

DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE

UPANISADS AND THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

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A study of the possible relationship
between Doctrine or statements about
Supreme Reality and man's Experience
of any such Being

by

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submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy of the University of London

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2. That the work represents the result of my independent investigation, except where indebtedness to other sources, in particular translations of original texts, is indicated both in the text and the marginal or footnotes, when, as appropriate, explicit references are given.

A. K. J.

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

The purpose of this enquiry is to determine what relation might exist between Doctrine, or statements about Supreme Reality, and Experience of It. To this end, teachings about deity, the claimed sources of knowledge of It and the content of such experience have been examined, prior to considering what relation might exist between the two. The thesis is, therefore, considered that knowledge of Supreme Reality is derived from the experiences of the self, whether objective or subjective, empirical or mystical, and especially from an increasing self-knowledge and the accompanying moral, social and spiritual awareness. The underlying assumption is that Doctrine is primarily an assertion and summary of such Experience and that, if it is to possess any degree of authority, it must clearly be related to experience. Doctrine is, therefore, considered to be centrally-initiated and involving the whole self, and, as knowledge of the self increases, so the God-concept grows and develops, from a philosophical Absolute, with basically metaphysical attributes, to a Personal God rooted in man's affective and volitional nature, as Creator perhaps, but more especially as Father, Helper and Friend. In his self-understanding, in particular, then, man discovers and comes to know the Reality which is immanent but yet transcendent, in a synthesis of

experience and a progressive articulation of life as an orientation towards that which ultimately transcends. Doctrine, then, is subject to change and development but also to limitations necessarily imposed by a certain conceptual ambience and religious milieu; by the significance and relevance of an earlier or later illative process and by the standpoints and culture of the age in which any experient lives.

(No of words - 269)

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CONNECTION
WITH TEXTUAL TRANSLATIONS

1. Upaniṣadic Texts

H. Robert Hume, The 13 Principal Upanishads.

R. S. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads.

2. Bhagavadgītā Texts

E. F. Edgerton, The Bhagavad Gītā.

HL. W.D.P.Hill, The Bhagavadgītā.

R. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgītā.

S. A.M.Sastry, The Bhagavad-Gita.

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INTRODUCTION

1. It would, we feel, be generally agreed that religion could be defined as a body of metaphysical or, more correctly, theological beliefs and an associated code of conduct relative to an Ultimate Reality or Absolute Power upon which or whom human beings feel dependent. Whilst a study of comparative religion would reveal that the conception of such an Absolute Power may be of an almost infinite variety, the religious hypothesis, in general, maintains that a man's life is, in some way, subject to or dependent upon such a spiritual Being or Power and, as the expression of a desire to be in the right relationship with such a Power, the hypothesis inculcates obedience to certain rules of conduct, whether ritualistic, symbolic or ethical, which, it maintains is necessary for the attainment of the right divine-human relationship postulated by its teachings and, thereby, the highest self-realization.

2. A brief glance at its history shows that in one of its relatively developed forms, the hypothesis corresponds to what anthropologists have termed Mana, the generic name for the impersonal and all-pervading power, on whose actions and favours human well-being depends. In a more specialized form, it is seen in the various types of mysticism, such as, for instance, in the consciousness of a direct and immediate

communion with the deity, in what W.B.Selbie calls a kind of "theologico-mystical doctrine of the possible union of the soul with the Absolute and even of absorption into the Absolute". In a monotheistic form, the prevalence of such a mystical attitude is seen in the prophetic consciousness of a direct inspiration or revelation based on an immediate communication from God.

Psychology
of Religion,
P.35, O.U.P,
1924.

3. This consciousness of a relation and the desire to give it something more than a purely subjective value seems to be characteristic of man's expression of the God-concept, in both its elementary and more highly developed forms. In addition to involving a belief in the causal and creative effectiveness of the transcendental power, there seems to be present a certain reflective element which assists man to make sense of his universe, by providing him with a reason and explanation, thereby enabling him to satisfy some of his most elementary intellectual needs. In other words, it gives a sense of perspective to the Weltanschauung. However, to believe in God is not merely to accept the fact of his existence, that is, His BEING God, like one would the truth of a mathematical proposition. Whilst the religious consciousness affirms the object of its faith, it does not stop at a bare existence but is accompanied by an assertion of value and, as Dr. George Galloway remarked, many years ago, "only by virtue of the value which is conceived to belong to it does the object possess a religious

Philosophy
of Religion,P.
436,T. & T.
Clark,
Edinburg'
1914.

significance". The values of the higher religions, of course, are essentially ethical and spiritual and, in consequence, they postulate an ethical and spiritual God, the Eternal Value, who becomes the ground and consummation of all values. In other words, the idea of an ethical and spiritual God gives both unity and coherence to the values of the moral and religious life.

4. However, the religious consciousness does not only consist of an emotional and intellectual element - there is a volitional element as well.

Whereas the emotional element embraces that wonder and awe and even fear which arises as a result of man's consciousness of the Unknown, the rational element represents his attempt to interpret and formulate this experience. The volitional element, however, represents the voluntary direction of his activity towards a certain end which is the apparent outcome of the other two elements. The essential achievement of the volitional process is the holding of an idea in the centre of consciousness, by an effort of attention, and religious emotion or feeling, in order to become articulate and effective, needs both intellectual and practical expression. It seems reasonable to state, therefore, that both feeling and belief are strengthened by the performance of symbolic acts or acts of worship, and the will to perform such acts not only seems to produce a renewal of belief in that which the acts symbolize but, especially in the higher religions, this becomes a principle of the utmost value, particularly when

doing the will of a personal God is not ritual observance but ethical obedience.

It seems, then, that the fundamental function of the volitional element is religion is closely connected with the fact that religion is what Dr.E.S.Waterhouse terms "the attempt to satisfy a need essential to man", and, therefore, it arouses in him the effort to secure and conserve its values - to achieve the right divine-human relationship. Such a relationship is not self-existent, of course, in so far as it must be sought, defined, established and maintained. Although such a relationship has changed and advanced, as the history of religion shows, especially with the advance of man's moral and social conscience, every stage of human culture has expressed its sense of such a relationship and it has embraced one value above all others, namely human good or well-being. From a philosophical standpoint, therefore, the religious postulate, in its widest sense, has to be interpreted as a belief in the harmony between reality and the Ultimate Value of all human existence - the Good in its utmost sense.

5. However, to establish harmony or any other kind of relationship with any such Absolute Power not only implies but demands a prior conviction or belief in the existence of such a Being and also a knowledge of its nature, a nature upon which, of course, any such relationship must depend and by which it will, presumably be

Philosophy
of Religious
Experience,
P.73.

be defined. For the purposes of this enquiry, the existence of any such Being or Power is presumed and we shall, therefore, be concerned with how any knowledge of Its nature is obtained, that is, with statements which attempt to express or define such a nature. There have, of course, been many theories about the sources of knowledge of both the existence and the nature of Absolute Reality, the most common probably relating it to a direct revelation or inspired prophetic teaching but, in recent years, religious experience has been a source-theory much postulated - and equally criticized - both as a means of establishing the existence of God and of expressing His nature. It is the purpose of this enquiry to attempt to consider the extent to which Doctrine or statements about Supreme Reality is related to such Experience. In effect, this is the equivalent of examining the thesis that knowledge of Supreme Reality is derived from the experiences of the self, whether these be objective or subjective, empirical or mystical, and whether an increasing self-knowledge and an accompanying moral, social and spiritual awareness is also significant. The underlying assumption, therefore, is that Doctrine is primarily an assertion and summary of such Experience and that, if Doctrine is to possess any degree of authority or conviction, it must somehow be related to Experience. As H.D.Lewis has stated, it "---seems inevitable that the more specific assertions we make

about God must be based in some way on the particular content of our experiences".

Doctrine is, then, considered to be centrally-initiated and involving the whole self, and as knowledge of the self increases, so the God-concept grows and develops. It is interesting to recall that, in a Christian context, W.R. Matthews claimed that man knows God in so far as he truly knows himself and that, furthermore, the one progressive line of religious evolution is connected with the application to the divine of the analogy of human life and experience. In other words, the determination of the nature of Supreme Reality and the discovery of Its character must proceed, *pari-passu*, with man's discovery of his own nature, so that any thought of God which has expunged all tincture of anthropomorphism must decline into a concept of a Being for whom no human values are real and, therefore, into an essentially unknowable ground of the universe or an impersonal order of nature. Similarly, John Baillie would claim that our consciousness of God is never given ~~save~~ in conjunction with a consciousness of things albeit it is equally certain that all our knowledge of God is given us "in, with and under" our knowledge of one another.

6. It must be stated, then, that we shall use the term Doctrine in a far more general sense that that associated with systematic theology or dogmatics and, as we have previously stated, as

Article -
What is
Theology?,
Philosophy,
Vol. 27, No 103,
Pp. 345-358.

God in
Christian
Thought and
Experience,
P. 34.

Vide
Our Knowledge
of God.

an attempt to make articulate aspects of a general consciousness of Supreme Reality present wherever the human mind becomes capable of general ideas, of ideals and of the recognition of values, however these may be defined or understood.

Generally, such statements about deity may be divided into three main types, namely historical, cosmological and ontological, the first referring to divine acts or transactions in time, the second to the relation of deity to the world and the third to the Being or nature of God. It is with the third type that we shall be mainly concerned and such, indeed, constitute the ultimate essence of all religious belief. The distinctive features of such statements are the subject-term and the predicates which are attributed to it. The subject-term expresses the central-concept and, in this sense, it has no other use, it being the unfamiliar term in any contrast between finite and infinite. The predicates, on the other hand, express or rather attempt to express the basic concept and, in this way, ordinary words are put to what I.M.Crombie calls "unordinary" uses or other than customary usage, in so far as finite terms are applied or attributed to that which is believed to be infinite. If, therefore, there is any development of the God-concept, it must be by means of a growth in predicates or what we might term predicative-variants, in so far as the predicates employed might change but the central-concept is,

New Essays
in
Philosophical
Theology,
P.111f.

as it were, a static term. Such statements have both a negative and a positive aspect and are generally regarded as literally true in respect of what they deny but only symbolically true in respect of what they affirm, which would suggest that it is easier to state what Supreme Reality is not than to assert what It, in fact, is. Some, however, would claim that negative theology is probably to preserve deity from false attributes. This, of course, raises a number of semantic problems but, in so far as these are not directly relevant to this enquiry, they will not be pursued. If our thesis is correct, therefore, we should expect to find that doctrinal statements may change, as traditional statements are developed or even transcended by progressive articulation and that, as man looks inward and is more fully aware of himself, as a cognitive, conative and emotional being, so religion becomes more inward and spiritual. Likewise, of course, we should expect to find that limitations are, of necessity, imposed on doctrinal statements, in so far as they are subject to a certain conceptual ambience and a certain religious milieu, as well as to the significance and relevance of an earlier or later illative process and to conventional and traditional statements, and so forth.

7. The term Experience will also be used in a somewhat special sense, as referring to an awareness or apprehension of a supernatural power or value, whether personal or impersonal, which

basically transcends all human conception, and to what can be read out of such experience about the nature of Supreme Reality. Such experience is, then, not unique as to its form but as to its object, in so far as, in form, it may be similar to that intuitional knowledge which is found in various other aspects of experience. Of primary significance, however, in such experience, is not the apprehension of Being which is purely and simply Being and nothing else but what it is "over and above" mere Being, as Henri Bergson pointed out.

The Two Sources of Religion and Morality, P.117.

Again, if our thesis is correct, any such knowledge would seem to be mediated by both objective and subjective experience but, as S.L. Frank has cautioned, if by objective is meant that which exists after the manner of the external world (i.e. seen, heard, touched, etcetera) and by subjective that which springs from our mental life, then the content of religious experience, just as that of the aesthetic and moral, is neither objective nor subjective, in so far as its nature transcends these familiar categories, as the object is other than what is met in such experience. If, however, by objective is meant simply that which is outside us and by subjective that which is within us, then the content of such experience is both objective and subjective, at the same time. Perhaps, this is better expressed by saying that, in religious experience, we have a peculiar and yet clear combination of intimate nearness with remoteness or, in philosophical language, of the

God with Us, P.44f.

greatest immanence with transcendence, that is an immanent experience of a transcendent reality. The peculiar character of religious experience, then, is that one can have experience of the transcendent, and yet immanence does not conflict with but is, as it were, compresent with transcendence. However, such a Reality as is apprehended is inaccessible to us in its completeness; we can never know It in its essence but can only describe or attempt to define It in terms of what It means to us.

Term used by S. Alexander, Space, Time & Deity.

Some, such as Richard Kroner, would claim that religious experience is a speculative experience, combining two seemingly incompatible elements, namely experience and speculation, and, in a way, this seems acceptable, in so far as the interpretative element, although accepting what is experienced as true, cannot, with any degree of certitude other than that of faith, establish its claims and can only speculate on the essential nature of God. E.L. Mascall, on the other hand, has referred to a contuition of God, that is an apprehension of the presence of the cause in a perceived effect but, of course, the experience seems to involve far more than the mere apprehension of a cause. K. Mannheim has referred to a paradeigmatic experience or state of mind in which a peculiarly vivid kind of awareness and responsiveness to a Reality beyond ourselves seems to give insight into Its nature and this, at least, seems nearer to the thesis which we are considering. Furthermore, in its more developed

Vide How do we know God?.

Diagnosis of our Time, Pp.131f, London, 1943.

forms, religious experience claims to apprehend a personal God and Henri Bergson states that, in its mature form, religious experience involves all the factors constituting human personality. This, of course, does not mean compliance with L.A. Feuerbach's famous dictum that "Man creates (i.e. invents) God in his own image and likeness" but rather compliance with S.L. Frank's rephrasing of this as "Man apprehends God in his own image and likeness".

The Two Sources of Religion and Morality, P.132.

1804 - 1872.

God with Us, P.80f.

However, as far as Hinduism is concerned, religion is the search for a basic unity underlying the manifold of the universe and this search is developed along two main lines, an external seeking behind the formations of the outer world and an internal seeking, by directing the gaze inwards. Religion is, then, a kind of life of experience, an experience which is not an emotional thrill or a subjective fancy but the response of the whole personality to a central Reality. In this way, intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience and outer expression to inward realization, and of particular importance here is mystical experience which is the prevalent source of knowledge of Supreme Reality especially in the Upaniṣads. In this sense, of course, each religious genius spells out the mystery of God according to his own endowments, and it seems reasonable to state that the variety of pictures of Supreme Reality is more readily intelligible if one accepts that religious

experience is psychologically mediated and centrally-initiated but, nevertheless, a presentment of the Real already influenced by the ideas and prepossessions of the perceiving mind.

8. The underlying assumption, then, is that Doctrine is primarily an assertion and summary of the Experiences of the self but it implies, of course, that such experience is used in a very special sense. It, however, remains to be seen whether such a thesis can be maintained or, if necessary, modified and, as William James so concisely expressed it, "To foreshadow the terminus of ones investigations is one thing and to arrive there safely is another".

Varieties of
Religious
Experience,
P.52.

It only remains, then, to outline the procedure to be adopted in the enquiry. As a preliminary but yet important introduction to the study of the two principal works under consideration, we shall, somewhat briefly, consider the teachings of the Rg-Veda, a rich background of religious experience and its manifestations, especially in an objective sense. We shall, then, in both cases, examine the teachings about deity, the claimed sources of knowledge of It and the content of any such experiences of Supreme Reality prior to considering what relation might exist between Doctrine and Experience, However, as Hinduism can only be examined in translation, unless one is thoroughly acquainted with the original tongue, we have endeavoured to consult the best

known and most reputable translations available, particularly those by more recent authorities. A list of the translations used is given in a separate section of the bibliography and a general practice is made of giving references to all quotations made from the texts, either in the margin or as footnotes. Throughout -and wherever possible - we have used the diacriticals when quoting from the Sanskrit, unless, of course, the exigencies of the typing process occasionally prevent this. Detailed particulars of books consulted or referred to are normally only given in the bibliography where, unless otherwise stated, all books are to be regarded as published in London. With especial reference to quotations from the texts, unless an important difference in translation occurs, the quotations are not referred to a particular version, clarity being the norm for any one used. When differences occur, however, reference is made to specific translations and the difference noted. Details of the abbreviations used, when this occurs, are given on Page 5.

9. By the exercise, therefore, of independent critical power, in examining this thesis as it applies to the rich spiritual laboratory of Hinduism and, in particular, to the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā, it is, with due humility, hoped that some small contribution may be made towards advancing the study of this particular subject in the field of the Philosophy of Religion.

PRELIMINARY SURVEY

OF RG - VEDIC TEACHING

1. PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF RG-VEDIC TEACHING

1. It has been claimed that the Upaniṣads are for the Veda what the New Testament is for the Bible, an analogy which is not merely external and accidental but fundamental and based upon a universal law of development of the religious life.

P. Deussen,
Philosophy
of the
Upaniṣads,
P.46.

Deussen's argument is based on a comparison between the primitive religious consciousness which, by its commands and prohibitions, its promises of reward and threats of punishment, addresses itself to self-interest assumed to be the centre and essence of human nature, and that higher grade of religious consciousness which recognizes that the supreme function of existence does not consist in the satisfaction of self-interest but in its voluntary suppression. This comparison is illustrated by the primitive standpoint of righteousness by works, as seen in the Old Testament Law and, to a limited extent, in the "karmakanda" of the Vedic Hymns and Brahmanas both of which proclaim a law and hold out the prospect of reward for its observance and of punishment for its transgression, and the higher standpoint of the New Testament doctrine of the ultimate worthlessness of works and the Upaniṣadic doctrine which altogether rejects works, both of which, of course, strive for release from the bonds of reality which has its roots in egotism. We are to presume, therefore, that this is illustrative of a universal law of development which, by virtue of

op.cit,
Pp.47-48.

its complete change of emphasis, makes salvation dependent on a transformation of the natural man as a whole. If, however, salvation and the means to its attainment are subject to any such law of development, then it seems more than likely that, when salvation is understood in terms of a relationship to some Ultimate Reality or godhead, a concurrent development will occur in conceptions of such Ultimate Reality or godhead. Any higher conception may, possibly, be regarded as a development or refinement of the earlier or more primitive. However, as Sri Aurobindo has cautioned, this does not mean that the inadequacy or obscurity of first perceptions necessarily detract from their value or truth, since all seekings must start from an obscure and ignorant perception of hidden realities and proceed to a more luminous vision of the Truth which, at first, is veiled by the mists of ignorance.

The Life
Divine,
P.833.

2. Whether or not one accepts Deussen's contention that there is a universal law of development of the religious life, it at least suggests that it is reasonable to suppose that the sophisticated thought of the Upanisads did not suddenly spring from a previous void, in so far as the human mind progresses from knowledge to knowledge, in a process of enlargement and refinement of previous knowledge, and this certainly seems to be valid as far as scientific knowledge is concerned. In other words, the thought content of the Upanisads would seem to suppose origins anterior to itself and both the nature

and sources of any such anterior knowledge would seem to justify a brief survey of the teachings of the R̥g-Veda, as preparatory to an examination of the former, especially if such teachings are indicative of a progressive articulation, from the one to the other.

3. In this connection, it is interesting to recall

that Kaegi, in the last century, claimed that the whole significance of the R̥g-Veda, with reference to the general history of religion, rested upon the fact that it presented the development of religious conceptions from the earliest beginnings to the deepest apprehensions of the godhead and its relation to man. In recent times, Sri Aurobindo has stated that, from the historical standpoint, the R̥g-Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. Although denying that the Hymns are an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation in the form of primitive dogma, he does claim that out of the sameness of experience and the impersonality of the knowledge received, there arise a fixed body of conceptions, the same notions being repeated from hymn to hymn, with an entire indifference to any search for poetic originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. This, of course, could have been the consequence of a tradition of strict oral transmission, whereby the Veda was declared to be a form of divine revelation but, if one accepts Aurobindo's contention that there is an

The R̥g-Veda,
P.26; 1886,
quoted by
Dasgupta,
History of
Indian
Philosophy,
Vol.1, P.16.

On the Veda,
P.10.

invariable fixity of thought in the Veda, it might well be difficult to argue convincingly that any such fixed form and substance would easily be possible at such a primitive stage of thought. In this case, of course, it could, for instance, be surmised that the Rg-Veda represents the close rather than the beginning of a period or that the Hymns are merely a selection from a far richer vocal past. However, theories apart, the Rg-Veda is generally acknowledged as the foundation of Indian thought and may be regarded as the oldest Indo-European literary monument, although there is considerable disagreement as to when the earliest portions of it came into existence. The language of the Veda is regarded as "sruti", a divine source of revelation, not composed but heard or "seen", in mystic vision, by the sages or rishis. However, Aurobindo states that, in the Vedic idea of revelation, there is no suggestion of the miraculous or supernatural, the rishi employing those faculties acquired by a progressive self-culture, knowledge being a finding and a winning, the revelation coming at the end of a long march on the path to Truth. Nevertheless, it may be accepted that the Hymns represent the earliest literary phase in the evolution of the religious consciousness, wherein may be seen the outpourings of poetic minds struck by the immensity of the universe and the inexhaustible mystery of life.

4. In this brief survey, therefore, our concern will be with statements indicative of a reaction

See
Winternitz,
History of
Indian
Literature,
Vol 1, Pp.
290-310.

On the Veda,
P.8.

to and interpretation of such primary or basic factors. In so far as such statements are religious in character, that is primary apprehensions of some mysterious power or powers present in the world, we shall try to relate such statements to their earthly manifestations, in other words to the particular theophanies or, possibly, more accurately, kratophanies, from which they are to be regarded as originating.

