt about the tradition attributing Vivekacūḍāmani to Śaṅkarācārya. I prefer, however, to think that Śaṅkarācārya, by a more systematic application of the method of transcendental phenomenology in these independent works, is able to reach conclusions of a more radical or ultimate nature. It is startling to read his summary statement that "bondage and liberation, which are conjured up by Māyā, do not really exist in the Atman" and that "there is neither death nor birth, neither a bound nor a struggling soul, neither a seeker after liberation nor a liberated one - this is the ultimate truth."¹ Yet this conclusion is entirely consistent with the methodology adopted from the beginning.

¹ Vivekacūḍāmani, Śloka 569, p.211, and 574, p.213.

This thesis did not set out to "compare" Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta with Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology, though some interesting convergences have been noted. I have preferred to use Husserl's philosophy as a "model" phenomenology, not because it is the only possible one, or even the best one, but because Husserl is generally acknowledged in the West to be the founder of modern Phenomenology. His method of epoché (suspension of the "natural attitude"), though it "brackets" the natural world in order to focus attention on consciousness itself, does not aim at the elimination of world-consciousness. It retains the world as a "constituted" entity in consciousness, and views the nature of consciousness as "intentional". Husserl's aim seems to be to discover the source of apodictic certainty in knowledge, rather than to achieve any kind of "liberation" from the world of relative existence. Śaṅkarācārya, on the other hand, begins his work in a religious milieu where the primary concern is mokṣa or "liberation" from the bondage of worldly existence (samsāra), incessant rebirth (punar-janmaḥ) and transmigration. Of course, he reinterprets these religious categories in a phenomenological way, and makes the cancellation or "reduction" of the mind's Ignorance-structure fundamental to "Self-realization". The phenomenal world is neither doubted nor denied. It is retained, but only as a relative existence devoid of ultimate reality.

The transcendental Self (Ātman) alone is Reality. The world is significant but only as something to be transcended. It is the manifestation of Māyā, that inscrutable power of Brahman that makes things appear differently from what they really are. There is no interest here in "constituting" the world through "intentionality". Śāṅkarācārya is intent on eliminating the illusion of "objectivity" so that a man can, while still embodied, enjoy the Absolute Bliss of Brahman-Ātman unimpeded by the constructions of the mind. Śāṅkarācārya's main thrust is one-way: from the realm of empirical existence to transcendental consciousness and reality. Husserl's thrust is two-way: first, a search for the apodictic foundation of knowledge itself; second, a return to the world through "constitutive intentionality". The difference is one of emphasis and should not cause us to overlook the common interest of both men in self-exploration and self-transcendence. It is perhaps arguable that Śāṅkarācārya's negative evaluation of the world enhanced his positive evaluation of the transcendental Self, and therefore encouraged his followers to adopt the attitude of renunciation (Vairāgya) more resolutely and uncompromisingly.

Husserl's Transcendental Ego, though it functions as the universal "essence" of all individual egos through the technique of the "eidetic" reduction, is not exactly

equivalent to Śaṅkarācārya's Self (Ātman). Its "involvement" in mundane existence through the concept of "constitutive intentionality" gives it a world-orientation that is foreign to Śaṅkarācārya's Ātman. The latter "constitutes" nothing in the world because to do so would violate the principle of non-dualism (advaita). One "realizes" the Self by negating the false superimpositions of the mind. The world is a product of beginningless Ignorance (Avidyā), and has no reality as an independent entity. But when viewed as a cosmic illusion (māyā) it is the "appearance" of Brahman. Husserl's Transcendental Ego with its propensity for "constitution" is more akin to Śaṅkarācārya's Witness-Consciousness (Saksi) though the former is active and the latter is of the nature of a passive observer. No easy identification of the Transcendental Ego and Ātman is possible, because the utter quality-less (nir-guṇa) nature of Brahman-Ātman puts it in a category by itself. It is best described in negative adjectives as non-dual, non-temporal, non-moving, non-acting, etc. It is, indeed, transempirical, transcendental, the "Essence" of everything that appears in phenomenal existence. It is Reality itself.

Though it fails in certain respects to approach the radicality of Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta, Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology would appear to me to be one of the closest approximations to it in modern Western

philosophy. The procedure of "phenomenological reduction" is common to both, though Husserl stops short of reducing the phenomenal world to unreality. The turning of attention away from the world of "objects" to transcendental consciousness is common to both, though Husserl does it on a temporary and methodological basis to discover the foundation of knowledge whereas Śaṅkarācārya does it as a permanent "realization" of his identity with Brahman-Ātman which is Knowledge Itself. The use of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology can be a valuable aid to Western man in understanding some of the nuances of Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta, provided one does not make the mistake of fully identifying the two philosophies which belong to widely divergent milieus.

APPENDIX ONE

Śaṅkarācārya, the Man and His Works.

Śaṅkarācārya, one of the greatest if not the greatest philosopher of India, was born of a Brahman family belonging to the Nambudiri sect at Kaladi, six miles from Alwaye, in present-day Kerala State, on the Malabar coast of India. The generally accepted date of his birth is 788 A. D. and of his death is 820 A. D.¹ He is believed to have died prematurely at the age of thirty-two. According to tradition, he was the only son of Śivaguru who died while Śaṅkara was still young. At the age of eight he is said to have "devoured" with delight all the Vedas. He begged his mother's permission to become a sannyāsin (wandering, ascetic monk) and received it on one condition : that he return at her death to perform her funeral rites. Śaṅkara soon became a devoted pupil of Govinda Bhagavatpāda, a renowned guru (religious teacher) residing on the banks of the Narmada River. Govinda was, in all probability,

1

The dates are far from conclusive. Suryanarayana Sastri gives some evidence for and against: "An inscription of Cambodia refers to one Sivasoma, the pupil of Bhagavan Sankara, and the preceptor of Indravarman (878-887 A. D.); he was also the grandson of Jayavarman's maternal uncle, known to have lived from 802 to 869 A. D. There is no improbability in Sivasoma having been a pupil...but there is no conclusiveness since the successors of Sankara in the various pontificates were also known as Sankara-Acharyas.... Other dates claiming greater or lesser probability range from 400 A. D. to 805 A. D. The suggestion by Telang would place Sankara in the seventh century, if not earlier; for in the course of his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras (IV.ii.5) Sankara refers to the cities of Srughna and Pataliputra; the latter reference

a pupil of Gaudapāda, the author of the Māṇḍūkya Kārikas, an early Advaitin commentary on the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad. That would make Gaudapāda, who preceded Śāṅkarācārya by about three hundred years, his teacher's teacher (parama-guru).

After finishing his instruction under Govinda, Śāṅkarācārya travelled throughout India teaching the Advaita philosophy, writing a number of commentaries, and disputing with adversaries - primarily the Buddhists, Mīmāṃsakas and Naiyāyikas. He is usually credited with the defeat of Buddhism in India. He is also believed to have established at least four monasteries (maths) in India - the Śringeri at Mysore, the Govardham at Puri, Orissa, the Dvaraka at Kathiawar, and the Badrinath in the Himalayas. At Benares, one of his earliest disciples was Padmapāda who later wrote the commentary called Pāncapādika, based on Śāṅkarācārya's commentary on the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya. Another disciple was Suresvara, who wrote a commentary on Śāṅkara's Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya. Śāṅkarācārya is alleged to have met Vyasa, author of the Brahma Sūtras, at Benares, and to have disputed endlessly with him until Padmapāda intervened. The story goes that Vyasa finally acknowledged the correctness of Śāṅkarācārya's position and gave him permission to write commentaries.

would have been meaningless after that city had been destroyed by river erosion, about 750 A. D. There is also reference to a Purnavarman, probably well-known king of the period; such a king is mentioned by Hieuen Tsiang, as having ruled about 590 A. D. Probably, Sankara was a contemporary. The trouble with such arguments is that they are so inconclusive. "Purnavarman" may have denoted a particular king or may have been used indifferently just as one says, Tom, Dick or Harry..." S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, The Life and Teachings of Śāṅkarācārya (Third Ed.) Madras: G. A. Natesan and Co., no date, p.4.

The last days of Śāṅkarācārya are shrouded in mystery. Tradition is fairly unanimous about his visit to Nepal and Kashmir. He is believed to have died in the Himalayas at Kedārmāth. The best known biography of Śāṅkarācārya is the Digvijaya attributed to Mādhava Vidarānya, though its mythical elements and historical inaccuracies discredit it in the eyes of modern scholarship.²

Dr. Radhakrishnan, in summarizing the distinctive 'flavour' of Śāṅkarācārya's life writes:

The life of Śāṅkara makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess

²A further note on dating from S. S. Sastri may be of interest to the reader:

"It has been said that the upper and lower limits at least are fairly fixed. Sankara came after Bhartrihari, who, according to I-Tsing, lived between 600 and 650 A.D.; and he must have preceded by a reasonable interval, Vachaspati Misra, who wrote his commentary, the Bhamati, on Sankara's Sutra-bhasya; Vachaspati's date is fixed about 841 A. D.

There is reason to think that Kumarila Bhatta, a stalwart exponent of the Mimamsa school of philosophy, lived in the latter half of the seventh century A. D. Sankara reveals himself as a critic of both of the schools of Mimamsa, - that of Bhatta as well as that of Prabhakara. Mandana Misra is also a critic of both schools, though reputed to have been the pupil of Kumarila. And in some places in the Brahma-siddhi, an Advaita work of Mandana's, Sankara's views seem to be presupposed and criticised, notably in the discussion of the value of ritual observances in securing release and in the conception of release even while embodied (jivanmukti). This kind of pupil-critic-criticised relation seems best to fit in with the hypothesis that Kumarila, Mandana and Sankara were contemporaries, and that Sankara, like Kumarila, belonged to the latter half of the seventh century A. D. Attractive as it is, this suggestion (of Dr. T. R. Chintamani) cannot yet command final acceptance." S. S. Sastri, op. cit., p.6-7.