5. We may reasonably assume, therefore, that primitive man found himself in an environment partly friendly and partly untoward and perilous, as he experienced the beneficent effects of such natural phenomena as sunshine, rain, fire, the dawn, water and so forth, and the maleficent effects of such as drought, darkness, disease, blight, hurricanes and death. In other words, he found himself encompassed by the powers of nature which, whilst as yet mysterious, must have evoked not only wonder, awe and dread but admiration and gratitude, as well. This would conceivably be a situation impressing upon him an obscure feeling of hidden influences and incalculable forces, of the invisible behind the visible.

6. In discussing the character of perceptual experience, Dorothy M. Emmet thinks that this vague sense of interpenetrating and interrelated powers making themselves felt in various manifestations of the rhythmical periods of nature is prior to "personification", even of

The Nature of
Metaphysical
Thinking,
P.64.

oneself, as subject. As conscious thought develops, these vague, encompassing potencies become endowed with form and are thereby "objectified", at the same time man coming to a consciousness of himself as a distinct subject over and against them. The important point here, it seems, is that, in his consciousness of himself, man is also aware of his involvement and of some kind of participation in processes reaching beyond himself.

7. Since, then, man would seem to have begun from a consciousness of a power or powers, in the objective world of his experience, the earliest intelligent form of human religion would be a worship of outward nature-powers, invested with the consciousness and personality man finds in his own being, such "theological" symbolism being a way of thinking and speaking which, whilst pointing to the infinite, the divine and the unseen, describes it in terms of things seen, human and finite. It is at this stage that we find the poets of the Rg-Veda and, to facilitate our survey, we shall consider a movement of thought from naturalistic polytheism, through henotheism, to possibly monistic and monotheistic speculation, although this does not suggest that an earlier polytheism, for example, developed into a later monotheism and, thereby, that primitive thought was entirely devoid of any vision, at all, of a Supreme Being endowed with all the powers of an omnipotent Creator-God. The religious life of primitive peoples was, in fact, complex, and not able to be reduced to the various "-isms" associated with

Compare
Aurobindo,
On the
Veda,
P.4. and
John
Baillie, The
Sense of
the Presence
of God,
P.113.

evolutionary hypotheses.

8. Naturalistic Polytheism

In general, there was a twofold division of natural powers into the gods, representing gracious and kindly powers, and demons, representing grim and hostile powers, the contrast between god and demon being, therefore, not one of power but of benevolence, in so far as the activities of nature were regarded as being partly helpful and partly noxious. In a preliminary survey of this kind, however, we cannot possibly consider all the Rg - Vedic gods, and so we shall confine ourselves to the principal deities occurring in the tripartite division of the universe, namely in the celestial, atmospheric and terrestrial spheres.

Compare R.V.VII, 104, 1 & 2 & notes by Griffith.

Compare E.R.E, Vol. 12, Pp. 601-618, article by A.A. Macdonell.

a. The Celestial Sphere

1. Dyaus Pitar

Dyaus, the oldest of the gods, having a very transparent name meaning sky or day, is celebrated in six hymns, in conjunction with Prithivi or earth, in the dual-compound "Dyavaprithivi", and both are regarded as the universal parents of gods and men, an ancient and widespread mythological conception. By analogy with the human race, the phenomena which come and go within the sphere of Heaven and Earth are called the children of both, so that the idea of Dyaus Pitar (Father Sky) and his children, the Devas or gods, is a reflection of human society. As parents, both are regarded as protecting all creatures and as bestowers of treasures, fame and dominion and, as Griswold states, the Hymns conjure up a picture of Dyaus

See E. Bevan, Symbolism and Belief, Pp. 32-33, & compare A. B. Keith, Religion & Philosophy of the Vedas & Upanisads, P. 95.

See VII, 53, 1, R.V.

See I, 185, 4, R.V.

Pitar bending down in love over Mother Earth and bestowing his seed in the form of rain, by which the earth is fertilized and made fruitful. Yet, the personification of both hardly went beyond the notion of parenthood and, in the case of Dyaus, paternity seems to have been his chief anthropomorphic trait. It would seem that the personification process was held in check by their constant presence and obvious physical nature, as is seen from the etymology of their names. Elsewhere, however, both are spoken of as themselves begotten and mention is made of the Father of heaven and earth who arrayed them in beauty, an idea of interest in view of later monistic and monotheistic tendencies.

Religion of the Rig - Veda, P.99.

R.V.1.160, 2 & 4.

However, the significance of Dyaus, for our present purpose, does not lie in whether the sky itself was regarded as personified or in whether the god was regarded as a being who lived in the sky but, rather, in what the notion was meant to represent in terms of man's reactions to this visible phenomenon - the heaven encompassing the earth. At this point, one becomes acutely aware of the danger of the "psychologist's fallacy", of reading modern conceptions and theories into ancient thought. Nevertheless, in so far as Dyaus is regarded as, for instance, "wide, broad --- and with far limits", and, from whose apparent passivity, the attribute of stability would ensue, it would seem that the sky must have impressed upon the Vedic poets the idea of an infinite, unmoveable and "high" or

See E. Bevan, op.cit, P.30f, for a survey of various theories.

R.V.1.185,7.

inaccessible and transcendent reality, indicating, as H.D.Lewis has phrased it, a characteristic of religious insight which involves a "reinforcement of our sense of objectivity and bringing comprehensiveness into our apprehension of our environment", in however rudimentary a form.

Our Experience of God, P.115.

The god may, then, be regarded as symbolizing that transcendent reality which is, by definition, beyond the limitations that condition our means of knowledge but which, nevertheless, may also be apprehended by its manifestations in other meteorological phenomena, such as storms, thunder and lightning - phenomena which may be regarded as either more articulate expressions of his personality or, in terms of the analogy of the human family, as the specialized functions of his numerous offsprings.

2. Varuna

Varuna, the Supreme Rg-Vedic god of the sky who, according to Louis Renou, inherited the pre-historic function of Dyaus, as creator and sustainer of the world, has a name which, etymologically speaking, is not so transparent as those of the other gods. Griswold suggests that the name derives from vri, to encompass.

L'Inde Classique, Paris, 1949.

Op.cit, P.113.

Aurobindo states that it comes from a root meaning to surround, cover or pervade, from which, he claims, emerged the images of poetic minds that are our nearest concrete representation of the Infinite. Mircea Eliade, on the other hand, claims that the etymology of the name from varu-

On the Veda, P.493.
Compare A.B. Keith, op. cit, Pp.96-98.

vrinoti, to cover or close in, must be abandoned in favour of the Indo-European root uer, to bind, the power of binding indicating that the sovereignty of the god is essentially magical. However, if we distinguish between his celestial attributes and his ethical nature, the significance of the suggested derivations might become apparent.

Patterns in Comparative Religion, P.70. See also his Images & Symbols, P.96.

As far as his celestial attributes are concerned, it seems evident that the god's original celestial structure explains his various functions and glories. As a personification of the all-embracing sky, he is termed "all-embracer", having the sky for his garment and the wind as his breath. He is "visvadarsata" or everywhere visible and, as such, is "all-seeing", the sun, in one place, being regarded as his eye and spy. He is also termed "sahasraksa" or a thousand-eyed, so that past, present and future, near and far and day and night are all alike to him. In consequence, he is regarded as omniscient and infallible, knowing all and spying out all secrets and intentions. In a typically poetical figure of speech, it is said that no creature can even wink without his knowledge. His creative power is especially manifest in the great vault of heaven, through which he made a path for the sun to travel by day and the moon and stars by night. As Creator of heaven and earth, he propped up the heavens and measured out the expanse of earth. This act of creation is not, however, to be understood as creation ex nihilo

R.V.VII,
87-88.

R.V.VIII,
41.3,7.

R.V.I.24-25;
VI,51,1;
VII.34.

R.V.VII.34,10.

R.V.II,28,6.

I.24, 8 & 10.

R.V.VII,86,1
and VIII,
42,1.

but the ordering of an already existing matter into intelligible form, so that the god transcends both, he encompassing them rather than they containing him.

The somewhat complex nature of the god is seen from the fact that he is also termed "samudriya" R.V.I,25,8. or "oceanic" because he is regarded as sending rain from the heavens. So the god is regarded not only as the god of the all-covering sky but also of the all-covering rain, an idea which is seen in the Old Testament conception of the "waters above the firmament". Furthermore, by analogy from the structure of human society, he is regarded as King of gods and men - the majestic "Samrāj" or universal king. His sovereignty over the gods of the celestial sphere, R.V.V,85. in particular, is seen in his being regarded as Head of the Adityas, although some would claim that these may be little more than personified aspects of his divine nature, after the fashion of the "children" of Dyaus and much like the Amesha Spentas associated with Ahura-Mazda, in Zoroastrianism. Compare A.B. Keith, op.cit, P.96.

However, as observant worshippers of nature, the Vedic poets believed in an established order of things and we find, therefore, that Varuna is regarded as the embodiment of Law and Order, bringing, as it were, order into a disorderly cosmos. The sun, moon and stars pursue their regular courses, as does Nature its ordered seasons, in accordance with the all-compelling law of Rta, of which Varuna is both custodian R.V.V.65,1 & 66,1. See P.29, above. R.V.I,141,9; IV,42.

and ruler.

Turning to his ethical nature, as all-seeing and omniscient, he sees both righteous and wicked, in terms of those who obey and violate the universal law of which he is both custodian and guardian. In this way, the law of Varuna is a law of daily life and "sin" is an infringement of the law and an offence against the god, so Rta is also the "moral" law which, with equal impartiality, regulates the conduct of men. The god, himself, obeys the universal moral law which he has established and, as Lord of the Moral Order, his will is supreme. However, whereas the law governing Heaven and Earth, times and seasons, is observable and fixed, the "moral" law is imperfectly known, that is man knows that Varuna's ordinances exist but does not know what they are. He, as it were, sins in the dark and, as he sins, so he is ensnared and "bound" by the god's fetters and wrath, in consequence of which he has an unquiet sense of wrong unwittingly done, misfortune and disaster indicating that he has, somehow, deviated from the law of life. In order to gain the god's mercy, man must strive to discover his hidden faults and strive to justify himself in the god's sight, by prayer, oblation, sacrifice and hymns of praise. It is, perhaps, significant, that no hymn to Varuna is without a prayer for forgiveness of guilt. The idea of the mysterious "binding" power which inflicts transgressors for unwittingly breaking laws governing conduct, seems to stress the essentially unknowable nature of the god, developed, no doubt, from the idea of transcendence seen in his

R.V.1.25,
7-11;
VIII,41,4
& 7.

See A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, P.
246f, for
connection
of Varuna
with sin.

R.V.1.24,10
VII.87,7;
89,5; V.85,
7-8; 1.25,
10.

R.V.V11,89,
3-5.

R.V.V11,86;
1.25,1.

R.V.1.24,15
1.24,14;
1.25,3.

Compare A.
Macdonell,
Hymns from
the Rg-Veda,
P.21.

celestial attributes.

In conclusion, then, it would seem that, whereas the notion of Dyaus Pitar functioned as a symbol for an awareness of an infinite, unmoveable and transcendent reality, that of Varuna, although in no way dissociating itself from the former, yet gives a more clearly articulated expression to something incipient in it. One still finds ideas of transcendence, creative power and changelessness - an awareness of a boundless presence, a universal power active around and in the vastness and multiplicity of existence - but, in addition, ideas of omniscience and infallibility and, perhaps, most significant of all, a conception of law and order operative in the conduct of life, as well as in the celestial and natural spheres. As the god's law ensures that all things "prosper" by its operation, perfection and benevolence are also attributed to that which is eternal and universal amongst the phenomena of time and change. In so far as this law operates in the sphere of conduct, there opens up for man the possibility of a relationship with the eternal and infinite, for good or for evil, according to whether he obeys or unwittingly transgresses the ordained law of life. Aurobindo has stated that Varuna's epithets are those which a mind, at once religious and philosophic, could apply with little or no change to the supreme and universal Godhead, and it is difficult to appreciate how a god representative of the possibility of ethical monotheism, in ancient India, could have suffered so marked a decline.

On the Veda,
P.499.

3. Minor Celestial Deities

Three of these are worthy of brief mention only.

Savitṛ, or Lord of Stimulation, is the name of the sun as a personification of its quickening activity. When this power of stimulation is transferred to the spiritual world, he comes the inspirer and quickener of thought and, through his "inner" illumination, the god makes man sinless.

R.V.IV.54,3.

Viṣṇu is probably a personification of the sun in its "three strides" or course through the three divisions of the universe, a reference either to sunrise and sunset, or to its three levels, at sunrise, mid-height and zenith. The god is regarded as having taken his three steps for a "gracious" purpose, to deliver man from distress and to provide him with the earth as a dwelling.

R.V.IV.49,13;
VI.69,5-6;
VII.99,3.

According to Zaehner, the three steps seem to indicate the god's circumscribing the cosmos in space, thereby setting a limit to the finite world, the world being kept in being by Viṣṇu, though he transcends it, for none can attain to his greatness, a reference to his all-pervading omnipresence. He is also connected with Rta as the primaeval germ of Order.

Zaehner,
Hinduism,
P.45.

The Asvins seem to be identified with the morning and evening stars, and their activity on earth is always beneficent and, in a sense, they are representative of the sacred power of the "sky" on earth - the miracle working gods who cure what is diseased and heal the maimed. It is possible that such activities were derived from the

R.V.VIII,22,
14.

VIII.18,8;
22,10; VII.
71,5-6; I.116,
16; X.39,3.

mythological belief that the Asvins released the sun from darkness and it is interesting to notice that, like the Greek Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, they were thought of as healing, protecting and saving men from danger.

Compare
A.B.Keith,
op.cit,
P.115.

b. The Atmospheric Sphere

1. Indra

This god is the most prominent of the Rg-Vedic gods and dominant in this sphere, almost a quarter of the Hymns being dedicated to him.

See A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, Pp.124-
133.

The name is of uncertain origin but most scholars would agree that he is the thunder-god. It seems that he was originally classed as a "deva" or demi-urge rather than as an "asura" or sovereign god. He could be compared with early

Scandinavian gods with whom there are many resemblances. He is seen as the apotheosis of naked might and probably no phenomenon of nature is as suggestive of ruthless power as the

R.V.1.32,15;
1.102,8.

lightning stroke. His chief weapon is "vajra", a bolt, which was the mythological name for the lightning stroke. Elsewhere, it is stated that Indra's lightning flashes made light where no light was and, hence, he was regarded as generating the lightnings of the sky and also the sun and dawn, which is the equivalent of saying that the same power that produced lightning flashes also produced the light of dawn and sun which, as it were, revealed to man the whole heavens. With the lightning flash as his characteristic theophany, Indra is regarded as embracing all the phenomena of light and fire.

R.V.1.57,2;
61,6.
11.11,9-10;
VI.17,10;&
24,5.& 30,5.

However, although the god shakes and agitates the world, he also calms and settles, a reference to the calm following the storm. His most characteristic epithet is "maghavan" or "bountiful", because he is regarded as being generous to his worshippers. His generosity is attributed to his releasing the waters, no doubt identified with tropical thunderstorms, and frequently prayers are addressed to Indra for benefits.

R.V.1.103,4

11.21,6.

11.21,6 &
11.34,11.

It seems, then, that the unique character of Indra is ultimately grounded in the thunderstorm and its accompanying lightning, wind and rain. As the deity of the atmospheric sphere, he governs the weather and disperses rain and, in this sense, is revered as the cause of fertility, by sending fertilizing showers on the parched and burnt-up soil. As far as Rta is concerned, whereas Varuna is the Law-Giver, Indra is regarded as the Law - Enforcer, broadly speaking, and he is spoken of as slaying the perpetrators of great sin and not pardoning the arrogant. One passage, in the last book of Hymns refers to his dealing with the wicked and those who injure Varuna, although it would seem that such "ethical" functions are little more than those of the executioner punishing those who dare to break the law.

Compare A.S.
Geden, Studies
in the
Religions of
the East,
P.208.

R.V.11,12,10

X.89,8-9.

As the most completely anthropomorphized of the Rg-Vedic gods, Indra not only exhibits the manly virtues of valour and strength but certain traits which, according to M.Hirayanna, one would not normally associate with the idea of the divine,

namely his vanity, boastfulness and uncommon fondness of the intoxicating soma. It is also interesting to note that, according to mythology, the god was not born in the ordinary way, but emerged from his mother's side and, once born, was wanted by none but feared by all. Eventually, he turned on his father, Tvāṣṭṛ, smashing him to pieces. It is possible that such inventions were derived from the violent nature of the tropical thunderstorm and were used to enhance the more awesome aspects of his personality.

The Essentials of Indian Philosophy, P.11.

R.V.IV.18,2.

IV.18,12, but the name is not given in the text. See also A.B.Keith, op.cit, Vol.1, P.205.

In relation to Varuna, the dominant god of the celestial sphere, Indra's personification was developed more on the physical side, whereas the former's personification was more developed on the moral side. Indra is "svarāj", a monarch of his own making, an upstart king, and it is not surprising, therefore, that Varuna, characterised by meditative calm, remoteness and inflexibility, was superceded, in the popular mind, by Indra, the warrior king. However, both have much in common, in so far as statements about them refer to their manifestation, power, wonder-working, justice albeit in a somewhat primitive sense, and immanence in all the operations of nature and of life, both guaranteeing, as it were, the continuation and intangibility of cosmic rhythm and order.

Compare A.B. Keith, op.cit, P.96.

2. Rudra

This god is depicted as the most demonic of all the gods and his original sphere and function may be regarded as the destructive agency of lightning.

In consequence, the god is closely associated with Indra but, whereas Indra's "bolt" is beneficent, smiting only the foes of his worshippers, the arrow of Rudra is maleficent and he is spoken of as the wielder of the thunderbolt, the bearer of bows and arrows and as spitting like a wild beast. The god is also regarded as the inflictor of sunstroke, illness and disease in general, which, according to Griswold, is probably an extension by analogy from the destructive power of lightning. This powerful but dangerous god is sometimes identified with Agni, the god of Fire, Agni, indeed, often being called Rudra. Later, as Rudra-Siva, he becomes what Zaehner calls the most numinous and disturbing representation of deity that Hinduism was to produce. According to J. Murphy, an early explanation of this change of name was that "siva", meaning "suspicious", was simply a euphemistic and conciliatory way of speaking of Rudra, the destructive god to whom the usual attitude was one of fear.

However, Rudra was not only the great destroyer but the divine physician, with a thousand remedies at his disposal, smiting so that he may heal. His hand is said to be soothing, healing and cool; he is the bearer away of harm inflicted by the gods and is besought to avert their anger, no doubt by healing diseases inflicted by them. It may be that, in Rudra, the poetic mind endeavoured to combine the two poles of nature's unlimited power, the destructive and the beneficent but, although in Rudra opposites seem to meet, they do not appear to

R.V.11.33,3,
& 10-11

op.cit,
P.296,note 2
on 11.33.6
& V1.16,38.

R.V.1.27,10.

Hinduism,
P.43.

Origin and
History of
Religions,
P.281.

R.V.1.114,4;
11.33.

be reconciled.

3. Minor Atmospheric Gods

The Maruts vary in number from 21 to 108 and are somewhat opaque, in so far as the etymology of their name is uncertain. Danielou suggests the name may mean "flashing or shining ones" or "immortal" from the root "mr̥", to die, so that "That by the lack of which beings die (mar & ut) is immortal (marut). They are, again, generally regarded as storm-gods, possibly being the storm-winds, and are the constant companions of Indra. Zaehner thinks that they are almost as completely anthropomorphized as Indra, himself. They are variously described as eagles of the sky, born of the laughter of lightning, equal in age and of one mind, shining like tongues of fire and having the brilliancy of serpents, as lightning speared and as causing the mountains to shake, with thunder and blasts of wind. Their nature, in other words, is defined in terms of lightning, thunder, wind and rain. In a thunderstorm, numerous flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, winds and showers of rain, would seem to justify the use of the plural name, the Maruts. However, they also share the beneficent as well as the destructive traits of Rudra, as they bring healing remedies - the rains with which they fertilize the earth. It is worthy of note to see the similarity of functions between the different groups or families of gods.

R.V.1.133,6;
V111.9,6,8.

Hindu
Polytheism,
P.103.
Compare A.B.
Keith, op.cit,
P.152.

Hinduism,
P.32.

R.V.1.23,11-12;
1.165,1; 1.172,
1; V.54,11-13;
V.56,5; 56,5;
V111.7,4 & 20,
1.

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.cit,
P.150.

Vāyu - Vāta, the wind, may aptly be regarded as the most restless of all the forces of nature, and

R.V.x.168,3

is a compound name, Vāyu generally being regarded as the more important of the two. As wind, Vāyu represents a mysterious element, in so far as its sound is heard but no one sees its form and, as such, it apparently stands as a symbol for

transcendent reality. The hygienic and vital aspects of wind are also seen in statements which refer to its wafting, healing and prolonging life. In a later hymn, Vāyu is called the "breath" of the gods and, in the Upaniṣads, he appears as the cosmic life-breath.

R.V.1.164,44.
Compare A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, P.139.

See x,186, &
168,4.

Āpas or Āpah, the Waters, have a slight degree of personification, although conceived of as feminine and beneficent, as fertilizing the earth and causing abundant harvests. They are also spoken of as cleansing and purifying and, in this sense, are regarded as bearing away not only the defilements of the flesh but such sins as violence and lying which would seem to be an extension, by analogy, from physical to moral cleansing. Consequently, they are associated with the ethical god, Varuna.

R.V.V11.47,
1,3; V11.49;
X.17,10 &
X.30,8,12,14.

1.23,22.

Compare
Griswold,op.
cit,P.292.

V11.49,3.

Whereas, therefore, in the celestial sphere, the emphasis seems to be on the luminous, creative and beneficent manifestations of personified natural power, in the atmospheric sphere, it is far more on its shere might and destructive potential, albeit such avenging power may also be employed beneficently.

c. The Terrestrial Sphere

1. Agni

The dominant god, in this sphere, is Agni, the god of Fire. As fire, he is a thoroughly transparent

Consult A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, Pp.154 -
166.