that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debater; another regards him as a shrewd political genius, attempting to impress on the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradictions of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth, he is the mystic who declares that we are all greater than we know. There have been few minds more universal than his.³

Scholars are virtually unanimous in allowing that Śāṅkarācārya wrote commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras, the Bhagavad-Gītā, and on ten or eleven of the principal Upanisads viz. Kena, Katha, Īśa, Prasna, Mundaka, Māndūkyā, Chāndogya, Brhadāranyaka, Aitareya, and Taittirīya Upanisads. There is less unanimity about his authorship of commentaries on Śvetāsvatara, Maitrayāni Upanisads and on Gaudapāda's Māndūkyopaniṣad Kārikās.⁴ Upadeśasahasrī and Vivekacūḍāmaṇi are attributed to him and certainly reflect his philosophical position. Among other minor works attributed to him are: Āptavajrasūci, Ātmabodha, Mohamudgara, Daśaślokī, and Aparoksānubhūti. In addition, there are some popular hymns to the different forms of

3

S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, New York: The MacMillan Company; London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1923. p.450.

4

S. S. Sastri, op. cit., p. 25.

Godhead: Daksināmūrti Stotra, Harimide Stotra, Anandalaharī,
 and Saundaryalaharī.⁵ Of the minor works, (prakaranas)
 attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, Dr. Belvalkar admits as genuine
 only a few: Aparoksānubhūti, Upadeśasahasrī, Pañcīkarana-
prakriya, and Sataśloki. The Tantric works, Saundaryalaharī
 and Prapañcasara are dismissed as spurious by Dr. Belvalkar
 in spite of a strong tradition.⁶ Paul Hacker opines that
 all of Śaṅkarācārya's independent writings are collected
 in the twenty-two Prakaranas of Upadeśasahasrī, and that the
 others are spurious. He admits the commentary on Gaudapāda's
Kārikās as genuine along with the commentary on Māṇḍūkya
Upaniṣad.⁷

5

S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p.450.

6

Sastri, op. cit., p.25.

7

Paul Hacker, "Sankara der Yogin und Sankara der Advaitin"
 in Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens,
 Band XII-XIII, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968-9, p.147. (English).

APPENDIX 2

REFUTATION OF DANIEL INGALL'S THEORY AGAINST ŚANKARA'S AUTHORSHIP OF VIVEKACŪDĀMANI

Daniel H.H. Ingalls in his article, "The Study of Śaṅkarācārya" opines that Śaṅkara did not write Vivekacūdamani. He gives two reasons based on internal evidence, the first of which is that: "The author of the Viveka-cūdamani makes an absolute equation of the waking and dream states after the fashion of Gaudapāda. Śaṅkāra may liken the two to each other, but he is careful to distinguish them"¹ I assume that Ingalls is referring to those verses where Śaṅkara deals with the three states of mind - waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep - for a phenomenological analysis of the intervals of experience. The relevant verse (sloka) reads as follows:

In dreams, when there is no actual contact with the external world, the mind alone creates the whole universe consisting of the experiencer etc. Similarly, in the waking state also, there is no difference. Therefore all this (phenomenal universe) is the projection of the mind.²

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Daniel H.H. Ingalls, "The Study of Śaṅkarācārya", art. in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, XXXI, Poona: 1953, p.7

2

Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekacūdamani, Trans. Swami Madhavananda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970, sloka 170, p.66.

Now it is a fact of experience that, when we dream, the mind is out of contact with objects, yet is able to project or create a world involving subjects, objects, and their relationships. To the dreamer, it all seems very real indeed.

Śaṅkara concludes that the phenomenal universe is projected, by the mind, not only during dreams, but also in the waking state. Both states of consciousness, though factual, are unreal when viewed from the perspective of the absolute Self. There is virtually no difference between them. Ingalls fastens on the phrase "there is no difference" and concludes that such an "absolute equation" of the waking and dream states is very atypical of Śaṅkara. The argument fails to convince me. It leaves out of account Śaṅkarācārya's method of "deliberate superimposition" (adhyāropa) and subsequent "rescission" (apavāda). At one stage, out of methodological and pedagogical considerations, he may deliberately impute the difference between waking and dreaming states as a concession to the empirical mode of thinking. But it is perfectly consistent with his methodology, at a later stage, to rescind or annul the previous superimposition for the purpose of "transcending" the empirical mode and for arriving at the absolute or transcendental point of view. We have an example of "rescission" in verse 170. The phenomenological method of reduction leads to a transcendental result: realization of Self (Ātman). There is no good reason,

therefore, to reject Śaṅkarācārya's authorship on the basis of this argument.

Ingalls has another reason, which he feels is crucial:

Again, and most decisive of all, the Viveka-cūḍāmani accepts the classical theory of the three truth values, the existent, the non-existent and that which is anirvacanīya, indescribable as being either existent or non-existent. The workaday world according to the classical theory is anirvacanīya.... Now, Paul Hacker has pointed out that when Samkara uses the word anirvacanīya, he uses it in a sense quite different from that of the classical theory. He uses the term in connection with his theory of creation. Before creation primary matter, which he calls nāmarūpe, was in a state of anirvacanīyatva. It was an indistinguishable mass - tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīya, a mass in which one could describe nothing as being a this or a that. There is no implication here as to the state of its existence.³

Earlier in the same article, Ingalls opines that Śaṅkarācārya authored the Upadeśasahasri of which the main features are:

1. disinterest in the workaday world; 2. keen interest in release (mumukṣutva). These features of timelessness

(kūtāstha-nīyatva) he considers to be consistent with

Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy. But, as indicated above, he thinks

the classical three-truth theory with its category of anirvacanīyatva ("indescribable as being either existent or non-existent") gives the empirical world more reality or value

than Śaṅkarācārya would have allowed. I submit that this is

a misunderstanding of Śaṅkarācārya's methodology, and may not be used as an argument against his authorship of

Vivekacūḍāmani.

Vivekacūḍāmani.

³. Ingalls, op. cit., p.7.

Let us look at the internal evidence from another point of view. It is certainly true that the classical three-truth theory is operative in Vivekācūḍamāni. On first appearance, it seems to support a simple two-truth theory that discriminates between Brahman as the Real and the world as the unreal; but, on closer examination, we find the world of relative existence (samsāra) described as the effect of nescience (avidyā) and, therefore, as neither existent (Being) nor non-existent (absolute non-Being) but as an "indescribable" (anirvacanīya) third entity:

Avidyā (Nescience) or Māyā, called also the Undifferentiated, is the power of the Lord. She is without beginning is made up of the three gunas and is superior to the effects (as their cause).... It is She who brings forth this whole universe.

She is neither existent nor non-existent nor partaking of both characters; neither composed of parts nor an indivisible whole nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words.

Is it possible that Ingalls, in his concern to use a philosophical method that affirms the reality of historical change (pariṇāmi nityatva) misses the subtle way Śaṅkarācārya discriminates between the relative or dependent reality of phenomenal existence (samsāra) and the ultimate or independent Reality called Brahman-Ātman? The three-truth theory is perfectly consistent, it seems to me, with his method of

⁴, Śaṅkarācārya, op. cit., sloka 109, p.39.

adhyāropāvāda and assigns the world a value that is neither Being nor non-Being, but a relative existence to be transcended in the interests of achieving Self-realization.

The idea derived from Paul Hacker that Śaṅkarācārya applied the category of indescribability (anirvacanīyatva) to primary matter before the existence of the phenomenal world does not in any way support Ingall's argument. It supports, in fact, my argument that Śaṅkarācārya subscribed to the orthodox three-truth theory of existence, non-existence, and a middle term "indescribable" as either (anirvacanīyatva). In terms of cosmology, the consistent application of this formula places the entire cosmos, including matter, under the middle term. It is indescribable as either existence (Being, Brahman-Ātman) or non-existence (Non-Being, Nothing) but hovers between them as the product of primal nescience (avidyā) or cosmic illusion (māyā). Since the latter is described as the "power of the Lord", it is but an "appearance". The ambiguity of empirical existence is cleared up only when man, by intuitional knowledge of the Self (Ātman), sees through the delusion of ignorance (avidyā) to the Absolute. The distortion is due entirely to our lack of real Knowledge:

We do not want to suggest that the error of our knowledge is absolute. There is no such thing as absolutely erroneous knowledge. Error always hangs about a core of truth. We misperceive something; and this something is present in our perception together with the erroneous distortion that we add to it.... In fact, truth peers at

us through erroneous appearance. It is never wholly hidden. Only we fail to recognize it.⁵

Enough has been said to establish the fact that Ingalls, on the basis of internal philosophical evidence, has not been able to disprove the tradition asserting that Śaṅkarācārya was the author of Vivekacūḍāmaṇi.

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G.R. Malkani, Metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta, Amalner: Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1961, p.149.

GLOSSARY

<u>Acarya</u>	("knowing and teaching the <u>ācara</u> ", rules, customs); a spiritual guide or teacher; a title affixed to the name of learned Brahmans and great teachers, e.g. <u>Śaṅkara + ācārya = Śaṅkarācārya</u>
<u>Advaita</u>	(neg. prefix a + dvaita, dualism); non-dualism, the doctrine that only the Ultimate (principle) has real existence, all phenomenal existence and plurality is an illusion (<u>māyā</u>). The school of <u>Vedānta</u> established by <u>Śaṅkarācārya</u> .
<u>Adhyāsa</u>	superimposition; specially what is not real on the Real; erroneous predication of qualities and attributes on quality-less <u>Brahman</u> .
<u>Agami karma</u>	deeds or actions yet to be performed in future.
<u>Ahaṁkāra</u>	(<u>aham</u> , I and <u>kāra</u> , making, action, from root <u>kār</u> , to do, make) The individuating principle, responsible for the limitations, divisions, and variety in the manifested world; the ego, a self-conscious entity.
<u>Ajñāna</u>	(neg. prefix a + <u>jñāna</u> , knowledge); ignorance, especially ignorance of the ultimate Reality, <u>Brahman-Atman</u> .
<u>Akāśa</u>	(prep <u>ā</u> + <u>kaśa</u> , appearance; from root <u>kāś</u> , to shine, appear); ether, space
<u>Ananda</u>	Absolute Bliss, one of the three words used to describe the essence of the Ultimate Reality, <u>Brahman</u> .
<u>Anna-maya kośa</u>	The material sheath; one of the covering of the Self; the gross body.