"sondergott", having a naturalistic origin in the sun, lightning, flintstone and firesticks, and, in consequence, his personification is somewhat rudimentary. In other words, there is no difference between the cult object and the god whose "outward and visible sign" the cult object is. His omnipresence is indicated by the fact that fire is found in the three spheres, the celestial, the atmospheric and the terrestrial, as sun, lightning and the altar and hearth fire. In this sense, he binds the three spheres together, and, in this sense, may be regarded as the earliest Indian "triad". Amongst various functions, he is referred to as the dispeller of darkness, evil spirits and hostile magic, putting the demons and goblins of night to flight and banishing illness, an obvious reference to the hygienic value of fire, warmth and light. In a sterner aspect, he strikes and scorches, in the lightning and tropical sun, those who oppose him and neglect to render him his due. He is, therefore, allied to the punitive functions of Varuna and Indra and, like them, is also guardian of Rta. As the sacrificial fire, he is regarded as the mediator and messenger between gods and men, and, in this way, knits the three worlds into a coherent unity and stands as a symbol for the inter-relatedness of all things. In relation to "sin", he plays a part second only to Varuna, in so far as he is all-seeing, having eyes, a hundred and a thousand, to behold the deeds of men. He can distinguish between human wisdom and folly and

R.V. 1.54,
4-5; 1V.7, 9-
11; X.4; X.
12,2.

Compare Mehta,
Early Indian
Religious
Thought, P.50,
& Zaehner,
Hinduism, P.25.

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, P.156.

R.V.1.95,3;
111.2,9 & 20,
2; 1V.1,7;
V111.39,8.

R.V.1.12,7;
111.1,7 & 5,1;
1V.1,9; V11.
5.3; 15.2,10
& 13; X.88,2
& 87,4.

R.V.1.1,8;
189,6; 11.9,1;
1V.3,4; X.8,5.

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.cit,
P.159.

R.V.1.128,3;
11.2,4; 1V.2,
11 & 4.3; X.
79,5.

is the eye and guardian of Rta, as both ethical and ritualistic order. Furthermore, he takes account of sin and punishes it, informing Varuna and all the gods of men's guilt.

R.V. 2.2, 4-5.

Of particular interest is the fact that the innumerable hearth fires and altar fires were regarded as manifestations of the one Agni. There is only one Agni, although many times kindled, and the god is of like appearance in many places. Griswold is of the opinion that this is the first statement of the problem of the relation of the One and the Many, of the multiplicity of phenomena to an ultimate unity in things, a problem which, of course, the Upanisadic writers attempted to solve in the "Brahma-Atman equation" and in the doctrine that nothing real exists besides Brahman.

R.V. V11.3,1;
V11.11,8;
18,9;
V.8,2.op.cit., P.
176.

Finally, it must be noticed that Agni is referred to as "Lord of Rta", as ritualistic order, and is besought, together with Varuna and Indra, by worshippers seeking specific benefits. The purpose of invoking the gods was, at first, mainly to gain success in life or to ward off some danger. Later, however, there arose a system of elaborate sacrifices and a special class of priests alone capable of officiating at them, so that sacrifices were no longer regarded as prevailing upon the gods but as compelling or coercing them to do what the sacrificers wanted, benefits following, so to speak, from sacrificial punctilio. This assumption of the mysterious omnipotence of sacrifices is the chief trait of Vedic mysticism and, although the concept of an unalterable law involved in such invariable

R.V. 1.911
V11.68
R.V. 1.27,1.Compare S.N.
Dasgupta,
Hindu
Mysticism,
P.17f.

P.373

effects is developed mainly in the later Brahmanas, it is significant to recall that Agni is referred to as the wise priest who corrects mistakes in ritualistic worship. R.V.X.2,4-5.

2. Soma

Closely related to Agni is Soma, the sacrificial offering or libation and, in so far as the two main features of Rg-Vedic ritual were fire-worship and soma-sacrifice, the personification of soma-juice is, naturally, in the terrestrial sphere, one of its most prominent deities. Although a deity with an indisputably naturalistic basis, the god's personification is vague, no doubt because both plant and juice were constantly before the eyes of the priests, as they sang the praises of the gods. Under the influence of Soma, man became capable of deeds far beyond his natural powers and was endowed, as it were, with godlike qualities. The god also inspired the seer, healed the sick, prolonged life, scared away malign powers, gave joy and comfort and preserved one from the wrath of ones enemies, qualities readily identifiable with the "benefits" of alcoholic indulgences. Of particular interest, however, is that, as a result of the exhilarating power of the drink, the god is regarded as placing his worshippers in a world of eternal light and glory, thereby making them immortal. Aurobindo refers to Soma as the divine food, the wine of delight (ananda or bliss) and immortality, presumably referring to this as the gift of the gods which, as it were, descends to mortals and

R.V. 1,91;
V111,68.

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.
cit. pp.172-
174.

See R.V.
II.41,10;
VI.51,10,12;
VII.30,6 &
95,11

R.V.V111.48,3,
12-13;
IX,113,7-11.

On the Veda,
P.373.

and raises them to immortality, by tasting of the divine Ananda or heavenly bliss.

The primary religious significance of the deified sacrificial drink might lie in its being regarded as a visible means of "communion" with the divine and, in this sense, a symbol of participation and co-operation in divine life, that is to say, a ritualistic nexus by means of which man not only has a foretaste of the divine ananda but partakes of divinity by sharing in the heavenly "nectar" - the very life-blood of the gods. In this sense, of course, it serves as a confession of faith and its primary religious meaning would seemingly be unambiguous, in so far as it also serves as a perceptible bearer of divine life.

3. Minor Terrestrial Deities

Here, brief reference may be made to further deified natural objects, as illustrative of the extensive scope of Vedic polytheism, in particular to

Sarasvatī, the goddess of the rivers. She is the most worshipful of all the rivers of the Punjab area, being termed, amongst other things, the divine one among the streams. In so far as she is an earthly stream with a heavenly origin, this would seem to imply that each class of stream involves the other, the earthly owing its origin to the heavenly, and the heavenly falling in the form of rain. She is regarded as powerful, the rushing flood, surpassing all other waters in greatness and is called the daughter of lightning. A transparent statement refers to her granting progeny and assisting in procreation. It is also

Compare A.B. Keith, op. cit., Pp.172-174.

See R.V.
11.41,16;
V1.61,10,12;
V11.36,6 &
96,1;

R.V.V.43,11;
V1.49,7 &
61,2,8;
V11.95,1.

interesting, as Griswold points out, that the area of the Sarasvatī river was so important in connection with the composition of sacred hymns, that the goddess, as the apotheosis of the river, came to be regarded as the inspirer of hymns and stimulator of good thoughts. In post-Vedic thought, she became the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, a transition which, likewise, presents no difficulty.

Finally, as rivers were conceived of as divinely animate, so were mountains, possibly as seats of the gods; forests, probably as a result of the eerie sounds heard at night, in them; plants, with reference to their medicinal use in particular, Soma being regarded as their King, and trees, especially the deified sacrificial post to which the victim was tied, in particular, Vanaspati who, as divine, is implored to grant wealth, splendour and good fortune.

Op.cit,
P.303.

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, Pp.
184-188.

R.V.111.1,
6; 2,6 &
11,3.
X.97,146.

Whereas, then, the celestial gods emphasize the luminous, creative and beneficent manifestations of personified natural power and the atmospheric gods stress its might and destructive potential, the deities of the terrestrial sphere are primarily connected with ritualistic order, with the oblation of soma juice and the fire sacrifices which, as it were, supplement the supplicatory nature of the Hymns.

9. Observations on Naturalistic Polytheism

1. It seems evident, then, that objective experience is reflected upon and interpreted by means of statements based, in general, on wonder and

numinous awe, such interpretation postulating the existence of good and evil forces discernible in functions or activities, the S-Part would seek to do little more than identify the object experienced aspects of nature.

2. Such statements, taking a positive rather than a negative form, generally follow an endeictic rather than a discursive mode of expression, that which is being described being hinted at or expressed in a somewhat veiled form, by means of symbols, myths and images, rather than in a strictly defined and articulate or conceptual language. However, a dearth of logical technique is compensated for, at least in part, by the richness of insight into what we may now term basic or "first-order" experiences common to all men. Such insight both invokes objects and ascribes predicates to them, a subject-predicate form of expression designating that about which something is said and that which is said about it. The S or subject-part is what we might term a "polyform-constant", in so far as there are many gods who remain the subjects of statements about them, however these may be altered or developed, and the P or predicate-part a variant, subject to both change and growth. We may consider the S and P parts separately, then.

3. The S-Part

In general, this part contributes little to the nature of the object, the etymology of its name indicating its origin in natural phenomena and this, of necessity, seems to be a limited factor, in so far as no allowance can be made for a development of it into something more than is implied by its derivation. Although, then, giving some clue to deified objects or

or forces and certain associated or apostrophic functions or activities, the S-Part would seem to do little more than identify the object experienced.

4. The P-Part

There would seem to be three main sources for the ascription of predicates, namely:-

- a. The material world of sense-objects
- b. Analogy from human emotions
- c. Sociological sources

a. The Material world of sense objects

This has particular reference to those basic or first-order constituents of objective experience whose influence could be directly felt by man, in the celestial and atmospheric spheres. One may claim that such phenomena manifested to the primitive mind, probably more than anything else, the power and majesty of natural phenomena, a power which man could neither evade nor control. Likewise, in the invariable regularity of the celestial bodies - a regularity unaffected by the changes seen in the terrestrial world - could be seen the existence of order and stability in a sphere, as it were, seemingly devoid of disharmony and contingency. In the sky, itself - a sphere of unlimited immensity - could be seen both transcendence and omnipresence. The sun, with its warmth and light, its life-giving qualities, would manifest creative - power and, in common with other celestial bodies, luminosity, this latter, as it were, representing the sphere of light as opposed to darkness and, by extension and possibly experience of night-marauders, that of the good or beneficial as opposed to evil.

b. Analogy from human emotions

Although, then, providing a number of impressive attributes, all of which could readily be incorporated in notions of a theistic god, the material world of sense objects does not seem able, by itself and unaided by other sources, to personify such a power or force. The main source for an anthropomorphic conception, then, would seem to lie in analogy from the consciousness and personality found in man's own being, through which the more impressive aspects of natural phenomena become independent and personalized powers, capable of acts of will and emotions and, indeed, possessed of a certain sense of values. Such an anthropomorphic process seems more pronounced in the case of the opaque gods than in the case of the more transparent because, it would seem, the latter's nature is more or less obvious, thereby providing little or, at least, less scope for poetic imagination and analogical initiative. For instance, the outstanding trait of Rudra is his anger and wrath, conceivably the result of the natural phenomena associated with him having a marked resemblance to the expression of human anger, especially in its destructive and seemingly uncontrolled manifestations. Possibly, also, by analogy from the calm which normally follows the manifestation of anger, the poetic mind attempted to combine the destructive and the beneficent, by picturing him not only as the great destroyer but also as the divine physician, although the anthropomorphic process seems to have gone no further, such being the strength of the god's basic insight, inspiration or imaginative activity of

attribute as manifested in the destructive power of lightning.

Furthermore, as mortals may be persuaded, coerced and propitiated, so we find an elaborate system of ritual and sacrifice directed towards such ends, with the obvious implication that "divine" reaction might be predicted, provided of course there was no breach of ritualistic punctilio. Of particular interest here, is the reference to a consciousness of guilt, of particular and persistent prayers for forgiveness and the desire to justify oneself - factors which introduce the idea of personal relationships with the gods. In other words, the values of life become associated with, if not, indeed, given a basis in, such personified powers.

c. Sociological sources

These are clearly complementary to the anthropomorphic process mentioned above, by analogy from the social structure of human society, whereby reference is made to family groups and relationships amongst the gods; to specialized functions associated with organized community life; to the sovereignty of a god such as Varuna; to co-operation, mutual help and service and to working together for a common cause defined in terms of the maintenance of a single, all-comprehensive cosmic order.

5. In these ways, therefore, it seems that such statements about the gods originate in man's experience of his daily confrontations with natural phenomena and in social intercourse with his fellows, and applied to the gods as the outcome of the insight, inspiration or imaginative activity of

certain peculiarly endowed individuals. It is, nevertheless, significant that such an interpretative element, within the context of what we have termed "polyform constants" and "predicative variants" suggests a tendency towards belief in some form of unity, the expression of which we must now briefly consider.

10. Henotheism

1. The term "henotheism" was coined by Max Muller to describe the attitude of those Vedic poets who habitually spoke of the god immediately addressed as supreme and, in consequence, heaped upon such the highest attributes without, thereby, any thought of denying the divinity of the other gods in the pantheon. In the Rg-Veda, it is true that such a tendency is particularly evident in connection with the three gods Agni, Indra and Varuna, each of whom, in turn, is exalted to the highest station, as Creator, Sustainer and Sovereign, and, thereby, distinguished as the personal Ultimate. Such henotheistic statements may be divided into what we may term "absorption" statements, in which the particular god of the moment is made to absorb all others who come to be regarded as manifestations of him, and "superlative" statements, in which the particular god is given attributes which, in strict logic, could only be given to a sole Divinity.

Compare R.V.
1.25, 20;
11.12, 2 & 13;
11.1, 4; 1V,
42; V.3, 1;
X.89, 10.

2. How, then, is one to regard such statements?
It is quite possible that they may have been the result of the particular slant of individual rishis or an especial religious zeal and ardour, expressing itself in the exaggerated phrases of worship and

and praise. To this end, it has been suggested that the intellectual burden of polytheism, which might conceivably have troubled deeper thought, at the time, could have been eased by a rational process of identification, of one form or another, and that the concept of Rta and a simplification or rationalization of divine attributes and powers could equally, if not concurrently, have contributed to the birth of the idea of a single, creative and sovereign deity, further reflection resulting in a more systematic interpretation of the statements associated with naturalistic polytheism.

However, the Rg-Veda is not unique in this henotheistic tendency, exaggerated statements about particular gods being found in other religious literature and, according to Farnell, especially in the Babylonian liturgies. Against all such, however, the criticism has been made that the tendency to exalt a particular god, worshipped at a particular time, above all others, makes the ecstatic poet contradict himself, unless, of course, such statements are not to be interpreted literally and dismissed, as we have said, as a mere phenomenon of worship. In this case, of course, it becomes difficult to account for a growing belief in the unity of the gods and, at the same time, to explain apparently contradictory statements. It seems necessary, therefore, to consider one or two recent attempts to interpret henotheism in terms of the bringing into consciousness of something which had, from the beginning, been latent. The problem, then, would no longer be one of the literal interpretation

See Greece
and
Babylon,
P.84,1911.

Compare also
F.B.Jevons,
Introduction
to the
History of
Religion,
Chapter 25,
Pp.382-397.

Compare, for
example,
1.164,46.

of what might be, on this view, simpler and less reflective utterances but one of the expression of a deeper insight through a process of conceptual refinement and clarification.

3. P.D.Mehta hints at this when he states that, in henotheism, there was a logical contradiction and, in consequence, it was merely a dim groping towards monotheism aided, in particular, by the concept of Rta which would seem to represent a dim awareness of that Ultimate Principle, behind, above and beyond the gods and, as yet, neither clearly articulated nor explicated.

Early Indian
Religious
Thought,
P.62

Dr. Chandradhar Sharma, however, claims that, if any such Western interpretation, as that advanced by Muller, is taken literally and in its entirety, then it is based on an ignorance of Vedic literature.

A Critical
Survey of
Indian
Philosophy,
Pp.15-16.

Neither polytheism, henotheism nor, indeed, monotheism can, he claims, be regarded as the key-note of early Vedic philosophy. For the Vedic seers who, in their mystic moments, came face to face with Reality, in a kind of direct, intuitive spiritual insight, the key-note of the Hymns is an immanent conception of an identity-in-difference, a kind of absolutism which finds its highest expression in the Brahma-Atman Equation of the Upanisads. He claims, in support, the fact that there is repeated reference to a supreme and binding principle which seems superior to and above the gods, evinced, for example, by a verse like the following reference to Indra-Varuna - "To me were given these first existing high celestial powers". If Muller were correct, then one would expect the most powerful

R.V.IV.42,2.
Here, each
God is
stating his
claim to
superiority.

god among the hierarchy to be enthroned as the supreme ruler of the universe - a fact which is conspicuous by its absence in the Vedas, as, indeed, Varuna's fall from power will serve to illustrate. In consequence, Sharma feels that Muller would have been more accurate, if he had said that the gods were merely manifestations of the Supreme God, so that, when any god was praised, it was not in his individual capacity but as a manifestation of the Supreme God. One is here reminded of Cicero's words - "God being present everywhere in Nature, can be regarded in the field as Ceres or on the sea as Neptune, and elsewhere in a variety of forms, in all of which he may be worshipped". It is unfortunate, therefore, that, in discarding polytheism and henotheism, Sharma also discredits monotheism, in so far as he finally concludes that there is only monism present, as he puts it, "from the first Mantra portion to the last Upanisadic portion".

De Natura
Deorum,
Bk.2, par.28.

Op.cit,
P.16.

Professor H.D.Lewis, in claiming that the henotheistic "high-gods" represent an advance upon a mere polytheistic stage, is, nevertheless, of the opinion that, at a certain stage of development, it seems possible to regard more than one deity as supreme and, although this may well seem flatly contradictory, it is not beyond comprehension that, just as early thinkers seem to have believed in a co-existence of opposites, so it was possible for a polytheistic religion to have a distinctly monistic aspect. He adds that monotheism is not a completely new departure but a bringing into consciousness of

World
Religions,
H.D.Lewis &
R.L.Slater,
P.144, Watts
& Co, 1966.

something which had been latent from the start". In other words, there seem intimations of an underlying unity of religious experience, in the form of some sense of one supreme reality animating various forms of worship not overtly or consistently monistic, so that polytheism and henotheism appear as simpler and less reflective forms. This point of view, then, far from discrediting henotheism, recognizes the importance of the interpretative element in religion so that, at whatever stage of intellectual development man realizes God, the significance and relevance of an earlier or later illative process must be taken into account. In other words, whereas, in its early stages, man's observation of the external world is interpreted subjectively, in terms of himself, later, with an increasing knowledge and power of mental manipulation and a growing capacity for systematization, he interprets more objectively, with an increasing awareness of the universal beyond the particular and of a unity behind the manifold diversity of experience.

4. It is evident, therefore, that, in the earlier Rg-Vedic Hymns, a relatively primitive insight was not entirely devoid of any vision of the One, however this might have been formulated. In diversity, the seemingly incompatible yield intimations of the One and to what seem to be more clearly explicated formulations of this, we may, finally, direct our attention.

11. Monotheistic and Monistic Tendencies

1. It has been suggested that the Vedic seers were

sufficiently logical to appreciate that the attributes of creation and sovereignty could be granted to one being only so that, if an endless variety of the world suggested numerous deities, the unity of the world suggested a unitary conception of the deity. In the further explorations which we are about to consider, it is important to bear in mind the distinction drawn by Radhakrishnan between what he terms a "psychological" monotheism, where One god fills the entire life of the worshipper, and a "metaphysical" monotheism, where one principle informs all the deities, as a common power working behind them all. The quest for such a "super-god" is seen in the cosmological hymns of the Xth book of the Rg-Veda, where the conception takes two forms - as a tentative monotheism, where the first principle functions as a kind of personalized entity, and as a philosophical monism, where the first principle is without qualities or attributes, limitless, boundless and impersonal. We might heed the warning, as we proceed, that such conceptions should be regarded more as tentative suggestions than as clearly explicated concepts.

2. The Personalized Entity

a. Viṣvakarman

Omnipotence, a characteristic of all the gods, became personified as Supreme, under the name of Viṣvakarman, the "Sole God", the all-doer who is referred to as the Father and Procreator of all beings and, therefore, presumably, himself uncreated. In an attempt to express the relation

See S. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, P.34.

Op.cit, P.33.
See also F.B.Jevons, op.cit, P. 383-384.

Compare R.V. X.82;90,121; and 129.

See A.B. Keith, op.cit, Pp.206-207.

R.V.X.81,3; 82,2-3.

of the god to the world, cosmic creation is compared to the work of a smith and a carpenter and also, metaphorically, to a sacrifice. However, in the metaphor of cosmic creation as a sacrificial operation, it is not clear whether Visvakarman was the creator as well as the first creature of the cosmic waters, which generally function, in cosmological mythologies, as a kind of first evolvment of some more primal principle, although it seems significant that no mention is made of Rta in connection with this god. Generally, it appears that, in the conception of Visvakarman, the dualism between chaotic, unformed matter and an intelligent agency giving it intelligible form remains and a tentative monotheism is suggested in the conception of the god, not only as the divine artificer who fashioned the world but also as the Father and Procreator of all. Nevertheless, with what seems to be an increasing sense of both transcendency and unity, a sense of impersonality is at least evident, in so far as godlikeness rather than a personal god concept is embodied in Visvakarman.

R.V.X.81,
4-6.

R.V.X.81,3.

b. Prajāpati

Prajāpati, Lord of Creatures, is the apotheosis of the creative activity of nature and the name of the Supreme Being who is Creator, Animator and Ruler of the universe. As a Father-God, all created beings are regarded as his children, in the same sense in which paternity was attributed to Visvakarman. Prajāpati, however, is both creator and created, the One and the Many, a primaeval being existing before any determinate existence and,

Compare A.B.
Keith, op.cit.
P.207.

R.V.X.85,43;
121, verses
2,5,9-10;
169,4.

yet, evolving himself in the empirical universe.