<u>Anandamaya kośa</u>	bliss sheath; one of the five sheaths or coverings of the Self to be phenomenologically "reduced" or negated; considered to be the most subtle and inward sheath, and "nearest" the Self.
<u>Anirvacanīya</u>	(<u>fut. part.</u> not to be defined); indefinable, a term applied to the whole phenomenal universe appearing by the power of <u>māyā</u> , or cosmic illusion; neither real (<u>sat</u>) nor unreal (<u>asat</u>)
<u>Antahkarana</u>	(<u>antar</u> internal + <u>karana</u> sense-organ); the internal organ; mind in a collective sense, including intelligence (<u>buddhi</u>), ego (<u>ahaṁkāra</u>), mind (<u>manas</u>), and memory (<u>citta</u>).
<u>Aparoksa</u>	(neg. prefix <u>a</u> + <u>parokṣa</u> , invisible, imperceptible, unintelligible); immediate, visible, perceptible, intelligible.
<u>Aparokṣānubhūti</u>	(<u>aparoksa</u> + <u>anubhūti</u> , perception, apprehension); direct, immediate apprehension by intuition.
<u>Asana</u>	(from root <u>ās</u> , to sit); sitting, posture; one of the stages in the practice of <u>Yoga</u> .
<u>Asat</u>	(neg. Prefix <u>a</u> + <u>sat</u> existent); non-being
<u>Ātman</u>	The Supreme Self or Soul; with small <u>ā</u> it refers to the individual soul; but in <u>Advaita</u> the "essence" of the individual soul is <u>Ātman</u> , so there is no distinction.
<u>Āvarana-śakti, Āvṛti</u>	The veiling power of <u>Māyā</u> ; in <u>Sāṁkhya</u> , attributed to <u>tamas</u> , a constituent or "quality" of <u>Prakṛti</u> ; in <u>Vedānta</u> , a phenomenological factor in the structure of mind itself.
<u>Avidyā</u>	(neg. prefix <u>a</u> + <u>vidyā</u> , knowledge, from root <u>vid</u> , to know); primordial ignorance, manifested at the cosmic and individual levels.
<u>Avyaktam</u>	(pp. not manifested); the Unmanifested; in <u>Sāṁkhya</u> primordial matter; in <u>Vedānta</u> , some as <u>Māyā</u> .
<u>Bhāṣya</u>	(from root <u>bhās</u> , to speak, talk, say); a commentary or explanatory work; all <u>Sankaracarya</u> 's commentaries are known as <u>bhāṣyas</u> i.e. <u>Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya</u> .

<u>Bhedābheda</u>	(bheda, difference, cleavage + non-difference abheda); different, yet not different; dualism (bheda) and non-dualism (abheda) in combination. A school of <u>Vedānta</u> , opposed to <u>Advaita</u> .
<u>Brahmā</u>	name of one of the gods of the Hindu trinity or Trimurthi; the Creator god. The others are <u>Viṣṇu</u> , the preserver, and <u>Śiva</u> the destroyer.
<u>Brahman</u>	(root brh, to grow, increase, expand) The Self-existent, the Absolute, the Eternal, Universal Spirit; not an object of worship but of intuitive knowledge; universal Being, Consciousness, Bliss.
<u>Brahmasūtra</u>	(compound of <u>Brahmā</u> + <u>sūtra</u> , aphorism); another name for the <u>Vedāntasūtra</u> , so called because it is a series of aphorisms about the Universal Spirit, also called <u>Uttara Mīmāṃsā</u> : Author, <u>Badarayana</u>
<u>Buddhi</u>	(from root budh, to wake up, recover consciousness); intelligence, power of forming conceptions and notions; power of the mind to discern, judge, comprehend, apprehend, understand; a higher faculty, than mind (<u>manas</u>) belonging to the <u>Vijñānamaya kośa</u> .
<u>Cit</u>	(from root cit, to know, perceive); universal consciousness; in <u>Advaita</u> , used to describe <u>Brahman</u> - <u>Ātman</u> , along with <u>Sat</u> (Being, Existence) and <u>Ananda</u> (Bliss)
<u>Citta</u>	memory; one aspect of the knowledge sheath.
<u>Dhyāna</u>	from root dhvai, to think of, consider, meditate on
<u>Dikvijaya</u>	The name of a well-known biography of Śaṅkarācārya by <u>Madhava Vidvāranya</u> ; somewhat fanciful & unreliable from the point of view of chronology.
<u>Dvaita</u>	(from dvi, two + suffix ta); dualism, doctrine advocated by <u>Madhva</u> , that denies the Ultimate Principle as cause of the world, contends that soul is a separate principle with an independent existence of its own.
<u>Dama</u>	restraint of the external sense organs
<u>Guna</u>	usually translated "quality" or "attribute"; translated in this thesis as "constituent"; in <u>Sāṅkhya</u> philosophy, there are three <u>gunas</u> or constituents of primordial Matter (<u>Prakṛti</u>): <u>śaitva</u> , <u>rajas</u> and <u>tanas</u> ; in Śaṅkara <u>Vedānta</u> , these are reinterpreted as phenomenological entities in consciousness.