According to M. Hiriyanna, Prajāpati represents the highest conception of a unitary godhead in the later mantras taken as a whole and, therefore, the best example of a tentative monotheism, he being both a transcendent god and an immanent spirit, the life of every being. However, in this conception there is an apparent blending of monotheism and monism, in so far as the Supreme Being is identified with the whole universe of which he is the creator, he being all and everything. He is not, that is, to be regarded merely as a creator, externally related to the world, but also as constituting its very substance, as the monistic principle does. It would seem, then, that, in this conception, a religious awareness of the transcendent and a rational quest for a unitary principle meet and intermingle with a sense of the immanence of the Supreme in the empirical world.

Essentials
of Indian
Philosophy,
P.14.

Compare R.C.
Zaehner's
parallel of
Father and
Holy Spirit,
Hinduism,
P.54.

c. Purusha

This god is conceived as a cosmic person who filled the universe but yet extended beyond it by the length of ten fingers, the universe being constituted by a quarter of his nature. Only a fragment of the divine is manifested in the cosmic process, the world being but a partial expression of the Supreme Being who still, as it were, in greater part transcends it. The universe is thought of as being parallel in nature to human personality and from the several parts of the cosmic person are derived all existing things. This serves to emphasize the pantheistic nature of the created universe. There

R.V.X.90,
1-4.

Compare R.V.
1.164,45.

R.V.X.90,
verses 4,9,
10, 12-14.

is, then, unity in the conception of the cosmic man R.V.X,90,2. and multiplicity in Purusha's sacrificial dismemberment, and this seems to anticipate the Upanisadic doctrine of the identity of the human soul with the universal principle, in so far as macrocosmic man appears to be the prototype of microcosmic man.

However, whereas Prajāpati is conceived of as both the universe and the life-force pervading it and yet, as creator, Purusha is not thought of as creator-god whose function is to fashion an already existing primal matter. In him, God and matter are One. Although, then, a pantheistic identity ensues, Purusha still remains, for the greater part, a transcendent principle but it, nevertheless, seems that the distinction between man and god is already becoming blurred and, in this sukta, the apotheosis of man indeed seems to have begun, in so far as gods and men appear on equal terms, as consequences of a sacrificial dismemberment.

See A.B. Keith, op. cit, Appendix B, Pp.619-621.

R.V.X.90, 12-13.

3. The Impersonal Principle

1. Suggestions of a tentative monism are seen in Vac or "Holy Utterance", a personification of Vedic hymnal composition who, although supporting or inspiring the chief gods of the pantheon, is supreme over them all, including the universe. Brahman, the neuter equivalent of Vac, was later developed into the world-principle. Likewise, Aditi, the Infinite, is seen as an unborn and undying essence, the infinite substratum, and, indeed, the equivalent of universal nature in

R.V.X,125.

Compare A.B. Keith, op.cit, P.199.

R.V.1.89,10. Compare A.B. Keith, op.cit, Pp.215-217.

a pantheistic sense.

2. However, it is to the Hymn of Creation that we must turn for an explanation of the universe as evolving out of an Impersonal One, neither a god nor a personalized entity. The gods, we are told, were of late or secondary origin, knowing nothing of the beginning of things. This One is regarded as uncharacterisable, without qualities and attributes, in so far as it is impossible to bind that which is both limitless and boundless. In a searching attempt to get from nothing to something, then, the One is regarded as evolving into determinate self-conscious being, becoming a creator by self-limitation, so that the world is formed by a union of being and not-being. A distinction has to be drawn, therefore, between Absolute Reality and the personal-god concept, the former being "beyond being" and knowledge, the latter being regarded as a development or manifestation of the Absolute, so that there remains an impersonal substratum despite personal embodiments. Hence, this conception presents an impersonal, ultimate first principle, a kind of super-essential godhead, in utter transcendence of all created being, a single primordial substance designated "Tat Ekam" or "That One". Albeit, then, creation is a determinate manifestation, there still remains that which is transcendent, which continually evades description and is, as it were, subject to an infinite regress. One senses that the conception of the transcendent now stands on the threshold of an Absolute realm, a state of "being"

R.V.X.129.

X.129,6.

Compare R.V.
1.164,46.Compare R.V.
1.164,6 and
X,129,1-3.

which can no longer be expressed through analogy with either things or names of things. The unity which has been sought through the objective world and expressed in objective terms can be described no further, so that the problem now becomes - "God is but what is God?".

12. POSTSCRIPT ON THE Rg-VEDA

1. If, therefore, one attempts to relate statements about the transcendent and experiences of it, the Rg-Vedic Hymns seem to suggest that statements about deity originated in man's confrontation with and reaction to the world of natural phenomena, to an experience of powers which were regarded as essentially mysterious and evoking awe, wonder and fascination. From such a reaction, particularly to the impressive manifestations of power in the celestial and atmospheric spheres, one can appreciate, as we believe this survey has indicated, the possible origin of such attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, transcendence, order and stability, beneficence and, relative to man's finite state, eternity and immortality. Furthermore, statements indicative of such attributes are augmented by the use of analogy from both human emotions and social intercourse, the essentially mysterious and unknown being described in terms of the known, of that which was both understood and capable of explanation.
2. Initially, such powers are associated with the particular, or that to which certain phases of existence were believed to be subject, and this leads to a kind of polyonymy - a manifold of gods associated with particular and specific manifestations of power, in many instances the etymology of the name clearly

indicating the particular manifestation. A process of further reflection produced a conception of a unitary power to which all "demi-urges" were subject or of which they were merely manifestations, so that transcendence and unity are combined in a Supreme Reality, at once both above and beyond the world but yet manifesting itself in it. However, as we have seen, the conception of "divinity" is expressed in polytheistic, henotheistic and tentatively monistic or monotheistic terms. How, then, can a solution be found to such diversity? We must, therefore, consider the problem of signification.

3. The Western approach would maintain that development is the key to diversity in man's expression of his consciousness of God, so that monistic and monotheistic conceptions are end-products in a process of conceptual clarification and refinement, in which, of course, polytheistic and, indeed, henotheistic thought functions as an intermediate stage in the development process. The Eastern approach, on the other hand, would claim that there was an intimation of the transcendent, as a pervasive factor in experience, immanent from the beginning, so that diversity is the result of a change in the expression of man's awareness of the One, attempting, as it does, to comprehend divinity in its totality, with its manifold names, forms and personalities, its power being expressed, as it were, in the richness or abundance of its epithets. In both, however, the common or basic factor is unity, albeit the Western approach tends to emphasize the significance of rational processes in the explication of the concept of transcendental unity, whereas the Eastern tends to

stress the importance of some kind of intuitive insight. It would seem, though, that the two processes are not necessarily contradictory but rather complementary, an initial insight into or intimation of an underlying unity requiring explication by means of both a richness or diversity of expression and a process of reflection or interpretation. However, it seems necessary to distinguish between a transcendent "X", as a unity-concept behind all experience of the objective world, and the numerous attributes predicated of such an "X". It must not, in other words, be assumed that the content of experience is an objective reality immediately apprehended in its essence through some form of intuitive insight. Rather, the Rg-Vedic Hymns suggest that there is mediated knowledge of an "X", a One, Supreme Reality, behind the manifestations of powers in the empirical world. That is to say, diversity seems rather to grope after an expression of the existence rather than the essence of "X", as the transcendental unity manifesting itself in the world.

4. It is of interest, though, that the idea of an underlying or transcendental unity is expressed in four different ways. In the polytheistic Hymns, unity seems to be associated with the concept Rta, the transcendent and immanent principle, uniting and governing all things, including the gods, but yet above and beyond all. In the henotheistic Hymns, we find the One, Supreme Being, sovereign over lesser divinities or the conception of the various gods as manifestations of the One. In the later Hymns, we find either the unity of Creator and Created, or a

pantheistic unity of all "being" as One, from which determinate manifestations have evolved, yet which is, in no way, regarded as being exhausted by such manifestations and, in this way, a kind of panentheistic unity.

5. If, indeed, such are acceptable interpretations, then it would seem that intimations of a transcendent One are more pervasive than might be supposed and that the search for and explication of a basic unity underlying the manifold of the universe, has been an important motivating factor from the beginning. There is, then, discoverable a unity in diversity, a plurality of viewpoints, at whatever level, being attributable to a difference in temperament and to the needs of various inspired individuals. It would seem, then, that there is an explication of a common experience, according to different points of view and in various but by no means incompatible directions. This interpretation would have the support of Sri Aurobindo, when he claims that, from the language of the Hymns, one is compelled to perceive in the different gods, not only different names but also different forms, powers and personalities of the One Deva.

On the Veda,
P. 34.

6. However, man has in "inward being" or mind. Consequently, the question must inevitably have arisen as to the way in which any such One could control such "inward being". As far as an outward-looking interpretation of experience is concerned, the only answer to this question is that inward-being is controlled by man's external circumstances. If, then, inward-being is, in some way, different

from the One, then the latter cannot be thought of as either infinite or omnipotent, in so far as inward-being is external to and, thereby, limiting the unlimited. If the One, on the other hand, can control man's inward-being, then the transcendent would be, in a much more significant sense, immanent, as well. The question naturally arises, then, as to whether man can find the One within himself and so come to know It in Its essence?

7. After this introductory survey of the Rg-Veda, we may now proceed to our main task - an examination of explications of experiences of the transcendent from the statements of the principal Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā.

T H E

U P A N I S A D S

2. Prolegomena to the Upaniṣads

1. Our survey of the Ṛg-Veda makes it reasonable to assume that the seers of the Upaniṣads inherited, as it were, the idea of a Supreme controlling Power or Essence presiding over man and the universe and, in a personified form, variously named Prajāpati, Viṣvakarman and Puruṣa. However, although these seers postulated the existence of such a One, they left to posterity very little idea of Its nature or essence. As A.B.Keith has remarked, "The Ṛg-Veda asserts as a norm for future development of that thought the effort to grasp more concretely and definitely the unity which it asserts as a fact but which it does not justify or explain in detail".

Religion and
Philosophy of
the Veda and
Upaniṣads,
Vol:2, P.434.

2. In any attempt to ascertain the essence of any such Unity, the central question, therefore, must be concerned with the nature of that which remains identical and persists through all change. The interest in the Upaniṣads shifts from objective to subjective, from reflection on the wonders of the external world to meditation on the significance of the self - a self believed to contain the clue to the interpretation of nature. This, apparently, arose because doubts were beginning to arise, both as to the possibility of discovering the essential nature of the One through empiric means alone, and as to the adequacy of the Vedas to convey such knowledge. As far as the adequacy of the Vedas is concerned and although the Upaniṣads mention them respectfully and their study is enjoined as an important duty and, indeed, verses from the Vedas

Compare S.
R. dhakrishnan,
The Principal
Upaniṣads,
P.49.

Compare
Brh:Up:
1.3,10 &
4.4,22.

are quoted in support of Upaniṣadic teaching, it is also stated that Vedic knowledge, by itself, will not do. For instance, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Svetaketu's father admits that, although he has studied all the Vedas, he still lacked the knowledge whereby "what has not been understood becomes understood". In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, the knowledge of the Vedas is reduced to a somewhat inferior position, as the stage of the mind-made Ātman. The Brhadāranyaka lists the four Vedas and, likewise, suggests that they are inadequate to convey knowledge of Brahman. In the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, the Vedas are relegated to an inferior position as "aparā vidyā" or inferior knowledge, as compared with "parā vidyā" or that by which the "Imperishable" is apprehended. This is finally amplified in the Chāndogya where the Veda is termed "nectar" and the Upaniṣads "nectar of nectar" (amṛtānām amṛtāni).

3. It can only be assumed, therefore, that such epistemological realism, as evinced in the Ṛg-Veda, must have led to an unsatisfactory conclusion, in so far as the Unity sought, as if it were something outside of and apart from the self, could not be reached, simply because there would inevitably remain a dualism of self and not-self, of a knowing subject and a known object. Ultimate Reality must, then, seemingly be something which is not external, as everything external stands in a relationship to something else. This has been neatly expressed by Hāgerström when he states that "God is either

6.1.f.

Chand: 7.1f.

Taitt: 2,3.
4 & 5.Brh: 4.1,2.
See also
2.4.10.Mund: 1.1.
4-5:Chānd: 3.5.4.
Compare also
3.1.2 and
3.5.2.Compare A.B.
Keith, op.
cit, Vol: 2,
P.515.Philosophy
of Religion,
P.175.

reality, as such, or the "I" itself, not, however, as this person, but rather as that which is absolutely incapable of being objectified, as that which cannot be conceived as existing alongside another". The suggestion is made that there must be, in man's experience, something which is beneath the "multiplicity of powers, senses, capacities, imagination, feeling, thought and desire" - something, that is, which persists through his various states and experiences, a kind of "identical individuality", as S.K. Belvalkar phrases it, and what Otto terms "the essential in contrast to the accidental of its outward periphery". In other words, as the One is placed above the many, so in man there must be that which is beneath multiplicity and diversity and, perhaps, an analysis or experience of this "one" might provide the answer to the question pertinently raised in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad - "Through understanding of what, pray, does all this world become understood?".

Compare Otto, P. 259, Mysticism, East & West.

Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy, Vol: 1, Pp. 59-60.

Otto, op. cit., P. 259.

1.1,3.

4. Hence, in the Upaniṣads, we are to witness an exploration into the depths of man's inward being, in an attempt to discover what his essential nature is, so that, by this means, if the individual is, in Radhakrishnan's words, "a world in miniature", he may be able to throw light on the One - "the world or the individual writ large". In other words, the Unity which is Brahman is to be known through the conviction of one's own unitary self or, as the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad expresses it - "The self is to be meditated upon for in it all these become one,

Principal Upaniṣads, P. 492; Note on Chāṇḍ: 8.1,3.

Brh: 1.4,7.

This self is the foot-trace (padanīyam) of all this, for by it all these become one".

Compare
Brh:4.4,21 &
Chānd:8.1,3;
Mund:2.2,6.

5. However, it is material to recall that Saṅkara observed that knowledge grows by connecting the unknown with the known, which implies that the mind is already in possession of some knowledge and, from a partial or incomplete knowledge, a transition has to be made to a fuller or more complete knowledge. If we were in a state of total ignorance to begin with, he states that the desire to know Brahman would never arise in our minds and, likewise, if there were a full and complete knowledge of Brahman, there would be no incentive for further enquiry.

Works,
Memorial
Edition, Vol:
1, Pp.8 &
242. Quoted
by M.K.V.
Iyer in
Advaita
Vedānta,
P.134.

6. It would seem, therefore, that a vague and partial knowledge is to serve as an incentive for further enquiry about the real or essential nature of Brahman and, for our present purpose, the vague and partial may be identified, in the sense determined earlier, with the pronouncements of the Rg-Veda. At this stage, then, we may consider the claimed source of any such vague and partial knowledge, in order to determine its function, if any, in the transition to a fuller and more complete knowledge of Brahman.

See P.65,
supra.

7. Naturally, therefore, the question arises as to where the scriptures came from or who was the first teacher of scriptural knowledge. If it were claimed that the scriptural texts were the recordings of the superconscious experiences of the seers, then, of course, it could still be asked how the seers could experience Ultimate Reality without having

Compare
Swami
Satprakash-
ananda,
Methods of
Knowledge
according to
Advaita
Vedānta, P.195

previously been taught about it and, obviously, an infinite regress would seem to ensue. It would appear, therefore, that one is either forced to accept or reject the contention that the scriptures were initially revelations.

In this respect, we must distinguish between two important concepts - "sruti" and "smṛti". The former means that which is heard and indicates that the Veda is a body of knowledge which is communicated, a recording of a kind of direct intellectual apprehension of what is heard or directly experienced, and the Veda is called "sruti" because it is believed that its teachings were handed down, orally, from teacher to disciple. They were, furthermore, not regarded as having had human authorship and had, therefore, either been revealed to the sages or had become manifest to the primordial rishis who were the seers of the mantras. Indeed, the concise phrase of the Brahma-Sūtra - "sāstra-yonitvāt" - confirms that Brahman was regarded as the source of the Veda. Saṅkara, commenting on a verse in the Brahma-Sutra states that "sruti" is the only source of our knowledge of Brahman. "smṛti", on the other hand, means remembrance or recollection and is associated with various kinds of traditional interpretations or formulated conclusions which were, according to Radhakrishnan, conditioned by the historical situations in which they were produced. "Sruti", therefore, is to be regarded as a means of knowledge which, as scriptural or verbal testimony, conveys knowledge of the supraconscious and, as inference is dependent upon perception, so

Note

The 4 Vedas are included, here.

Brh:Up:
2:4,10. Cp.
also
Mait: 6,32;
Chānd:7.7,1;
Mund:1.1-2.

Radhakrishnan, Brahma-Sutra,
1.1.3, P.240.

ibid, 2.1.27,
P.359.

Principal Upanisads,
P.134.

so "smṛti" derives from "śruti".

In this connection, Swami Satprakashananda claims that "śruti" is prior to mystical perception and that it did not originate from the supraconscious experiences of the sages, as is generally supposed by modern thinkers, the sages being those who perceived supraconscious truths disclosed by the Vedas. This, of course, suggests a twofold interpretation of "śruti", indicated by the difference between revealing and being revealed, that is, a claimed revelation in both an active and passive sense. The former implies truths that were revealed in some form of supraconscious experience and, then, recorded, whereas the latter suggests truths that were arrived at through perception and inference from objective experience in the world and accessible to those prepared to search for them. However, these questions need not detain us, as we are concerned merely to make the point that scriptural testimony is claimed to be the source of a knowledge of Ultimate Reality.

8. If this be so, then, obviously, an important if not fundamental question is whether any such knowledge might well necessarily precede any kind of "intuitive" perception assisting in any transition from a vague and partial to a fuller and more complete knowledge of the One, so that the latter becomes dependent upon the former to the extent that, in its absence, no transition is possible. In such a case, then, "śruti" would serve as a basis for intellectual development and, in this sense, would have to be regarded as a means, subordinate yet

Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedanta, P.203.

Compare Svet: Up: 6.18.

An analysis of intuitive follows, in a later section.

necessary, to the attainment of true knowledge, from which it would follow that, without the orientation of scriptural revelation, any intuitive awareness could hardly attain the desired end. In this connection, it is informative to recall Saṅkara's words:-

"Realizing thyself as the Self of all by means of the sruti, reasoning and thy own experience, do away with what is superimposed on thee, even when the least shade of it appears".

Viveka -
cudamani, 281,
quoted by
Satprakash-
ananda, op.
cit, P. 225.

9. However, knowledge acquired by a study of scriptural texts and reflection on their teachings remains, for the aspirant after true knowledge, only an indirect or mediate knowledge, and in no sense a direct or immediate grasp of Reality. Does this mean, therefore, that scriptural "revelation" is supported by reasoned reflection and verified by some kind of immediate apprehension or intuitive experience, so that it may be claimed that the revelations of the "sruti" texts are confirmed by the supraconscious perceptions of what we may term "illuminated souls"? In what sense, indeed, is this a direct experience of Ultimate Reality? It would suggest rather that the term "knowledge" might not be as appropriate as realization or, at least, that "knowledge" should be used in an extended sense to mean, in this case, experience or realization which, as S.P. Saraswati would claim, may be either perfect or imperfect, direct or indirect, but it seems difficult to understand how these terms are supposed to apply to an immediate apprehension or

Fundamentals
of Vedanta
Philosophy,
P. 305.

intuitive experience of Unity.

10. Our main preoccupation, therefore, must be to try to determine whether or not the Upaniṣads, as "śruti", lead the aspirant after true knowledge to a direct or immediate experience of an apprehended unity in or of all things, so that their pronouncements either contribute something unique to our knowledge of the One, and something derived from a direct experience of it, or that they merely confirm the statements of the earlier "śruti".

We shall, therefore, first proceed to establish what is taught about Brahman, in the Upaniṣads, prior to considering the problem of any experiential basis for such teaching.

Compare F. Edgerton, Sources of the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, P.197, in J.A.O.S, Vol: 36.

3. UPANIṢADIC TEACHING ABOUT BRAHMAN

1. Franklin Edgerton has said that "As soon as we ask how the Upaniṣads conceive the One Principle or Thing and what its relations are to the empiric universe, we find the most varied answers". He further points out that the Upaniṣads have no permanent point of view in regard to these questions and are, on the contrary, constantly shifting the viewpoint, in so far as they are tentative and experimental rather than fixed and final. It is true that, in the Upaniṣads, we find references to a Nirguna and Saguna Brahman, to a Higher and a Lower, to an Impersonal and a Personal, as well as statements suggestive of monistic, pantheistic, transcendental and immanent conceptions of the One. This, of course, merely serves to illustrate the difficulty of trying to abstract what is taught about the First Principle and dividing it into a workable number of classifications which, at the same time, serve to distinguish between attributes, per se, and the various identifications that are made between the One and the numerous phenomena in the empirical world.

At least, as A.B.Keith has reminded us, it is clear that there is a unity; that it is necessary to grasp the nature of the unity and that the proper names of the Unity are either Brahman or Ātman - two ideas whose history in the Brāhmanas indicates that they are used constantly in alternation with each other, so that they must have been felt to be practically akin. When,

Sources of the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, P.200, J.A.O.S., Vol.36.

Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads, P.516.

For a dissenting view, see F. Edgerton, op. cit., Pp.200-202.

therefore, we refer to the One, we propose to use the two names in this sense, although, of course, recognizing that they are indicative of a difference in approach signified by what we may, with others, term the objective and subjective, respectively.

Some, however, would suggest that the "neti-neti" phrase of the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad expresses, in a drastic and final form, the idea that any attributions are not to be taken literally or in any empirical sense and would, seemingly, be the equivalent of denying to the Absolute what A.B.

Keith describes as "any and every attempt to define it in terms of ordinary knowledge". In similar

vein, Ultramaré claims that the phrase denies every effort to define the One. Nevertheless, however devastating these pronouncements might, in the last analysis, appear to be and, indeed, serve as a stern condemnation of the unsatisfactory nature of all attempted descriptions of the One, our task, at this stage, is to summarize such efforts at description.

2. To this end, a classification used by Jadunath Sinha, amongst others, commends itself, both by virtue of its relative simplicity, it being a twofold classification, and by virtue of its interest from a religious standpoint. Broadly, he considers statements about Brahman as falling into one or other of the two categories of Immanence and Transcendence, categories which are able to embrace between them statements indicative of a Nirguna (without attributes) and a Saguna (with attributes) Brahman and relate, respectively to a Higher (para) and a Lower (apara) knowledge. However, such categories would not

Compare
3.9.26;
4.2.4;
4.4.22;
4.5.15.

Op.cit,
P.521.

L'Histoire
des Idées
Theosophiques,
1.74.

Foundations
of Hinduism,
P.4.

For para and
apara see:-
Brh: 2.3.1;
Mund: 1.1.4;
Mait: 6.3;
Pras: 5.2.

accommodate numerous passages which, at one and the same time, suggest both immanence and transcendence, either by implication or limitation. It will be necessary, therefore, to make due allowance for this, by sub-dividing each of the two categories mentioned above, in order to distinguish between statements suggestive of the "purely immanent" and what we may term the "partially immanent", as well as between those suggestive of a wholly or completely transcendent beyond manifestation and a transcendent which is yet manifest, in part.

3. BRAHMAN AS IMMANENT

a. Initially, under this heading, a distinction must be made between passages which suggest that Reality is a single being, wholly and completely immanent, and of which, therefore, all things are modes, moments, members, appearances or projections, and those which imply the existence of something other than deity or spirit, namely that in which it dwells.

b. Those passages proclaiming an undifferentenced Unity express it in three main forms:-

1. That the whole world is Brahman

"Verily, this whole world is Brahman" (1)

See below for references.

2. That the Soul or Self is the whole world

"These worlds, these gods, these beings and all this are the Self" (2)

3. That the Person, He or I are similarly identified

"The Person is truly this whole world, whatever has been and whatever will be" (3)

1.Chand: 3.14.1. Compare 7.25.1; Mand: 2; Mupq:2.2.11(H) & 2.2.12(R).
2.Brh:2.4.6. Compare also 2.5.1; 4.5.7; Chānd:7.25.2; Mait: 4.6; Ait: 5(H); 3.1.1(R).
3.Svet: 3.15; Compare also Brh: 4.4.13; Chānd:7.25.1; Mupq:2.1.10; Svet:3.9; 11.15; Kaiv: 8-9;19-20.

Hence, according to such passages, the Brahman is proclaimed to be wholly or completely immanent.

c. The distinguishing characteristic of the other statements which suggest immanence as distinct from pure immanence is that the Brahman is thought of as coming within a relational scheme and as, thereby, being experienced or manifest within a world of multiplicity, of diversity and of change or, in other words, as being somehow manifest in a dualistic world of knowing subject and known object. Statements indicating the presence of deity or spirit in the world, as distinct from its being identical with it, are of various kinds, including those referring to a personified concept of immanence. Such statements emphasize its being in the world, by reference to its five main characteristics, as such.

1. As all-pervading, immanent, omnipresent or widely diffused

"The great, the all-pervading(Vibhu) (1)

2. As having entered all and within all

"--the great God has entered (all) the worlds" (2)

3. As the Soul Self or Inmost being of all

"--the inmost being of everything" (3)

1. Kath:1.2.22(R), 2.22(H). Compare also Brh: 3.4.2; Kaṭh: 2.3.8(R), 6.8(H); Mund: 1.1.6(sarvagata), 3.2.5(sarvaga); Mait: 5.1(Hymn to the Immanent Soul); Isa 8; Svet: 2.16; 3.7 & 21; 4.4; 6.11 & 17; Vajra 9.
2. Mait: 6.38. Compare also Mait: 7.6; Brh: 1.4.7; Tait: 2.6.1; Svet: 2.17, Kauṣi: 4.20.
3. Mait: 7.1. Compare also Brh: 2.5.1; 3.4.1; Chānd: 6.9.4(The Tat Tvam Asi" passage referring to the indwelling spirit); Mait: 5.2; Mund: 2.1.4; 3.1.5; Kath: 2.3.17(R) and 6.17(H); Svet: 3.21; Brh: 5.4 (The Tad vai Tad passage).

4. As hidden in all things

"--the lord of all, hidden in all things" (4)

5. As Inner-Guide or Controller

"He is your self, the inner-controller
(antaryāmin), the immortal" (5)

d. However, the thought of Brahman as coming within a relational scheme is probably most obviously suggested in passages which refer to the Absolute as God or Īsvara (The Lord) - the determinate or "saguna" Brahman. We may consider the general expression of this under seven main headings.

1. As Creator

"He is the maker of the universe, for he is the maker of all". (1)

2. As Ruler and Governor

"He is the ruler of all, the Lord of all and governs all this whatever there is" (2)

3. As Lord of the Law of Karma, according to fruits to all creatures relative to merit and demerit

"--who brings good and removes evil" (3)

4. As the Supreme Person

"--the Primeval, the Supreme Person" (4)

4. Svet: 4.15; Compare also Kaṭh: 5.6(H); Muṇḍ: 2.2.1; Svet: 1.14.

5. Brh: 3.7.3-23. Compare also Maṇḍ: 6.

1. Brh: 4.4.13. Compare also 2.1.20; Svet: 3.2-3 & 20; 4.11 & 14; 5.13; Muṇḍ: 2.1.1 & 3-9; Mand: 6; Mait: 6.8; Chand: 6.8.4; Ait: 1.1; Tait: 2.6.1; 3.1.1; 3.6.1.

2. Brh: 5.6.1. Compare also 2.5.15; 3.8.9; 4.4.22; Tait: 3.1.1 (Creator, Preserver and Destroyer). Kaṭh: 2.3.2(R).

3. Svet: 6.6. Compare also 4.11; 6.11; Brh: 4.4.24 (See R's note on the "giver of wealth, P.280; Chand: 4.15.3; Kath: 2.2.13(R) and 5.13(H) (See R8s note, P.640 that this suggests a doctrine of Divine Providence).

4. Svet: 3.19. Compare also 3.8; 3.14; 6.7; Muṇḍ: 1.2.11; 2.1.2; 2.1.10; 3.2.8; Pras: 5.5; Brh: 5.12.2; Mait: 2.5; Kaṭh: 2.3.8(R)-6.8(H); 1.3.11(R)-3.11(H).

5. As having various perfections and thereby being the object of aspiration

"The Supreme Object to be desired" (5)

6a. As perfect in a vaguely moral sense, i.e. free from evil as sorrow, pain and death

"He burnt all evils" (6a)

b. As perfect in a more usual moral sense

"---enjoyer of righteous works---pure, steadfast---stainless" (6b)

7. As gentle, worthy of worship and adoration

"Worthy to be worshipped day by day" (7)

Such passages indicate, then, that the Brahman is thought of as related to the world, which is regarded as somehow real or as an expression of It and not merely as an appearance and, therefore, illusory. It is immanent but not purely immanent in it and functions as its Creator, Ruler and Governor, and the goal or object of man's ambitions and aspirations.

i.e. the goal of lower or apara knowledge.

4. BRAHMAN AS TRANSCENDENT

a. Before considering statements indicative of transcendence, it seems important to consider some of the various interpretations given to this difficult term, first of all in Western usage.

5. Mund: 2.2.1. Compare also 1.1.9; 2.1.6-7; 2.2.7; 3.2.8; Mand: 6(omniscience); Svet: 3.9; 6.8; Kath: 1.2.20(R)-2.20(H); 1.3.11(R)-3.11(H); 2.1.13(R)-4.13(H) (Like a flame without smoke, i.e. Perfect).

6a. Brh: 1.4.1. Compare also 2.5.11-12; 8.4.1.

b. Mait: 2.7. Compare also 7.4 & 6; Mund: 2.1.7; 3.1.5; Svet: 6.19; Isa 8(untouched(R)-unpierced(H) by evil and pure; Kath: 1.3.8(R)-3.8(H); 2.2.11(R)-5.11(H); 2.2.2(R)-5.2(H) (born of right, i.e. Rta, as upright, honest and true).

7. Kath: 4.8.(H)-2.1.8(R). Compare also 2.2.3(R)-5.3(H); Svet: 6.18; 4.11; 4.16(kindly(H)-auspicious(R); 4.21; Tait: 2.7(bestower of bliss).

The Latin "transcendere" may be translated as to climb over, to surpass or to go beyond, and Runes' P.319. Dictionary of Philosophy defines the transcendent as that which is beyond in any of several senses. Kant uses the term as meaning whatever is beyond possible experience and hence unknowable, in contrast to the experiential nature of the immanent. Generally, in negative theology and mysticism, it may be regarded as synonymous with incomprehensibility, that is, the meaning or nature of that which cannot be comprehended or perceived. In Deism, the term implied a remoteness from nature, in the sense of not closely related to or widely different from, and in epistemology, it means that which is not directly accessible to the apprehending consciousness. It would seem, therefore, that the meaning of the term is by no means as obvious as is sometimes imagined. In Western usage, then, the term usually implies that which surpasses normal or empirical existence and experience, so that it transcends or is beyond the capacity of the human mind to know.

b. Although R.C.Zaehner has stated that, in its sacred books, Hinduism has not supplied any clear picture of a transcendent Being, it would seem that quite a different interpretation is given to the term in Eastern and, more specifically here, Upanisadic usage. For instance, Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya has pointed out that the Upanisadic concept of transcendence is totally different from the Western notion. He claims that the term here always signifies uniqueness or distinctness

Hindu and
Muslim
Mysticism,
P.231.

Studies in
the
Upanisads,
P.51.

with reference to Brahman and never exclusiveness or apartness. M.N.Sircar concurs with this when he comments that the "neti-neti" phrase does not deny the reality of existence but it does deny "all the empirical characterization of reality". In other words, the transcendent is something unique and distinct from the empirical. A.N.Watts refers, in like manner, to that which is "other than all known and knowable things".

c. It would seem, then, that, in Upanisadic usage it is not possible to think of the transcendent without, at the same time, thinking of that which is transcended and compared to which it stands as unique or distinct. For this reason, it seems important to modify any suggestion of absolute unknowability, such as is implied in Western usage, if only because such would not only deny a direct knowledge but also any mediate knowledge, as well. Hence, it is apparent that a distinction must be made between incomprehensibility and unknowability, in so far as an incomprehensible Absolute is by no means the equivalent of an unknowable Absolute. This is really the equivalent of distinguishing between Brahman in essence and in manifestation.

It is all a question, then, as H.D.Lewis has pointed out, of making "the transcendent significant---in terms of the finite realities which do come within our orbit," although, of course, they do not "fathom or reduce the mystery of the transcendent" which remains, in essence, incomprehensible.

d. Passages, then, suggesting the wholly transcendent are mainly negative in form and emphasize, in various

Hindu
Mysticism,
P.59.

The Supreme
Identity,
P.63. See
also R.Guenon,
Introduction
to the Study
of Hindu
Doctrines,
P.281.

Our
Experience
of God,
P.120.

ways, its incomprehensibility and its unlimited and undefined nature, it being, in the words of the Kena Upaniṣad, "other than the known and above the unknown".

1.4(R).
1.3(H).

These statements may be considered under seven main headings.

1. Brahman as Incomprehensible

"---the highest beyond the reach of man's understanding". (1)

2. The Undifferentiated, transcending causality

"In it there is no diversity". (2)

3. Transcending Time, as a durationless "now"

"---that which people call the past, the present and the future---". (3)

1. Mund: 2.2.1. Compare also 2.1.2 (higher than the highest immutable) and 1.1.6 (ungraspable(H)-unperceivable(R); Brh: 3.8.8; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15 (incomprehensible); 3.9.26; and 4.5.15 (na-itī and net-netī passages, referring to the Incomprehensible, going beyond the attributes of effects); 2.3.6 (a passage which Śaṅkara regards as referring to the Absolute Transcendent, non-empirical Godhead. See R's note, P.195); Chānd: 6.2.1 (without limitation or upādhi); Maṇḍ: 7 (ungraspable, unthinkable, and, as the 4th quarter of AUM, that which is beyond all word and thought); Mait: 6.17 (infinite, incomprehensible, unlimited); Kena 1.4(R)-1.3(H) (This passage may be compared with the Tao Te Ching, 56, lines 1-2, in A. Waley's "The Way and the Power, P.210-Those who know do not speak; Those who speak do not know"); Kena 2.3(R)-11(H); Kath: 1.2.8(R)-2.8(H) (inconceivable); 1.2.18(R)-2.18(H); 1.3.15(R)-3.15(H); 2.3.12(R)-6.12(H) (incomprehensible, except as existent).
2. Brh: 4.4.19. Compare also 2.5.19 (without earlier, without later, i.e. beyond causality); 4.4.20 (unborn, beyond space); Chānd: 6.2.1 (one only, without a second. Compare R's note, P.448-Being is above all conceptions and conceptual differentiations); Kath: 1.3.15(R)-3.15(H) (without beginning, without end, i.e. beginningless); 2.1.11(R)-4.11(H); Mund: 3.1.8 (without parts); Svet: 3.17 (devoid of all senses); 6.5 (without parts).
3. Brh: 3.8.7. Compare also 2.5.19 (without earlier, without later, i.e. beyond temporal relations); 4.4.25 (Lord of what has been and what will be); Maṇḍ: 1.1 (Past, present and Future and whatever is beyond the threefold time); Svet: 6.16 (the author of time); Kath: 1.2.14(R)-2.14(H) (beyond Past and Future, i.e. a durationless "now"); 2.1.5 & 12-13(R)-4.5 & 12-13(H) (Lord of Past and Future); 1.3.15(R)-3.15(H) (without beginning, without end).

4. Transcending the World

"In it all the worlds rest and no-one ever goes beyond it". (4)

5. Moral Transcendence

"---beyond right and wrong". (5)

6. Its Paradoxical Attributes

"---the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the unmoving and the moving". (6)

4. Kath: 2.2.8(R)-5.8(H). Compare also Brh: 3.8.9(the intelligent transcendent ruler, by whose power heavenly bodies stand in their respective positions. See R's note, P.233); 4.4.25(above the world as unborn, undecaying and undying); Chānd: 3.14.4(encompassing the whole world); Tait: 2.8.1(from fear of which the wind blows, the sun rises, etc); Kath:2.3.3(R)-6.3(H); 1.3.11(R)- 3.11(H)(beyond both the manifest and the unmanifest); 2.2.13(R)-5.13(H)(the eternal amid the transcendent); Subāla: 14.1(The general import of which, according to R, is that which remains when all things are negated, P.889); Svet: 3.14(surrounds the earth on all sides and stands ten fingers' breadth beyond); 4.18(neither Being nor Non-Being, i.e.transcends the duality of Subject and Object); 6.7(transcendent); Mund: 2.2.5(In whom sky, earth and space are woven).

5. Kath: 1.2.14(R)-2.14(H). Compare also Brh: 4.4.22(What he has done or what he has not done does not affect him); Kaiv: 22(Merit or demerit I have none, i.e.do not affect me); Tait: 2.9; Kau: 1.4(Thus one, devoid of good deeds, devoid of evil deeds, a knower of Brahman goes on to Brahman); Mund: 3.1.3(shaking off good and evil) and the same thought in Mait: 6.18.

6. Brh: 2.3.1. Compare also 3.8.8(neither gross nor fine, etc); Kath: 1.2.21-22(R)-2.21-22(H)(bodiless among bodies, rejoices and rejoices not); 1.2.20(R)-2.20(H)(smaller than the small, greater than the great); Tait: 2.6 (actual and beyond, defined and undefined, true and untrue, intelligent and non-intelligent); Mund: 2.2.1(Being and non-Being); 3.1.7(farther than far, yet near at hand); Mait: 6.15(Time and Timeless); Isa 4(though standing still, outstrips those who run); 5(moves and moves not, far and near, within and without); 14(manifest and unmanifest); Svet: 3.20(subtler than the subtle, greater than the great); 5.10(neither male, female nor neuter); 3.19(see without eye, hears without ear); Pras: 2.5(Being and non-Being. Compare this with Rg-Veda X.129.1).

Compare, also, the following Minor Upanisads:-

Nrisimhauttaratāpini: 6 & 7; Ramapurvatāpini: 5.8; Rāmāuttaratāpini: 2. See "108 Upanisads" published by Nirnayāsāgar Press, Bombay, Third Edition.

In connection with Paradoxical Attributes, it must be noted that, although A.B.Keith comments that contradictions in adjectives are a normal characteristic of the Upaniṣads, Swami

Op.cit,
P.587.

Nikhilananda states that there is an ascription of irreconcilable attributes, in order to deny

The
Upaniṣads,
P.30.

in the Brahman all empirical predicates to show that It is totally other than anything we know.

In other words, each attribute cancels the other and leaves the idea of an indefinable existent, free from all attributes, all determinations and all limitations or upādhis (limiting adjuncts).

7. Its Essence, as Sat, Cit and Ānanda

"---as the Real, as Knowledge, as the Infinite---". (7a)

" Bliss is Brahman ". (7b)

In this connection, it must be noted that Brahman is frequently described, in the major Upaniṣads, by such separate terms as Reality or Existence (Sat), Consciousness or Knowledge (Cit) and Bliss (Ānanda), although only in the minor Upaniṣads does the compound term "Sachchidānanda" occur. These three

7a. Tait: 2.1.1. According to Hume's Note 1, P.283, Deussen would emend "ananta" (infinite) in this verse to "ānanda" in order to have the customary threefold definition of Sat, Cit and Ananda and to lead to the culminating Bliss of Brahman in Tait: 2.8. Compare also Tait: 2.4.1; Ait: 3.1.3(R)-5.3(H); Brh: 3.9.28.7(R)-3.9.28.8(H).

7b. Tait: 3.6.1. Compare also Brh: 2.1.20(satyasya satyam); (the truth of truth); Chand: 6.2.1 & 6.9.4, for "sat" passages. For "cit" see Brh: 3.4.2(seer of seeing, etc); 3.8.11; 4.5.13(a mass of intelligence only); Chand:8.12. 4-5(The Self as Perceiver); Mund: 2.2.7(all-knowing, all-wise); Kath: 2.1.3(R)-4.3(H); Ait: 3.1.1.& 3(R)-5.1 & 3(H) (Brahman is intelligence); Kaiv: 21 (Pure Consciousness); Mait: 6.7(perceiver, thinker). For "ānanda" see Brh: 3.9.28; 4.3.33(Bliss of Brahman); Tait: 2.7(Brahman is Bliss); 3.6 (Bliss of Brahman); 2.5.1 to 2.8.1.

terms are especially significant because, although Brahman is regarded as indeterminate, unconditioned and without attributes, it is, nevertheless, in essence, Absolute Being, and at the same time, Absolute Consciousness and Absolute Bliss. These terms are to be understood in both a positive and a negative sense, so that by denying Being, Consciousness and Bliss in any empirical sense, they are, at the same time, affirming the positive nature of the three terms. Sat, in this sense, is the equivalent of not Non-Being but Pure Being; Cit as not nescience but Pure Consciousness and Ananda as not a mere absence of pain but Pure Bliss. In other words, Pure Being is not empirical Being, determined by time, space and causality and, in so far as it is the negation of all empirical Being, it is transcendental Being. Pure Consciousness is not empirical consciousness involving, as it does, a subject-object distinction; it is not determined by the intellectual categories of time, space and causality and, in so far as it is the denial of any objective existence, it is transcendental Consciousness. Finally, Pure Bliss is not empirical bliss, arising from the intercourse of the senses and their objects, but is the negation of all such bliss and, hence, transcendental Bliss.

In this connection, see Swami Nikhilananda, Upanisads, Pp. 35-48; Radhakrishnan, Principal Upanisads, Pp. 54-72 and A.B.Keith, op.cit, P. 507 and Pp. 519-522. Compare also Brh: 4.5.15 and Svet:4.18.

5. BRAHMAN AS BOTH IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT

a. We may, finally, consider statements which, at one

and the same time, refer to both the immanent and the transcendent Brahman, thereby presenting, as it were, the crucial paradox of religious thought yet seemingly resolving it with the implication that both terms might well be correlative rather than mutually exclusive.

b. In general, such statements suggest that, although manifest in the world, Brahman is in no way exhausted in it so that, in essence, It could not be fully manifest, the world remaining a mere fragment of the totality of Brahman. It may pervade the world as its soul but, in Itself, it is not the universe, being rather in all things as that which makes them what they are. These statements may be considered under two main headings.

1. Brahman is not exhausted in the universe

"All beings are one fourth of him. The three fourths, immortal, is in the sky". (1)

2. Brahman as both within and without the universe

" It is within all this and also it is outside all this". (2)

1. Chānd: 3.12.6, with which compare Rg-Veda.X.90.3. Compare also Brh: 1.4.7 (which implies that though perceived as immanent, He yet remains transcendent); 5.1.1; Chand: 3.14.3; Svet: 3.14 (surrounds the earth on all sides and stands ten fingers' breadth beyond); Mand: 1.1 (Whatever else there is beyond the threefold time); Mait: 7.11(R)-7.11.8(H) (Brahman with one quarter moves in the three and with three quarters in the last. This refers to the four conditions of the Self).
2. Isa 5. Compare also Brh: 2.3.1 (the mortal and the immortal, i.e. the manifest and the transcendent which is altogether beyond the world); 3.7.3; Kath: 2.2.9(R)-5.9(H); 2.2.11(R)-5.11(H); Tait: 2.6.1 (Having entered it, He became both the actual and the beyond, i.e. sat and tyat, the actual and the transcendent); Mait: 5.2 (within and without); 6.15; Mund: 2.1.2 (He is within and without); Svet: 3.9-10 (the whole universe filled by the Supreme who is also beyond this world).