<u>Guru</u>	a spiritual teacher
<u>Indriyas</u>	sense-organs; they cause "attachment" to the phenomend world
<u>Īsvara</u>	(from root <u>is</u> , to be master, to command, posses, dispose); the Lord, Supreme Deity, personal god.
<u>Jāgarastha-avasthā</u>	the waking state; one of the three states of consciousness
<u>Jīva</u>	(from <u>jiv</u> , to live) the individual soul as distinguished from the Universal Soul or Self; in <u>Saṅkara Advaita</u> , a product of Ignorance.
<u>Jivanmukta</u>	a man who enjoys "liberation" while yet embodied; he is freed from the effects of <u>Prārabdhā Karma</u> .
<u>Jñāna</u>	(from <u>jñā</u> , to know) the knowledge of Reality derived from meditation on and identification with the Supreme Spirit.
<u>Jñānin</u>	One who has knowledge or "realization", more specifically one who has "realized" his identity with <u>Atman</u> ; hence, a knower of <u>Brahman</u> .
<u>Jñāna Yoga</u>	The union with the Absolute by the way of knowledge.
<u>Karma</u>	Action; accusative of action; duty; the law of <u>Karma</u> is the moral law of cause and effect.
<u>Karma Yoga</u>	The way of union with the Absolute through works.
<u>Karta</u>	Agent, doer.
<u>Kārika</u>	a short exegetical elucidation.
<u>Ksetra</u>	(Lit. the field); used By <u>Saṅkara</u> to indicate the body as the receiver of objective knowledge.
<u>Ksetrajña</u>	The subject; knower of the "field" or of objectivity.
<u>Laksana</u>	The implied meaning
<u>Linga śarīra</u>	Same as <u>Sūksma śarīra</u> , subtle body
<u>Manas</u>	(from root <u>man</u> to think, believe, imagine); mind; in a wider sense, it means all the mental powers, including intellect, understanding, conscience, will; in limited sense, capacity for reflection, inference, doubt, cognition, memory, desire, etc.

<u>Manomaya kośa</u>	The <u>mental</u> sheath, one of the five sheaths enclosing the <u>Atman</u> and concealing it.
<u>Māva</u>	the veiling force of Nature, displaying duality, and thus producing error and illusion; it is postulated to account for <u>all</u> phenomena; In <u>Vedānta</u> , it is said to be neither real nor unreal but <u>indescribable</u> (<u>anirvacanīya</u>); beginningless.
<u>Moksa</u>	(from <u>moks</u> , desiderative of root <u>muc</u> , to set loose, to free, release); emancipation, liberation, release from worldly existence.
<u>Mukta</u>	(perf. pass. part of root <u>muc</u>); one who is liberated, released, emancipated from relative or phenomenal existence.
<u>Mukti</u>	final liberation or emancipation, freedom from the bondage of <u>Karma</u> and <u>samsara</u> .
<u>Mumuksu</u>	(from desiderative of root <u>muc</u>); one who is eager for liberation from mundane existence.
<u>Mumuksutva</u>	(from <u>mumuksu</u> + <u>tva</u>); earnestness to know the Absolute Reality; one of the four qualifications for undertaking instruction in the way of knowledge.
<u>Neti Neti</u>	(<u>na</u> + <u>iti</u> , <u>na</u> + <u>iti</u> "Not this, not this"); famous sentence "reducing" all <u>empirical entities</u> - to arrive at Pure Consciousness or <u>Brahman Atman</u> , without attributes.
<u>Nirguna</u>	(from <u>nir</u> , without + <u>guna</u> , attribute) without attributes, devoid of all qualities or properties; used in reference to <u>Brahman</u> from the absolute or transcendental point of view, opposite of <u>Saguna Brahman</u> .
<u>Nivṛtti</u>	without modifications (<u>vṛtti</u>); the state of "pure consciousness" when all <u>mental changes</u> have been stopped.
<u>Nitya</u>	eternal, permanent, real.
<u>Nyāya</u>	(from <u>ni</u> down + <u>aya</u> arrival) one of the six systems (<u>Darśanas</u>); founded by <u>Gautama</u> c. 550 B.C. It goes into all subjects using the syllogistic method; science of logical proof.

<u>Paramārtha Sattā</u>	(compounded of <u>parama</u> + <u>artha</u>), the highest truth, spiritual knowledge; opposite of <u>vyavahārika sattā</u> .
<u>Parama guru</u>	"teacher's teacher"; <u>Gaudarōda</u> 's relation to <u>Saṅkara</u> .
<u>Patañjali</u>	the founder of Yoga philosophy; author of the Yoga-sūtra, the science of restraining all mental modifications.
<u>Prakṛti</u>	(<u>pra</u> , before, first; <u>kar</u> to make) Cosmic Substance, primordial matter, made up of three constituents (<u>gunas</u>): <u>sattva</u> , <u>rājas</u> , <u>tamas</u> ; also called <u>pradhāna</u> and <u>avyakta</u> (unmanifested); In Vedānta, it is also known as <u>Māyā</u> .
<u>Prakarana</u>	A small independent treatise or monograph.
<u>Prarabdha Karma</u>	action that has begun to issue in fruit; action producing the present body, commonly considered binding on a <u>Jñānin</u> (knower of <u>Brahman</u>) until death of the body.
<u>Prāna</u>	(<u>pra</u> before; <u>ana</u> breath; from root <u>an</u> to breathe) the breath of life, life-principle.
<u>Prānamaya Kośa</u>	Vital sheath, one of the five sheaths covering and obscuring the Self.
<u>Prasthāna-traya</u>	The three great ways; three major works of Vedānta; ie. <u>Upanisads</u> , <u>Bhagavadgītā</u> and <u>Brahma - Sūtra</u> .
<u>Prāgabhāva</u>	"previous non-existence; a term in <u>Nyāya</u> logic.
<u>Purusa</u>	Cosmic Spirit; first principle of <u>Sāṅkhya</u> system of philosophy; the principle that guides and regulates cosmic evolution; in <u>Vedānta</u> , used as equivalent to <u>Almon</u> .
<u>Rajas</u>	energy, activity; in <u>Sāṅkhya</u> , one of the three constituents (<u>gunas</u>) of <u>matter</u> (<u>Prakṛti</u>).
<u>Saccidānanda</u>	(compounded of <u>sat</u> + <u>cit</u> + <u>ānanda</u>); Being-Consciousness-Bliss; in <u>Vedānta</u> , the three words used to describe <u>Brahman's</u> essence.
<u>Saguna Brahman</u>	Brahman with attributes, qualities; Brahman conceived as Creator, Preserver, Destroyer; the opposite of <u>Nirguna Brahman</u> .
<u>Śakti</u>	(<u>sak</u> , to be strong, able) creative power, energy; the kinetic aspect of Consciousness.

<u>Saksi</u>	Witness-Consciousness, that which "beholds" all entities, all activities in the phenomenal world, without itself acting.
<u>Samādhi</u>	(sam, together; dhi a placing from root dha to put) The final stage in Yoga, whereby the individual soul becomes one with the object of meditation, attaining super-consciousness and bliss.
<u>Samādhiāna</u>	concentration of the mind on <u>Sat</u> (Being)
<u>Sañcita Karma</u>	accumulated acts; acts done in the past
<u>Śaṅkara</u>	founder of non-dualism (<u>advaita</u>) based on <u>Brahma (Vedānta) Sūtra</u> ; lived approx. 788-820 A.D.; founder of four monasteries (maths) at <u>Sringeri</u> in south, <u>Badarinath</u> in north; <u>Puri</u> in the east, and <u>Dvaraka</u> in west. Died <u>Kedarnath</u> , Himalayas.
<u>Sama</u>	abandonment of all desires (vasovas) by control of the mind
<u>Sāṅkhya</u>	(from sam together and khya to reckon or count up, enumerate); the oldest school of philosophy, an account of cosmic evolution; founded by <u>Kapīla</u> in sixth century B.C.; enumerates 25 <u>tattvas</u> or categories including <u>Purusa</u> (Cosmic Spirit); <u>Prakṛti</u> (Cosmic Substance) etc.
<u>Samsāra</u>	(sam, together; sāra flowing); the passage of the soul in the cycle of births and deaths; the round of existence, transmigration.
<u>Sat</u>	Being, Reality, Existence.
<u>Sattva</u>	in <u>Sāṅkhya</u> , one of the three constituents of Cosmic Substance (<u>Prakṛti</u>); principle of balance between <u>rajas</u> (activity) and <u>tamas</u> (inertia).
<u>Śraddhā</u>	implicit faith in Vedas and gurus
<u>Śruti</u>	(from root <u>śru</u> to hear); revealed knowledge, Vedas
<u>Sthūla</u>	(from <u>stha</u> , to stand, remain); gross, tangible, material.
<u>Sthūla-sarīra</u>	gross body; the material, perishable body.
<u>Sūkṣma</u>	subtle, atomic, intangible