6. Our survey, then, suggests that there are different conceptions of Brahman, as is evinced by the diversity of statements found. Owing to such diversity, the suggestion naturally arises that "experience" of the One may not be of any single kind, unless, of course, only one of the various conceptions is a valid one and all the rest incorrect. If, on the other hand, they were to be regarded as genuine expressions of a variety of experiences of the One, then, of course, the question of their mutual relationship, the one with the other, inevitably arises. If this latter contention were acceptable, it would seem that the Supreme Reality might not be so much an immanent or a transcendent Being as an experienced Being, the nature of which is differently conceived, in so far as certain inspired individuals experienced It and interpreted the experience in an essentially different or individual way. It is, of course, equally possible that such individuals may have touched upon different aspects of any such experience, when attempting to describe or define it, but this does not imply that there is an infinite variety of experiences of the One, rather - and more rationally - that the experience may be the common core and any description of it the variable factor. At least, if this were so, then what was experienced would be regarded as primary data and attempted descriptions of it as secondary interpretations. On this point, it is informative to recall that Sidney Cave stated that different descriptions of the One correspond to what men feel to be their experience

Compare, for instance, Ninian Smart, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, P.40.

Christianity and some Living Religions of the East, P.34.

of the universe and that takes many a form. S. Radhakrishnan also states that the Upaniṣadic thinkers based the reality of Brahman on the fact of spiritual experience, so that distinctions made in the nature of the One are facts of such spiritual experience.

The
Principal
Upaniṣads,
P.53.

Nevertheless, Ninian Smart has cautioned that it is very difficult to tell about a description of an experience how much is due to interpretative elements and how much to the experience itself, and especially is this so because of what he terms "a certain conceptual ambience and a certain religious milieu", not to mention an unconscious interpretation which may be "injected" into the experience. In similar vein, William James noted the difference, commonly overlooked, between an experience and the representation of that experience in thought.

Doctrine and
Argument in
Indian
Philosophy,
P.138.

7. In effect, therefore, it seems that the difficult problem is that of trying to look for primary data lying behind secondary interpretations and only by proceeding from interpretation to data - that is, to the experiences they describe - may the origin and significance of any such statements be understood.

Varieties of
Religious
Experience,
P.424, 1952
Edition.

H.D.Lewis has expressed this, in an article dealing with the nature of theology, stating that "---If the theologian sets himself to the task of guiding us back from the more persistent abstract formulations of religious truths which we have to the original experience in the symbolic totality of which they played an indispensable part, then he will be discharging a function than which few can be more

"What is
Theology?",
in
Philosophy,
Vol.27, No.
103, October,
1952.P.354.

important at present".

It would seem, therefore, necessary to look more closely at the sources of knowledge of Brahman and at what is meant or implied by "experience", in the Upaniṣads, and to these we shall now turn our attention.

4. SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE UPANISADS

1. We have previously considered various statements relating to the Brahman, statements which claim to give knowledge of Ultimate Reality. However, knowledge, it seems, must be grounded in something other than itself being, as it were, a product or effect of some prior cause. Seemingly, therefore, knowledge of Brahman must be grounded in something other than itself and we must proceed to consider the extent to which, if at all, any such knowledge of Brahman can be related to or proceed from an experiential source.

2. However, and by way of clarification, we may first consider, albeit briefly, the sources of ordinary knowledge prior to examining the special problem of knowledge of the transcendent. Traditionally, in the West, the problem is concerned with a consideration of the faculty or faculties of mind by which knowledge is attainable and this very problem gave rise to the main cleavage in modern epistemology between rationalism, as represented by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, and empiricism, as represented by Locke, Berkeley and Hume, in other words between reason and experience. Kant's critical philosophy attempted to reconcile the two by assigning to reason and experience their respective roles in the constitution of knowledge. Whereas rationalists have emphasized the importance of deduction and demonstrative procedures, empiricists have relied mainly on induction and hypothesis but few contemporary epistemologists would probably subscribe to a rationalism or an empiricism of an exclusive and extreme kind, any more than they would espouse any one method to the absolute

exclusion of the other. A fourth theory regards intuition as the organ of knowledge and condemns reason or intellect as inadequate to the comprehension of reality and, in recent times, Henri Bergson has probably been its most eminent advocate, although, of course, in all four theories there are many variants. However, whatever theoretical emphasis may, in particular, be placed on the relative importance of such claimed sources of knowledge, it is generally agreed that the three main sources are perception, inference and intuition.

3. Perception involves a duality of knowing subject and known object and every act of perception is limited by space and time and is, of necessity, experiential. In other words, we experience an object in the "here" of space and the "now" of time, as a result of which perception cannot give knowledge of a before and after anymore than it can, in being connected with the particular, provide knowledge of the general or universal. It seems further limited by the active contribution of the knowing subject, to the extent that any subjective element involved modifies the object, in so far as it cannot be known in its pure and original form and, in consequence, a relation of separation rather than of identification ensues.

Inference, on the other hand, is able to widen the field of knowledge, in so far as it is not limited by the senses, and consequently it extends our knowledge to the past and future, as, for example, the inferential process involved in any cause and effect relationship demonstrates. Furthermore, inference may correct perception when the senses prove to be both false and

delusive as, for example, the rope's being identified with a snake or the sun's being relatively minute in comparison with the size of the earth. However, if inference corrects perception, it does so at the expense of the directness of perception and so provides an indirect or mediate awareness. As Henri Bergson has stated - "It goes all round life, taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it".

Creative
Evolution,
P.186.

5. Intuition, however, is a somewhat difficult term, in so far as it has been subject to a number of interpretations, and its importance for our particular object of enquiry justifies a fuller consideration of it than did either perception or inference.

H.D.Lewis refers to a "common usage" interpretation of intuition as a "swift and subtle reasoning where the observations or other items it involves are not displayed as openly as usual", as, for example, in "shrewd insight", in what is referred to as a woman's intuition or in a sailor's intuition about the weather based on long experience and subtle observation. W.E.Hocking distinguishes between what he terms "original" and "acquired" intuitions, the former being illustrated by intuitions of time and self, the latter by tricks of skill or what he calls "connoisseurship" which give an "inner" knowledge of things, after a long acquaintance with their superficial manifestations. Lindsay Dewar, on the other hand, distinguishes between "subconscious

Our
Experience
of God, P.47.

Compare B.
Bosanquet,
Essentials
of Logic,
P.145.

Types of
Philosophy,
P.209.

Man and God,
P.14f.

logic" and "intuition proper". The former is rendered possible by the fact that additional data are subconsciously perceived by means of that capacity for heightened apprehension which is characteristic of the unconscious. The latter he claims to be the highest form of human experience as, for example, the painter, musician and poet who arrive, by an immediate apprehension, at the point from which their creations spring, and neither conscious nor subconscious logic can account for the insight. In other words, the meaning of a great picture or sculpture can be apprehended by intuition only, not because the interpretation is the result of unconscious reasoning but because art, in all its forms, transcends the categories of logical thought. In this case, therefore, the distinguishing mark of intuitive knowledge is that it cannot be put directly into words or explained as the outcome of a ratiocinative process.

An Eastern writer, M.K.Venkatarama Iyer, distinguishes between intuition as a "method of approach" and as a "form of experience". The former would represent the mind's capacity to interpret as wholes facts furnished by the intellect, that is, a capacity for seeing things in their togetherness, whereas the latter would represent a felt experience transcending the common modes of thinking and speaking and, hence, supra-rational and not capable of being fully expounded in conceptual terms, whereby a complex of simple percepts are synthesized as a unity in space and time. This form of experience may well be compared

Advaita
Vedanta,
P.55.

with an intuition of unity such as result in an interpretation of pantheistic unity.

In philosophy, the term "intuition" has a more technical use and, in H.D.Lewis' words, refers to "modes of knowledge (or beliefs if there are fallible intuitions) which do not admit of further support or reason". In ethics, for instance, certain actions or kinds of actions may be known to be right or wrong by a direct intuition of their rightness or wrongness, without any consideration of the value of their consequences, as, indeed, in mathematics and logic, when there may be an immediate apprehension of perceivable entities and their relations.

Generally speaking, then, "intuition" may be interpreted as a source of that which is immediately known, in contrast to inferences drawn from experience. Hence, whereas perception and inference only give a knowledge that is mediated or indirect, intuition, it is claimed, has a direct and immediate quality and, furthermore, a compelling character underlining that what is intuited must necessarily be true or right, although, of course, a feeling of inner certainty is, at one and the same time, the most basic subjective test of truth and the least reliable.

Are, then, we to conclude that intuition is a cognitive faculty? It would seem so, in so far as empirical or rational means are available to validate the knowledge intuited, although the somewhat mysterious nature of the process seems to be suggested in A.J.Ayer's remarks that "words like 'intuition' and 'telepathy' are brought in just

Our
Experience
of God, P.47.

For an
opposing
view, see
A.J.Ayer,
Language,
Truth and
Logic, P.120
Victor
Gollancz,
London, 1962,
2nd Edition,
15th Imp:.
Compare also
ibid, P.138.

The Problem
of Knowledge.
P.33.

to disguise the fact that no explanation has been found".

6. Nevertheless, intuition is not without its critics.

For instance, a naturalistic explanation of it would find the origin of intuitive experience in a vast mental underworld, where instinct, memory and the subconscious interact, that is, it is a kind of subliminal perception which is too weak to enter consciousness but is, nevertheless, active. This does not, of course, invalidate its relevance for religious intuitions, the more so if it is accepted that any ideas of God are innate or latent and, in the process of time, are gradually made more and more articulate. W.E.Hocking, on the other hand, claims that intuition has three defects. In the first place, it cannot define what it perceives, for a definition makes use of a concept. Secondly, it cannot communicate what it perceives, for language is made up of the common coin of concepts and, thirdly, it cannot defend its truth nor distinguish true from false interpretation, without the aid and criticism of the intellect. However, without multiplying examples of arguments directed against intuition, it seems that most criticisms are directed not so much against intuition, per se, but against what is claimed to be its independence of the intellectual process. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between an immediacy associated with intuition and any consequent interpretation of it, however fragmentary this may be, in so far as it cannot readily be translated into conceptual terms, though,

Compare Hunter Mead, Types and Problems of Philosophy, P.182, Holt-Dryden, New York, 1959, 3rd Edition.

Compare H.D. Lewis and R. L. Slater, World Religions, P.145, Watts & Co., London, 1966.

W.E.Hocking, Types of Philosophy, P.211.

of course, it can become articulate, even in the course of a long period of time as, for instance, in a certain measure of agreement between the testimony of a manifold variety of mystical experiences.

7. When we turn to the Upaniṣads, however, it is not easy to discover a clearly defined theory of cognition and, at best, as M. Hiriyanna has expressed it, "a few hints may be put together".

Outlines of Indian Philosophy, P.69.

It would seem that three modes of consciousness are, indeed, recognized in the Upaniṣads, namely sense-perception, logical understanding (i.e. the processes of inference or reasoning) and intuitive insight. Presumably, therefore, consciousness is to be regarded as the basis of all experience and, hence, of knowledge, but it is not, apparently, confined to one horizontal plane but is, as it were, multi-dimensional. This is seen particularly in the emphasis which is placed on intuition and the part it plays in what Nathaniel Pearson has termed "the direct seeing of a higher consciousness".

Compare the Brahma - Sutra, P.105, Radhakrishnan.

Compare Kaus: Up: 3.7, for the essential need for consciousness.

Compare Sri Aurobindo and the Soul Quest of Man, P.94.

In order, therefore, to understand more clearly what is implied by "intuition", with particular reference to any transcendental consciousness, i.e. a consciousness of Supreme Reality, we may briefly consider these three modes of consciousness which are recognized in the Upaniṣads.

a. Sense Perception

Frequent reference is made to the various organs of sense-perception and the list is sometimes

See below for references.

Brh: 2.4.14; 3.2.2-9; 4.5.12; Chānd: 5.1.6-12; Mund: 3.1.8 (ḍeva); 3.2.7; Kaus: 2.13; 3.3; 4.20; Kena: 3; Isa 4; Prasna 4.2.8 & 11; Kath: 2.3.12(R) - 6.12(H).

extended to include speech and mind. A.B.Keith refers to the fact that "prāṇa"(originally breath) is the constant expression, in the Upaniṣads, for the whole sum of the organs of sense. Occasionally, the term "deva"(god) is employed to mean sense-power or the conscious self with all its powers, and the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad refers to streams of perception flowing from the senses to the mind.

Op.cit,
P.564.Compare
Brh: Up:
6.1.1-14.

1.5.

b. Logical Understanding

In the Aitareya Upaniṣad, reference is made to the various mental functions, such as consciousness (samyāna); perception (ajñāna); discrimination (viñāna); intelligence (prajñāna); insight(dr̥ṣṭi); thought (matī) and conception (samkalpa), which are termed the "appellations of intelligence(H)(names of intelligence(R)).In the Taittirīya Aranyaka, it is interesting to note that reference is made to perception(pratyakṣa) and reasoning(anumāna). In the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, it is stated that, apart from intelligence(prajñā), there is no cognizance through the senses, so that intelligence is to be regarded as essential for every kind of sense - knowledge. In the metaphor of the chariot and the driver, intellect(buddhi) is the charioteer, mind (manas) is the reins and the senses(indriya) are only the horses.

3.2.(R)-
5.1(H).
Compare R's
note on
intuition.

1.2.1.

3.7.

Compare
Brh: 1.5.3;
2.4.11 &
4.5.12.Kath:3.10
(H)-1.3.10
(R). See
also Mait:
2.6(R)-2.
6.d(H),
where the
metaphor is
further
developed.

So far, then, it is reasonable to suppose that perception and logical understanding are to be regarded as sources of knowledge in the Upaniṣads. Mention is also made of insight(dr̥ṣṭi), although this would seem more akin to the Western

See above.

interpretation of intuition in a non-mystical sense and, hence, what we might regard as an intuition of mind, in order to distinguish it from mystical insight in any religious sense.

c. Intuitive Insight

However, whereas perception and logical understanding may be regarded as valid means of knowledge, as far as the phenomenal world is concerned, they apparently have no intrinsic validity when supra - mundane knowledge is sought. In other words, if there is a transcendental consciousness (i.e. a consciousness or awareness of transcendent Reality), then it must seemingly be uniquely different from all other modes of apprehension and, if perception is ruled out, then so is logical understanding, as this latter is not possible without a basis of perception, as, indeed, is insight (dr̥ṣṭi). For example, numerous passages do, in fact, claim that the various sense-organs and, indeed, mind, as a logical or rational faculty, are incapable of apprehending Brahman, so the transcendental consciousness must be something quite apart and distinct from these. Indeed, if it is a question of direct knowledge about rather than indirect acquaintance with, then it would seem that Sruti or verbal testimony is questionable as, indeed, is analogy, since the Brahman is distinct from all else and nothing is in the universe which can be cited as analogous to it. Hence, it must be presumed

See references below.

See P.68, supra.

Compare Kath: 6.12(H)-2.3.12(R); 6.9(H)-2.3.9(R); Mund: 3.1.8; Kena 3(H)-1.3(R); Svet: 4.19.20; Tait: 2.4.1; 2.9.1. These passages state that the higher Brahman is not accessible to knowledge via sense, thought or instruction. Kena 3b(H)-1.4(R) claims that it is other than the known and above the unknown.

that all ordinary means of knowledge fail and, presumably for this reason, a distinction is made between parā-vidyā or the Higher Knowledge of Brahman and aparā-vidyā or the Lower Knowledge of empirical things.

Compare Mund:
1.1.4-5 &
Mait: 6.22.

Some indication is, then, given of how the Brahman is to be known. As has already been observed, the Kaṭha Upaniṣad states the need for an inversion of the natural orientation of consciousness by a "turning of the eye inwards". The Chāndogya Upaniṣad refers to "upanīṣad" as a kind of mystic or meditative insight. G. Mukhopadhyaya refers to it as an "intuition of the soul", in order to distinguish it from intellectual intuition, and Sri Aurobindo admits that the term "intuition" is a makeshift word and inadequate to the connotation demanded of it. The Upaniṣads, themselves, symbolize such an immediate "revelation" by the image of lightning, in so far as it is, apparently, equivalent to an instantaneous enlightenment or apprehension, a unique type of knowledge which, as it were, flashes spontaneously and of its own accord. This unique mode of apprehension is described, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, as that "by which the unhearable becomes heard, the unperceivable becomes perceived and the unknowable becomes known".

2.1.1(R) -
4.1(H).

1.1.10.

Compare Brh:
Up: 3.5.1.

Studies in
the
Upaniṣads,
Pp.114-115.

The Life
Divine,
P.79, note.

See Brh: Up:
2.3.6 & R's
note and
Kena: 4.4 &
R's note,
P.591.

6.1.3 (R).
Compare Brh:
2.4.5 and
3.7.23 for
references to
a kind of
intuitive
insight or
mystical
intuition.

8. However, any such claim to uniqueness merits some further consideration, in order to ascertain, as far as is possible, wherein such uniqueness might lie.

a. In this connection, and at this stage, it might be

appropriate to equate the term "transcendental consciousness", which we have so far used, with "mystical insight", in so far as this latter term is more commonly employed, with reference to the Upaniṣads. However, in its general usage, the former term must be understood to have a wider connotation because its employment, especially in connection with the Rg-Veda, embraces an objective or external awareness which is not, of necessity, associated with the latter. Furthermore, the deliverances or consequential utterances of the latter term, as we shall see later, are of a somewhat restricted and special nature. With these distinctions in mind, then, we may proceed.

b. It would seem, then, that the uniqueness of the mystical insight does not, of necessity, lie in the mode of apprehension it illustrates unless, of course, uniqueness is to be interpreted in a qualitative sense, in so far as it is meant to represent a kind of zenith of intuitional apprehension in comparison with its more ordinary or qualitatively less manifestation in the normal or mundane field. Then, surely, it would be a matter of degree and not of uniqueness.

c. Some would claim that a special or unique faculty is required to seize upon any such transcendental object or truth. S.Radhakrishnan speaks of a faculty of divine insight or mystic intuition, enabling man to transcend the distinctions of intellect and solve the riddles of reason. N.A.Nikam seemingly differentiates between normal and unique awareness, when he speaks of an

Philosophy
of the
Upaniṣads,
P.52.

awareness of the reality of the invisible, a perception of the unseen and an affirmation of the unseen in the visible, phrases reminiscent of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad quoted earlier. Indeed, Otto reminds us that Eckhart expressed his conviction in a "doctrine of faculties", distinguishing a particular faculty for the transcendental, the "intellectus", which is not in the least what is ordinarily called intellect but is above reason and functions quite differently from "ratio", as "ratio pura".

Some Aspects of Ontological and Ethical Mysticism in Indian Thought, P.122.

Chānd: See P. 97, supra.

Otto, Mysticism East and West, P.32 & Note 4.

On the other hand, Oman rejects the view that apprehension of the supernatural depends upon a special faculty and claims that what distinguishes religious apprehension from all else is the unique quality of the feeling, valuation, nature of the object and the way of thinking things together.

The Natural and the Supernatural, P.58f.

Likewise, Mircea Eliade refers to a qualitatively different consciousness which can fully apprehend metaphysical truths and Sri Aurobindo uses the

Yoga, Immortality & Freedom, P.36.

term "luminous uttermost superconscience" and distinguishes between the subconscious level of the instinctive life-urge and the superconscient sphere of intuitive illumination which is the domain of the higher mind. Finally, we may note

The Life Divine, P.289.

that, in a psychological approach to this question, R.Mukerjee claims that mystical insight is

essentially the reaction of the individual and not an abnormal phenomenon nor the outcome of reflexes

Theory and Art of Mysticism, P.9f.

and baffled desires but rather an expression of normal human impulses, involving a demand for a type of metaphysical justification which is

based essentially on unique personal experience. This approach, however, would seemingly favour a basically, if not an exclusively, subjective reaction to environment and a dependence on the desire for metaphysical justification which almost approaches to what is commonly referred to as "wishful thinking". This, however, must not be confused with what H.D.Lewis describes as the apprehension of "a beyond which thought cannot reach but which thought itself requires as its completion".

God & Mystery,
P.266, in
Prospect for
Metaphysics.

d. As far, then, as any claim to a unique faculty is concerned, it seems difficult to reconcile this, logically at least, with the strict connotation of that which has no like, no equal and no parallel, in so far as a plurality of unique faculties is a contradiction in terms. If, on the other hand, the intention is to denote the extraordinary, unusual or exceptional functioning of the faculty of apprehension, an apparent contradiction would seemingly be resolved. However, a more formidable difficulty for the "unique faculty school" arises from the constant reiteration, in the Upaniṣads, that the object or truth apprehended by the mystical consciousness can be verified by anyone who undergoes the necessary preliminaries. It seems that the claim that a verification process is possible means that it would have to be maintained that the transcendental consciousness is latent in all men but is, in most, submerged in a morass of normality and this, of course, lends support to those who would argue against the

See The
Oxford
Dictionary

See Mund:2.2.3
Svet:1.3;2.10
& 13-14;
Mait:4.4;6.18
& 22-30;7.11;
Praṣna 5.2-7;
and Mand: Up:.

"unique faculty school". In this respect, we are reminded of Rudolf Otto's words that "A-priori cognitions are not such as everyone does have - such would be innate cognitions - but such as everyone is capable of having. The loftier a-priori cognitions are such as - while everyone is indeed capable of having them - do not, as experience teaches us, occur spontaneously, but rather are 'awakened' through the instrumentality of other more highly endowed natures". This contention, if applied to the Upaniṣads, would indeed allow for a distinction to be drawn between initial insight and that occurring as a result of the verification process.

e. We must look elsewhere, then, for any uniqueness in transcendental or mystical intuition. There are, then, those who would claim that its uniqueness might lie in the fact that what is known is essentially the equivalent of a revelation. For instance, J.Hutton Hynd claims that "Mysticism places an emphasis upon revelation or the direct flash of insight which strikes the 'inner vision'".

Is there, then, any difference between revelation and the transcendental consciousness or mystical insight such that, if there were not, it could be claimed that what is known, whether as object or truth, was revealed to man?

Initially, we must draw a distinction between revelation, in an active and a passive sense. The former implies an act of self-revealing, whereas the latter denotes that something is being revealed, usually indirectly and through some media, such as

The Idea of
the Holy,
P.194,
Pelican
Edition,1959.

Mysticism and
Ethics. in
Mysticism and
the Modern
Mind, P.83,Ed.
A.P.Stiernotte.

the intelligent interpretation of facts compatible with perceptual and inferential knowledge.

In the generally accepted sense, however, revelation is taken to mean what George Galloway, at the beginning of the century, termed "an apprehension of truth which rests, directly or indirectly, on the activity of God", or, as Josef Pieper states, "The innermost core of the event we call revelation is the divine act of communication itself". In essence, then, the active meaning of revelation implies a direct activity of that which, as it were, wishes to reveal itself. In this connection, we must note that hints are given, in one or two places, in the Upaniṣads, about a doctrine of "prasāda" or grace, whereby, through the "grace" of the Creator, man is enabled to behold the greatness of Ātman, and also about what Hume terms an almost "strict Calvinistic doctrine of Election", when only by Divine favour is the One revealed to him whom He chooses. These tendencies, however, may be regarded as contrary to the general import of the Upaniṣads and, at this stage in our enquiry, are more of interest than importance, although theistic tendencies are, indeed, evident in the Svetasvatara Upaniṣad which hints at devotion to a personal God.

Revelation, in the generally accepted sense, then, implies a free reception of ideas or, more specifically, an objective and direct knowledge and an objective source. Indeed, Mahendranath Sircar has claimed that the three distinctive marks of revelation are directness, infallibility and objectivity and that, furthermore, it is possible in

Philosophy of Religion, P.582.

Belief and Faith, P.78.

See Kath: 2.20(H) and R's note 2, P.617. Compare Svet: 3.20(H)&(R).

Kath: 2.23(H) - 1.2.23(R) which is the same as Muṇḍ: 3.2.3.

See 6.23. Compare also Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, P.55.

Hindu Mysticism, according to the Upaniṣads, P.31.

the normal or what he calls the "concrete" consciousness. It would seem, then, that revelation must be regarded as a process in time, even if, as we have stated, it comes through the more ordinary channels of everyday experience, reason and reflection, but, of course, this would stress the passive side of its manifestation.

For the equation of intuition, as imagination, with revelation, see Sri Ananda Acharya's Brahma - darsanam, P.50.

In contrast, the immediate and spontaneous nature of transcendental or mystical intuition would suggest that it is not a process in time and, hence, to be regarded, in some mysterious way, as transcending time. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Geoffrey Parrinder, referring to truths which are, in a mystical sense, inaccessible to the understanding, suggests that what is meant is probably that conscious reflection and reasoning are not obvious, so that truths "flash upon the mind, which recognizes and accepts them, as if they came from nowhere", so that some would attribute them to the workings of the subconscious mind, whereas others would claim that they came from God.

Upanishads,
Gita and
Bible, P.94.

A further difference between revelation and mystical intuition is seen in the attributing of infallibility to the former whereas it is more usual to talk of a feeling of certainty with reference to the latter. That there is a difference between the two, in some ways comparable to that between knowledge and belief, is obvious. Again, whereas revelation, in the generally accepted sense, is seemingly an expression of the causal in the effectual, mystical insight, in the very realization of the identity of subject and object - the claim so consistently made in the Upanishads -

would seemingly deny the very ground of any objective revelation. There are difficulties, then, against the acceptance of the uniqueness of mystical insight as lying in an act or process of revelation from an objective source.

f. If, however, revelation were interpreted as signifying the acquisition of a new insight or the realization for oneself of a claimed insight, the term might prove more easily acceptable. The former, of course, would be obtainable at the zenith of a multi-dimensional consciousness, in a state of Aurobindo's "luminous uttermost superconscience", whilst the latter would be the end product of a verification process brought about by the practice of certain disciplines, the details of which will be relevant at a later stage. Any such interpretation, leaning, as it does, to a more passive aspect of revelation, would place an emphasis on that subjective approach which is so typical of the Upaniṣadic attempt to solve the problem of knowledge of Supreme Reality, and would suggest that a possible solution to the question of uniqueness might be found in the nature of the object or truth apprehended, and to this we may finally direct our attention.

g. As far as knowledge of such a Reality is concerned, it is stated that It is an ultimate and non-sensuous Unity in all things, a Unity which, when the individual and universal consciousnesses "merge", is expressed in such phrases as "That art Thou", "I am Brahman" and "All this is Brahman". In other words, a basic unity

The Life
Divine,
P.289. See
P.99, supra.

References
below.

of existence is apprehended in some kind of supersensuous and super-rational immediacy, and from this it is stated that all diversity and manifoldness is merely appearance and, therefore, illusory and the product of ignorance (avidyā). Reality is, then, a totality of partless, simple and undifferentiated experience and is, at once, the ultimate essence of the individual self, the highest principle of the universe and the Brahman or Ātman, so that individual and universal, psychic and cosmic and Brahman and Ātman are identical. There are, however, indications of various stages of ascension to such a concept of Unity, at least as expressed in the Upaniṣads, and hints of this have already been noted in connection with the Ṛg-Veda. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, it is suggested that things are no longer multiple or divided but an All. In the Īśa, oneness seemingly becomes an equation of the One and the Many, so that the One is a kind of manifold One, until, finally, the stage is reached in which there is One only, a progression "out of the All-One" to "The Alone", as Otto has expressed it.

As far as experience of any such Reality is concerned, it is claimed that it is an experience of the Pure or Absolute consciousness and, as noted above, the culmination of which is an "experience" of identity with such a consciousness. The expression of this is couched in phrases referring to Pure or Absolute Being or Existence, Pure Consciousness or Knowledge and Pure Bliss, although such expressions will have to be examined, critically, later.

W.T. Stace has suggested that any such experience

Compare S. Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, P.42.

See Rg-Veda 1.164.46; X.81.3; 121.1-10 & 129.1.7, for example.

Chānd:6.2.1; Īśa 6-8; Mānd: 7; Brh:4.4.19-20, etcetera.

Mysticism, East and West, P.52.

is of two kinds, an extrovertive and an introvertive, the former being "vastly less important" than the latter. The former implies a kind of objective reference, where a unity is seen through a multiplicity, by looking outward through the senses. The latter experience is a kind of self-transcending experience, where by looking into the mind, there is an experience of that which is devoid of plurality, a kind of positive experience without any positive content, the equivalent, presumably, of the undifferentiated unity referred to earlier. Indeed, Stace claims that there is a direct experience of the dissolution of separate individuality in something which transcends it and is directly perceived as swallowing it up, presumably similar to what we read in the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad. However, this would be an experience of dissolution and not necessarily of Ultimate Reality.

Mysticism and
Philosophy,
P.63.

Op.cit,P.86.

Compare
Mand: 7(R).

Brh: 4.5.13.

h. Seemingly, therefore, any uniqueness would lie in what W.M.Urban has called "a heightened noesis of the numinous" or an experience of Absolute Consciousness, the very climax of which is knowledge by identity, a knowledge which Aurobindo claims can only come through an evolution of consciousness. Presumably, then, any reference to a unique mode of apprehension or, indeed, to a unique faculty is derivative, by association with what is unusual or unique, in the sense that what is known or experienced lies at the uttermost or highest limits of man's powers of apprehension. How, otherwise, indeed, could such knowledge and experience be achieved

Humanity and
Deity, Note 1,
P.438.

by a verification process.

9. We have, then, seen that the Upaniṣads recognize sense-perception, logical understanding and intuitive insight as sources of knowledge. However, a new dimension is clearly given to intuitive insight and it is evident that consciousness is regarded as being multi-dimensional, its comprehensive awareness ranging from an apprehension of the empirical world to a state of "transcendental consciousness" which, in some mysterious way, exceeds the limits of the empirical consciousness and touches upon, is made aware of or, indeed, comes into contact with what is believed to be Ultimate Reality. There is, therefore, a belief in the possibility of a direct intercourse with the Brahman, not through any external media but by a species of intuitive identification or awareness which somehow generates the certainty of immediate evidence.

Compare S. Radhakrishnan Eastern Religions and Western Thought, P.129.

The central problem, then, becomes one of trying to ascertain, as far as is possible from the evidence available, what exactly is "experienced" in a state of transcendental consciousness, in an attempt to abstract the possible content of primary data from the morass of secondary interpretation.

That this is no easy task must readily be admitted but, in so far as it is the "essential purpose of the Upaniṣads to promote God-realization", it might not

S.Spencer, Mysticism in World Religions, P.23.

prove to be altogether impossible and, indeed, a task after which we might be in a stronger position to examine any relation between the content of any such transcendental awareness and any doctrinal statements which may be dependent upon or associated with it.

5. THE CONTENT OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Sidney Spencer has claimed that the "Upanisads represent a remarkable combination of fantastic speculation of a mystical character and profound intuitive insight" - an observation which serves to remind us of the important distinction already suggested between primary data and secondary interpretation. Prima facie, this suggests that what is experienced should be regarded as primary data and any attempted descriptions of it as secondary interpretation and, furthermore, that what is experienced might be the common core of the transcendental or mystical consciousness, the only variable factor being the interpretative element, in so far as there could be more than one interpretation of the same experience.
2. However, the question arises as to how there could be any objective analysis and assessment of any primary data, if the only access to such were through a direct experience?. It seems important, therefore, to make the point that, if any distinction is to be made between primary data and secondary interpretation, then the former must somehow be made manifest in descriptive statements of however vague a kind. In other words, any such awareness or insight must somehow be expressed or communicated, so that primary data must find expression just as secondary interpretation, by definition, obviously does, the distinction between the two presumably being marked by what is stated or claimed. W.T. Stace has drawn attention to this, when referring

Mysticism in
World
Religions,
P.18.

op. cit.
P.31.

op. cit.
P.37.

Mysticism &
Philosophy,
P.32

to the difficulty of deciding what part of a mystic's descriptive account of his experience ought to be regarded as actually experienced and what part should be taken as his interpretation of it - a difficulty which is obviously far greater than the corresponding difficulty in the case of sense experience.

In discussing the difference between what he terms "low" and "high level" interpretations, he claims that it is doubtful if one can ever come across a quite uninterpreted experience and his suggested distinction between the two is apparently dependent upon a differentiation between description and interpretation. However, his use of the term "interpretation" embraces both description and interpretation, so that a "low level" interpretation is merely descriptive, whereas a "high level" one is interpretative, in so far as more than a mere descriptive element is present. For example, the mystic's account of his experience as one of an "undifferentiated, distinctionless unity" is a mere report or description but, when the same experience is referred to as "mystical union with the Creator of the Universe", then this is a "high level" interpretation, in so far as it includes more than a mere description, namely an assumption about the origins of the world and belief in the existence of a personal God. From this, it is apparent that his use of the term "interpretation" includes both classificatory concepts, logical inference and explanatory hypotheses or, as he expresses it, "anything which the conceptual intellect adds to the experience for the purpose of understanding it".

op.cit,
P.31.

Op.cit,
P.37f.

ibid.

3. As, then, we proceed to examine the content of the

transcendental consciousness, in an attempt to isolate primary data from secondary interpretation, we must be alive to the fact that we are not, by the very nature of the case, dealing with a direct experience. It is necessary, then - and without over-stating the case - to distinguish between primary data as that given in direct experience and primary data, as that manifest in descriptive statements, the latter, for the non-mystic or one who has not risen to the heights of such awareness or insight, being the only available means of access to any such content. In order to do so, we shall restrict our use of the term "interpretation" to statements which embrace logical inference or explanatory hypotheses and, in consequence, confine our use of "descriptive statements" to those which attempt to describe rather than to interpret the experience.

4. It is useful to recall, before we proceed, a few statements, employed by modern writers, when referring, in general terms, to the content of the transcendental experience. N.A.Mikam refers to the "expression of man's primal awareness of the mystery of Being" and to an "awareness of the reality of the invisible" or "perception of the unseen". Swami Satprakashananda states that it is a "unique experience which puts an end to all relative notions". He also refers to Sri Ramakṛṣṇa's transcendental experience, in a modern age, which testifies to the ultimate reality of non-dual, non-relational consciousness. Otto claims that "we are in the region of wonder and the element of unity therein --- is only the conceptually apprehended element of an inexpressible and wholly

Some aspects of ontological & ethical mysticism in Indian Thought, Pp.117 & 122.

Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedanta, Pp. 251-252.

Mysticism, East and West, P.258.

wondrous content". Hume, on the other hand, refers to "a blissful state of consciousness in which individuality and all distinctions are overcome".

The Thirteen Principal Upanisads, P.52.

Finally, we may recall R.Mukerjee's words when he speaks of an "acosmic apprehension which clothes in shining, immutable garb the mystic's ontological or philosophical tradition". All these general statements appear to have one thing in common, namely the implication of something mysterious and non-rational.

Theory and Art of Mysticism, P.18.

As, then, we proceed, we must look for statements which are descriptive, in the qualified sense mentioned above, and this may assist in determining whether any such statements merely assert existence or, in addition and without, at the same time, being interpretative, contribute anything to our knowledge of the nature or attributes of Ultimate Reality.

See P.110, above.

5. Preliminary Experiences

a. Certain experiences are mentioned as constituting stages in the process of contemplation of the Absolute and, therefore, as preliminary to a further and fuller enlightenment. Although, strictly speaking, associated with various stages of yogic practice, we may briefly consider them. They may be grouped into those of form, light and sound or what R.D.Ranade has called morphile, photile and audile experiences, the last of which are both less prominent and frequent than the other two, so we may commence with these.

Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy, P.342f.

b. Aural

It is claimed that certain sounds are heard within oneself and the Chāndogya Upanisad states that these

See Bṛh:5.9.1; Mait: 2.6.

are indicative of the presence of Reality within us and can be obtained merely by shutting the ears and thereby hearing sounds. All such, however, seem of no importance, in so far as they are not convincingly accounted for any more than their exact nature is defined.

Chānd:
3.13.8.

c. Morphic

Mention is made of such forms as the saffron - coloured raiment, the red-coloured Indragopa beetle, the flame of fire, the lotus-flower and the sudden flash of lightning. Again, there are references to fog, smoke, wind, fire, fireflies, lightning and a crystal moon as preliminary experiences leading to the manifestation of Brahman and the claim is made that such images are not the subjective activities of the self but something akin to what Radhakrishnan has termed "spiritual manifestation". However, the references to lightning are interesting, as we shall presently see.

Brh:2.3.6.

See Svet:
2.11 and R's
notes on
this verse,
P.722.

ibid.

d. Photic

Although aural and morphic experiences are somewhat obscure, this is not readily apparent with photic experiences. For instance, the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad refers to Brahman as the "light of lights" and the Chāndogya states that, after crossing the bridge of phenomenal existence, even a blind man ceases to be blind and before the vision of the aspiring mystic the spiritual world is suddenly and once and for all illumined. However, these, as harbingers of what is to come, do not constitute the zenith of self-realization. To this end, the Maitri Upaniṣad claims that the same of transcendental consciousness consists in the mystic's

2.2.10(R)-
2.2.9(H).

8.4.2.

2.2.(R & H).

seeing his own form in a flood of supreme light arising from within himself and that this constitutes the realization of Brahman. In this connection Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya claims that the various colours in photic experience are given different ranks and that the experiences are tested and graded according to the visualization of particular colours.

Studies in
the
Upanisads,
P.194.

e. However, the question of whether these are literal descriptions or merely symbolic expressions of enlightenment need not detain us, in so far as such experiences which, incidentally, are mentioned by certain mystics in many of the world's religions, are seemingly propaedeutic and preliminary and not, therefore, descriptive of an actual experience of Brahman. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that preliminary experiences of this kind are associated with a particular colour or form of light, usually of a sudden and supremely bright or dazzling nature. In this connection, indeed, one is reminded of Plato's words - "Suddenly, a light, as if from a leaping fire, will be enkindled in the soul", Epistle 7. and of the words in the Acts of the Apostles - "Suddenly, there shone from heaven a great light". Although such might well be accepted as literal descriptions, especially by those orientated in fundamentalism, there are others who would claim that they are more metaphorical than literal and, as such, suggestive of the immediate or spontaneous nature of mystical intuition than, perhaps, descriptive of a preliminary stage of enlightenment.

Chapter 22,
Verse 6.

6. Descriptive Statements

a. As we proceed to consider descriptive statements, we may remind ourselves that we shall be concerned

with introvertive experience which, in Ninian Smart's words, "is an experience in the depths of the soul, not directed to outer reality as the panenhenic

Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, P.138.

feeling is". We may also remind ourselves of the

difference between the immediate and

spontaneous experience of Ultimate Reality and

that which is gained after a process of self -

discipline and concentration, by means of what we

have termed a verification process. This has been

compared to the difference between "jnāna" and

"upāsana" - the former being an experience which is immediate and complete in itself and, in this sense,

not dependent on the efforts of the seeker after

knowledge, whereas the latter is a process in time,

leading to a mediate and incomplete manifestation,

which gradually grows clearer and more complete, but

a process dependent upon the agent who contemplates.

By means, then, of the verification process, the

seeker after knowledge is able to verify, for

himself, the claims of the former or "jnāna"

experience, by actually experiencing it for himself.

Compare Kath: 2.3. 12-18, & Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, P.102:

See G. Mukhopadhyaya, Studies in the Upanisads, P.182.

It would seem, then, that the most promising

method of examining any descriptive statements

associated with the introvertive experience would

be to proceed from the methods advocated for the

verification of any such experience, prior to

considering any statements which attempt to describe

it.

b. In the verification process, then, various stages

are involved. It seems important to consider these, especially in view of the fact that a certain conditioning process might be involved, in which case the transcendental experience could be a predetermined one.

However, first of all, certain preliminary disciplines are required, in order to bring about a transformation of both conduct and character, in addition to that of consciousness, because, as G. Mukhopadhyaya has stated, bodily and mental purity is required to become fit to retain the imparted knowledge. These are calculated to assist in a process designed to close the eyes to phenomenal reality and to turn them inward to approach and experience noumenal reality.

Such disciplines, designed to wear down the body and its appetites, involve the practice of austerity or "tapas" and a process of moral purification. Austerity involves penance, fasting, chastity, almsgiving and sacrifice or ceremonial observances. That the practice of austerity cannot be the main discipline, however, is indicated in certain passages which are sceptical about its efficacy, in so far as it produces limited rewards only, such as those identified with the "Way of the Fathers" or a return to rebirth, in forms determined by the deeds of the past, i.e. by the operation of the "karma-samsāra" cycle.

As far as the cultivation of "moral" purity is

Studies in the Upanisads, P.142f.

Compare "avṛtta - cakṣuh", i.e. "eyes turned inward", in Kath:2.1.1. (R)-4.1(H).

See below, for references.

Compare Bhagavad - Gita, 18.5.

See Brh: 3.8.10; 6.2.16; Chand: 4.10.2-4.

concerned, we find exhortations to speaking the truth, and the practice of virtue and self-control. There is a continued emphasis on the importance of truth, and the practice of "dharma"(justice or law) is regarded as the embodiment of truth, in so far as it restrains "the unruly wills and affections" of people. The individual is instructed to become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected. In other words, tranquillity of mind, self-restraint, renunciation and patience are preliminary conditions that continually recur and various prohibitions warn against the promulgation of esoteric knowledge to anyone who is not morally pure. In this connection, the history of religion shows that the practice of bodily austerities and the cultivation of moral virtues have been regarded as important means of obtaining spiritual ends, even if, in the process, excesses of bodily suffering have played a large part.

c. There are, then, three stages involved in the verification process. The first or "śravaṇa" stage requires one to listen to tradition and scripture (i.e. śruti) and to be instructed in such by a "guru" or spiritual teacher. This is followed by the "manana" stage, a process of reflection, induction and inference, by means of which the assumptions of the first stage become logical conclusions. Finally, the third or "nīdīdhyāsana" stage is one of profound meditation in which, it is claimed, the logical

See below
for
references.

Brh:1.4.14.

Phrase from
Book of
Common
Prayer.

See Brh:
6.3.12;
Mait: 6.29;
Svet: 6.22;
Kath:1.2.24
(R)-2.24(H).

See Brh:
2.4.5; 4.5.
6;
Chand:6.1.3.

conclusions of the "manana" stage become a spiritual perception. Somewhat succinctly, Dr. David Friedman describes this third stage as "the inner mystic contemplation of ultimate truth which transmutes it into a personal and direct (i.e. subjective) experience".

Year Book of Education, 1951, P.234.

d. We may briefly consider the first two stages prior to considering, in some detail, the culminating stage of meditation. In the "sraavana" stage, the importance of the "guru" is constantly stressed, in the Upaniṣads, in so far as his help is deemed necessary to disperse the mist of empirically acquired knowledge as well as to expound the texts. However, the "guru" must be thoroughly competent in both mediate and immediate knowledge of the Brahman, that is both "srōtriya" or well-grounded in the texts and "Brahma-niṣṭha" or one who has, himself, realised the Brahman. Without the help of the "guru", then, it is, apparently, hard for the seeker to find the true meaning of the "sruti" and even harder to grasp the spiritual truths signified by them, let alone to attain to a direct or immediate knowledge or experience.

See below for references.

Compare Muṇḍ: 1.2.12.

Compare Swami Satprakash-ananda, Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedānta, Pp.265-266.