<u>Sūkṣma śarīra</u>	the subtle body; also called <u>liṅga śarīra</u>
<u>Svanna-avasthā</u>	the dreaming state
<u>Susupti-avasthā</u>	the deep sleep state
<u>Sūtra</u>	(from root <u>siv</u> , to sew); a short sentence or aphorism i.e. <u>Brahma Sūtras</u>
<u>Tattva</u>	(from pronoun <u>tad</u> , and suffix <u>tva</u>); thatness, essence
<u>Tamas</u>	principle of darkness, dullness, inertia; in <u>Sāṃkhya</u> , one of the three constituents (<u>guṇas</u>) of Cosmic Substance or <u>Prakṛti</u> ; the restraining aspect of Nature
<u>Tat tvam asi</u>	Vedantic aphorism meaning "That art thou", identification of the individual ego (<u>Jīva</u>) with the Supreme Self (<u>Ātman</u>)
<u>Titikṣā</u>	patient endurance or forbearance of sorrow and suffering
<u>Turiyā</u>	The fourth; Brahman, transcends and pervades the three states of consciousness; also called <u>Caturtha</u> .
<u>Upaniṣad</u>	(prep. <u>upa</u> towards; <u>ni</u> down; <u>sad</u> to sit) sitting down opposite the teacher to receive instruction; the philosophical part of the <u>Vedas</u> ; source of <u>Vedānta</u> and <u>Sāṃkhya</u> , part of the <u>Araṇyaka</u> , which is part of <u>Brahmana</u> , dated from 8th century, B.C.
<u>Uparati</u>	spontaneous equipoise of the mind; complete withdrawal of the senses from sense-objects.
<u>Unādhī</u>	denotes any limitation imposed on the Self through ignorance of the mind.
<u>Upādānam</u>	"material cause" of the universe; opposite of "efficient cause".
<u>vāda</u>	(from <u>vad</u> , to speak) discussion; affixed to a word it indicates a school of philosophy.
<u>vairāgya</u>	(<u>vi</u> apart, away, without; <u>raga</u> desire); without desire; dispassion; indifference to the unreal and transitory; renunciation of all desires to enjoy the result of action here and hereafter; in Vedānta, one of the four qualifications.

<u>Veda</u>	(<u>vid</u> , to know); generic name for most ancient sacred literature; four collections (<u>saṁhita</u>): <u>Rg. Veda</u> , hymns to gods; <u>Samaveda</u> , priestly chants; <u>Yājur Veda</u> , sacrificial formulae; <u>Atharva Veda</u> , magical chants; <u>Vyasa</u> is the compiler and arranger; Vedic period 1500-1000 B.C.
<u>Vedānta</u>	(<u>Veda</u> + <u>anta</u> , end); end of the Vedas, second part of the <u>Mīmāṃsā</u> ; founder: <u>Badarayana</u>
<u>Vedānta-sūtra</u>	the aphorisms of <u>Vedānta</u> philosophy, ascribed to Badarayana; also called <u>Brahma-sutras</u> .
<u>Vidyā</u>	(from root <u>vid</u> , to know); Knowledge, especially knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, <u>Brahman-Ātman</u> ; the phenomenological reduction of <u>Avidyā</u> leads to <u>Vidyā</u> ; or "liberation" from Ignorance.
<u>Vicāra</u>	Enquiry; the method of enquiring into Reality by asking questions like "Who am I?"
<u>Viksepa-Sakti</u>	The "projecting power" of <u>Maya</u> that makes the phenomenal universe appear; attributed in <u>Sāṅkhya</u> philosophy to <u>rajas</u> , the active principle.
<u>Viveka</u>	(from <u>vi</u> , away, apart, without; <u>vic</u> to shift, sever, separate); discrimination, especially between eternal and non-eternal, real and unreal; in <u>Vedānta</u> , one of the four qualifications for Knowledge or Self-realization.
<u>Vijñānamaya kośa</u>	The knowledge sheath, one of the five coverings of the Self (<u>Ātman</u>): more subtle than the mental sheath (<u>manomaya kośa</u>), but not as subtle as the bliss sheath (<u>ānandamaya kośa</u>).
<u>Vivekacūdāmaṇi</u>	The name of a small treatise attributed to <u>Śaṅkarācārya</u> ; its title means Crest Jewel (<u>cuda-maṇi</u>) of Discrimination (<u>Viveka</u>);
<u>Vijñānavadin</u>	One who follows the Buddhist school of <u>Vijñāna-vāda</u> , a form of subjective idealism which denies the reality of anything objective.
<u>Vṛtti</u>	(from <u>vart</u> to turn, revolve); mental state, condition, or modification. <u>Nivṛtti</u> is the stopping of such modifications.

Yoga

(from root yuj, to yoke or join); one of the six Darśanas or systems; founded by Pātañjali (3rd Cent. B.C.), based on Saṅkhya philosophy; a practical way of joining the individual soul with the Universal Spirit; defined as "restraint of mental modifications" Yogin is a practitioner of Yoga.

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