In the "manana" stage, which follows, it is necessary to obtain an intellectual conviction of the truths expounded in the first stage, by reasoning about what has been heard or taught, as a result of which the assumptions of the first stage

Brh: 2.1.14; Chand: 3.11.5; 4.9.3; 4.14.1; 6.14.1-2; 8.11.2-3; Muṇḍ: 1.2.12-13; Kath: 1.2.9(R) - 2.9(H); Svet: 6.23; Mait: 6.29; Kaus: 1.1; Prasna 1.1; 4.19.

become logical conclusions. Such a process of reflection is, according to Swami Satprakashananda, "a mental operation producing ratiocinative knowledge that leads to the refutation of any possible contradiction from other sources of knowledge regarding the meaning established by the scriptural testimony". As a result of the "manana" stage, then, the seeker may be presumed to have not only a detachment from selfish interests, induced by the various preliminary disciplines, and an initiation into the various teachings about the Brahman, contained in the "aruti" and expounded by the "guru", but - and this seems significant - an intellectual conviction of their ultimate truth.

At this stage, then, the conviction of truth may be regarded as "sraddhā" or faith which is to be understood as something other than credulity or gullibility, so that reason is implicit in faith. Hence, contemplative meditation, which we are about to consider, is an act which, according to G. Mukhopadhyaya, is "illuminated by knowledge, sustained by faith and crowned by the mystic faculty".

So far, then, such knowledge must be regarded as mediate knowledge. It may well remove ignorance regarding the existence of the non-dual Brahman and, indeed, doubts and misconceptions regarding the means of Its attainment, but it cannot unveil the Brahman to the seeker, anymore than hearing and reflection can do away with the persistent self-consciousness of the individual in a world of subject-object relations. We may, then, proceed

op.cit,
Pp.256-257.
Compare also
P.215,
Par: 12.

Compare
Brh:6.2.15;
Chand:1.1.10;
Mund:1.2.11
& 3.2.10;
Prasna 1.2;
1.10.

Studies in
the
Upanisads,
P.180:

to consider the final stage, by means of which the logical conclusions of the "manana" stage are claimed to become experienced as a direct and immediate spiritual perception.

e. In this culminating stage of "nididhyāsana" or contemplative meditation, there is to be a constant dwelling on the truth of which the seeker has become intellectually convinced by means of the two earlier stages. The aim of this, according to Mircea Eliade, is to do away with "normal consciousness in favour of a qualitatively different consciousness which can fully comprehend metaphysical truth", and such a process of meditation is generally referred to as "yoga". To this end, various aids are prescribed, aids by means of which the "yogin" can get rid of all states of error and illusion, such as dreams, false perception and hallucinations, as well as all normal psychological experiences. Such techniques are set forth, in detail, in the Maitrī Upaniṣad.

Yoga,
Immortality
and
Freedom,
P.36.

See Chānd:
2.23.1;
Tait: 2.4;
Svet:2.8-13;
Kath:1.2.12
(R)-2.12(H);
2.3.11(R)-
6.11(H).

Mait: 6.18.

However, there is a gradation in the meditative process, designed presumably with individual differences and capacities in mind, although the common factor is the ultimate goal of Oneness. If meditation, then, is used as an umbrella term for the various yogic disciplines, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds, namely "dhyāna" or "upāsana", and "nididhyāsana" with which we are now concerned. Whereas the former may be regarded as meditation, the latter is profound meditation, the main difference between them being that, whereas the former is normally practised with the aid of a

symbol, the latter is more akin to a process of right apprehension, that is "vijnāna" or knowledge,

Compare Brh:
2.4.5 and 4.5.
6.

which, unlike "dhyāna", apparently depends on the nature of the thing known rather than on the knower's mind, "dhyāna" depending on the directions of the scriptures, the teachings of the "guru" and the seeker's faith and will. Satprakashananda illustrates the difference by stating that, when an image of a deity is before a person's eyes, he will see it, as it is, whether he wants to or not, so that the knower has no option in it, at all. In contrast, meditation on the image, as symbolic of the deity, rests on scriptural prescriptions, the seeker's faith in them, and on his determined effort. Yet again, there is scope for imagination in "dhyāna" but in the cognition of the object there is no room for imagination, at all. We may take notice, then, that in practising "nididhyāsana", strictly as "vijnāna", there is no meditation on the Self, as Brahman, but an arriving at an apprehension of it as Brahman, by the repudiation of all limiting adjuncts superimposed upon It and, finally, grasping It as Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss. In "nididhyāsana", then, the mind is invariably directed to Nirguna Brahman (i.e. without attributes) and is regarded as the road leading to "higher" knowledge. In "dhyāna", the object is usually Saguna Brahman (i.e. with attributes), and the "lower" road for the less qualified, although it could eventually lead to a realization of Nirguna Brahman.

f. In order, then, fully to appreciate the state of

Methods of
Knowledge
according to
Advaita
Vedanta,
Pp.288-289.

See Mund:
2.2.8 & Pras:
5.2.

transcendental awareness reached, as a result of the "nididhyāsana" stage, we must examine a little closer the concept of a multi-dimensional consciousness or awareness which is not confined to one horizontal plane. We find, therefore, reference to four states of awareness, the waking-state, the dream-state, the state of deep, dreamless sleep and, finally, the "turiya" state in which there is claimed to be contact with Pure Spirit.

1. The Waking-state (jagarita-sthāna)

This is the state of the perceptual self which is outwardly cognitive and one in which the sense faculties are turned outward, so that the mind (manas) receives, from outside, impressions which it builds up into ideas. In other words, the self is brought into relation with its physical environment and the field of cognition is empirical.

2. The dream-state (svapna-sthāna)

This is the state of the imaginative self which is inwardly cognitive but dependent upon predispositions left by its waking experiences, feeding, as it were, on stored-up memories. Here, the self is aware of other worlds than the physical and the mind fashions a world of forms, unaided and by itself, yet using the material of the waking-state.

3. The state of deep, dreamless sleep (susupta-sthāna)

This is the state where there is no perception of either external or internal objects and where there is liberation from the empirical world. In this state, mind and senses are what Hiriyanna terms

See Mand:
3-7; 9-12;
Mait: 7.11.
7-8; Brh:
4.3.7-33;
Chand: 8. 10-
11, & Hume's
note, P. 392 &
note 3, P. 458.
See also
Rg-Veda, X.
90.3-4, for
the four
quarters of
Brahman.

Compare
Hiriyanna,
Outlines of
Indian
Philosophy,
P. 71.
Zimmer,
Philosophies
of India,
P. 361F.
Radhakrishnan
Eastern
Religions and
Western
Thought,
Pp. 122-123.
A.B. Keith,
op.cit, P. 568.
Prasna Up:.

op.cit, P. 7'

"quiescent" and there is a cessation of the normal, empirical consciousness. It is not a state of consciousness in the ordinary sense but neither, apparently, is it a state of absolute unconsciousness but rather what L.D.Barnett has termed an "unconscious consciousness" because, he claims, a state of personal identity connects the waking and dreamless sleep states. In other words, the self subsists, although it is not aware of the physical world of waking experience or the subtler world of dreams. As Radhakrishnan expresses it, the principle of objectivity is there though it is unmanifest or inactive. It is, however, significant to notice that this state is the earlier Upaniṣadic idea of the complete union of the individual with the Absolute and, presumably, an experience of Absolute consciousness. A passage in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad compares such a state with the state of death, where, of course, there is a complete cessation of normal, empirical consciousness.

4. The "turiya" state

This is a state of pure or transcendental consciousness not within the experience of ordinary men and hence outside the strict limits of empirical consciousness. Like the third, it is, apparently, regarded as a supra-mental state and, although objective consciousness is absent in both, the seed of it is present in the state of deep, dreamless sleep whilst absent in this "turiya" state. This state is the non-empirical beyond the other three states and, hence, different in kind

Brahma - Knowledge, P.36. See also works cited on P.121 supra.

Eastern Religions and Western Thought, P.123.

4.4.2. See also 2.4.12. & Chand: 6.8.1; 6.15.1-2; 7.25.1.

See works cited on P. 121, supra.

even from L.D.Barnett's "unconscious consciousness", See P.122, however abstruse this expression is. The "turiya", then, is a mystic state in which the metaphysical reality is cognized, and in which there is believed to be contact with Pure Spirit. It is, therefore, presumably and yet mysteriously to be regarded as a cognitive state but clearly in no ordinary sense. Somewhat sceptically, Oltramare, whilst recognizing the possibility that, even in the period of the Upaniṣads, there may have been felt the necessity of making some effort to supply an ideal which would not, like the established conception, find the only true reality in an entity deprived of that consciousness which, in experience, is the most essential and real part of existence, admits that, in this conception of the Māṇḍuka Upaniṣad, there is nothing more than a logical construction.

L'Histoire des idées Theosophiques, 1, P. 124f, quoted by A.B. Keith, op. cit, P.370.

Particularly See Mand: 7 and R's notes on this verse.

g. Having, then, considered the methods advocated for the verification, for oneself, of any claimed transcendental experience, we can now look at statements which attempt to describe it. In so doing, we shall attempt to determine whether any such statements merely assert existence or, in addition and without, at the same time, being interpretative, contribute anything to our knowledge of the nature or attributes of the Brahman.

See P.114, supra.

If, then, we refer back to statements made about the Brahman, we find that these are negative in form and refer to Transcendent Reality as an unlimited, undefined existent, which is incomprehensible, not

See P.80f, supra.

only because it is unlimited and undefined but also because it is completely non-empirical. In it there is no diversity, it is without parts, devoid of all senses, unborn (i.e. unmanifested), beyond space and both ungraspable and unperceivable. It is a durationless "now", without earlier or later, and beyond temporal relations. In so far as it is beyond the duality of subject and object, it is stated to be neither Being nor yet non-Being and this would suggest that, although unmanifested, empirically, it yet exists. Yet again, it is described as "Sat, Cit and Ananda", a seemingly positive declaration of Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss, in the sense that none of these are applicable in any empirical sense. In so far, therefore, as the experience is referred to in terms which clearly imply a non-empirical awareness, it may be regarded as a state of transcendental awareness, but an awareness of what? It must, of course, be appreciated that any "Īvara" statements cannot seemingly be deduced from any such experience, as there is nothing in it which could, for instance, suggest either Creator, Ruler or Supreme Person.

i.e. Saguna
Brahman
statements,
vaguely
suggestive of
a Personal
God.

h. If, indeed, the Brahman is to be referred to in this way, what, indeed, is learnt about It, by way of nature or attributes?. The fact that such a state of transcendental awareness is described must suggest that there is such an experience, and, if, in this sense, the Brahman is to be identified with this state, then presumably it may be accepted that there is an experience of Brahman, however this term might be defined or understood. Nevertheless,

it must again be asked what is known from a description of the experience, other than that It exists but cannot be described except in negative terms - a mere declaration of what it is not rather than what it is. It is, of course, possible to concede that a negative description has, at least, some positive content or implication, as, for instance, the statement "X is not alive" equates with the positive statement "X is dead". The fact, however, that there are difficulties here is obvious from the statement "This is not a red light", in so far as it is not possible to equate it with a positive statement, in just the same way. At least, in both instances, there is an empirically verifiable procedure to establish positive alternatives, a procedure which is absent in the case of Brahman assertions.

i. In so far, then, as the previously discussed "turiya" state is that in which, so it is claimed, metaphysical reality is cognized or, in which, there is believed to be contact with Pure Spirit, we may consider the application of such statements as are made to this state of consciousness, to see just how appropriate they are to it. As we have seen, the "turiya" state is somehow outside the limits of empirical consciousness and there is no perception of either external or internal objects, there being, as it were, complete liberation from the empirical world. In this sense, it is strictly non-empirical and, therefore, appropriately described as unlimited, i.e. by subject-object relations, and hence undefined. It is incomprehensible in the double sense that (a). it

See P.122,
supra.

cannot be understood or comprehended, in so far as there is nothing, as it were, to understand and (b). it is boundless or unlimited, in so far as there is nothing to bind or limit it. Likewise, in so far as time and space are also empirical concepts, it is timeless and beyond all temporal relations. It also follows that, as beyond the duality of subject-object relations, it is not Being or Existent in time yet, in so far as something is claimed to be experienced, it cannot be regarded as non-Being. In other words, it IS but in a strictly non-empirical sense. It would seem, then, that, in so far as the "turiya" state is claimed to be completely devoid of all empirical content, such negative statements may be regarded as appropriate of it. Nevertheless, we are not made aware of what it is, in any positive sense, other than that it is.

j. Do, then, the three "essential" qualities of Sat, Cit and Ananada in any way solve the problem of knowing what it is?. Prima Facie, it would seem that, in so far as these are meant to convey the idea of Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss, they may help to solve the problem, but any solution must clearly depend on what is meant or implied by the adjective "Pure". It would surely be extremely naive to dismiss such qualities as meaningless and without content, in so far as they are seemingly irrational and beyond understanding, although if "Pure" is meant to be interpreted as being, in any way, meaningful in an empirical context, then it seems that difficulties at once arise. For instance, what exactly is meant by Pure

Consciousness, in so far as, in the empirical situation, such an expression must be devoid of meaning if, in fact, consciousness means an awareness of or of something or that. Similar problems must arise in connection with Pure Being and Pure Bliss. It could, of course, be maintained that "Pure" is being employed in an attempt to achieve some form of conceptual articulation for a non-empirical or transcendent Reality and that, in this sense, "Pure" emphasizes the contrast between the two modes of Being. It would, however, be difficult to accept this as the equivalent of anything other' than a rational hypothesis, in which case, of course, it could not be regarded as being employed in any descriptive sense. Similar difficulties would arise, if it were maintained that "Pure" was employed to refer, as far as consciousness is concerned, to that inner or ultimate self which is behind all such awareness, the activity of which, as it were, consciousness manifests, as a function of the knowing self. By obvious analogy from the "ātman" or individual self, "Pure" consciousness then becomes the function of the Ultimate "Ātman" or Universal Self. If this be so, then it would seem that the use of the term "Pure" consciousness is misleading, in so far as, whilst apparently standing for a function, it is, in effect, asserting the existence of something which can never become an object of consciousness and, hence, as far as the Ultimate Self is concerned, it remains, as before, unknowable. However, one remaining avenue of possible explanation and indeed justification might be considered. If "Pure" is employed to emphasize

See P.110, supra, for qualified use of the term "descriptive" in this context.

the idea of a non-empirical Reality, it serves to deny any attribution of empirical qualities to it, in so far as it is not, in essence, consciousness but Pure Consciousness, a term which, as we have stated above, has no meaning in an empirical context. Hence, it would appear to state, in positive terms, what it is not rather than what it is, from which, and almost paradoxically, it follows that the adjective has a negative force, preserving, as it were, the element of mystery associated with transcendent Being. In this case, again, the three "essential" attributes, although supporting the claim to existence, in no way solve the problem of knowing what it is, leaving the understanding aware only of what it is not and, in the last analysis, stating no more than the list of negative statements or attributes, previously considered, do.

7. After this somewhat prolonged consideration of the various stages leading to the culminating experience, intuition or awareness of the Brahman, achieved in a state of transcendental consciousness, and of the descriptive as distinct from interpretative statements which proceed from it, we must now endeavour to draw conclusions about the possible content of any such transcendental consciousness.

It seems, therefore, that:-

- a. The general import of the descriptive statements is that there is an experience or intuitive awareness of an existent, transcendent Reality, and that such an awareness may be regarded as primary or basic.

b. Descriptive statements relating to such an experience are negative in form, in so far as they describe the Reality in terms of what it is not, as far as the empirical world is concerned. Such statements seem appropriate to the experience, in so far as it is completely devoid of any empirical content.

c. In consequence, whereas one is left knowing what such a Reality is not, one is also left in no doubt that it is not possible to grasp or define it positively. In so far, then, as any qualities or attributes derived from and related to the empirical world are denied of it, such negative statements manage to emphasize and, indeed, preserve an essential element of mystery which inevitably must surround any such Reality.

d. Descriptive statements, then, refer to what must be termed a "unitary consciousness" or one in which multiplicity is completely obliterated. Indeed, as H.D.Lewis has expressed it, "It is all a case of emptying the mind of all empirical content to find oneself at one with 'the barren Godhead'". W.T.Stace, indeed, has pointed out that other mystical

The
Elusive
Mind, P.306.

expressions for such an undifferentiated unity use such metaphors as "darkness", "emptiness", "silence", "nothingness", "nakedness" and "nudity".

Mysticism
and
Philosophy,
P.100.

e. Any attempted positive description, such as that suggested by the three "essential" qualities of "Sat, Cit and Ananda", runs into difficulties, unless, as has been argued, such be interpreted in a negative sense. Any "Īsvara" statements referring to the Brahman as Creator, Ruler or Supreme Person,

cannot seemingly be deduced from any such experience and must be regarded as belonging to a "lower" state of knowledge or interpretation associated with statements vaguely suggestive of a personal God.

f. In so far, then, as such statements leave one none the wiser as to what the existent is but only to what it is not, there is, as it were, apprehension without comprehension. In this connection, one may recall the words of the Katha Upaniṣad, stating, as they do, that Ultimate Reality is incomprehensible except as existent - words, indeed, which are reminiscent of the "neti-neti" utterances of the Brhadāranyaka and certain other Upaniṣads.

6.12(H);
2.3.12(R).

Bṛh: Up:
2.3.6(H);
3.9.26(R).

We may, then, finally, turn our attention to a consideration of the possible relationship between doctrine and experience, in the Upaniṣads.

6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE
IN THE UPANISADS

1. Having now considered Upaniṣadic teaching about Brahman, the sources of knowledge and the apparent content of the transcendental consciousness, we are presented with the problem of the possible relationship between doctrine and experience, in these writings.

It is, at the outset, as well to remind ourselves, again, that, whereas Western epistemological theory, with few exceptions, is preoccupied with objective knowledge of the external world of objects and rarely with the possibility or actuality of suprasensory cognition, Eastern theories stand in sharp contrast, with their final evaluation of the suprarational, intuitive or spiritual over the rational intellect, as the means of valid knowledge. In other words, it is their claim that it is from the non-rational, the highest intuition or spiritual experience, that the truest knowledge of Reality comes.

2. In this connection, we have tentatively concluded that, although it is possible to claim a consciousness of the existence of Brahman, it seems difficult to claim that, from any such transcendental awareness, one comes to know the nature and attributes of the Brahman. This immediately poses the question of whether any claimed knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Brahman is, then, merely the product of secondary interpretation superimposed on a primary intuition of existence, pure and simple.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between what we may term "a knowledge that S is" and "a knowledge that S is P", that is a knowledge of existence and a knowledge of positive attributes, the former being regarded as primary and the latter as secondary or derivative, so that rational assertions of this latter kind would be somehow dependent upon the facets of experience.

From this, a further question arises, namely that of whether distinctions made in the nature of the One are seemingly facts of any spiritual experience or merely variable descriptions of a common experience or, indeed, whether there are many experiences and many interpretations of them. H.P.Owen claims that one must presume that an experience is interpreted in way X, not way Y, because X and not Y was the interpretation which "fitted" the experience.

The Xth Knowledge of God, P.186.

However, he also cautions against the error of inferring from similarities of language an identity of experience such as, for example, that, although Hindu and Christian descriptions of the "unio - mystica" are expressed in similar terms, they are interpreted differently. A final problem is that of whether secondary interpretation subsequently defines what is experienced, in the sense that doctrine, as established interpretation, might do just this and especially so, in so far as the previously considered verification process is concerned.

ibid,P.187.

In order, then, to consider the problem of the relationship between doctrine and experience, we may commence by examining the connection between primary

intuition and secondary interpretation.

3. Primary Intuition and Secondary Interpretation

a. Although obvious, it seems necessary to state, at the outset, that, if there were no Primary Intuition, however vague this might be, then any Secondary Interpretation would be non-sensical, as, indeed, an uninterpreted or unarticulated Primary Intuition would, likewise, be meaningless. In the same way, description must depend on an experience or awareness of that which is being or attempted to be described. Furthermore, both description and interpretation must be regarded as distinct from direct revelation and, indeed, from the somewhat watered-down term, "disclosure" which is sometimes associated with it.

Unless, therefore, it is presumed that there is a direct revelation of the nature and attributes of the Brahman - and there are difficulties here which will presently be considered - it must be accepted from the evidence previously collected that:-

1. there is a primary awareness or intuition of the existence of that which is called Brahman, and
2. there is a secondary or dependent reaction to or an attempted description and interpretation of this awareness.

In the knowing or experiencing process, then, the "knowing-subject" seems compelled to describe and interpret the experience, although it does not follow that there is any interval of time between the two, which may well be both spontaneous, as far as description is concerned, and instantaneous, as far as interpretation is concerned. However, it would seem

This is
dealt
with,
later.
See P.146.

that instantaneous interpretation may be more closely associated with the end-product of the verification process than with an original experience or awareness. However, it must not be presumed that every "valid" intuition or experience takes a rationally articulated form and, as already stated, a clear distinction must be made between description and interpretation.

We have already seen that a number of passages in the Upaniṣads declare that it is existence alone which is comprehensible of the Brahman, it being beyond the powers of human understanding and being beyond comprehension other than by stating "He is". These same thoughts are expressed when it is stated that "He" is both the affirmable "He is" and the absolutely non-affirmable "neti-neti". These and similar passages lend considerable support to the view that the Primary Intuition is one of existence and of existence alone.

See Brh:
2.3.6;
Kath: 6.12
(H); 2.3.12
(R).

See Mund:
2.2.1; 3.1.8;
and Prasna
2.5d.

b. What arguments, then, may be advanced against the view that the Primary Intuition is also revelatory of the nature and attributes of the Brahman?. In the first place, it would be difficult to explain or reconcile with this view the fact that there are marked differences in the descriptions of the experience. Why, for instance, should A describe it as X and B as Y, the more so if X and Y are contradictory?. For example, the Ṛg-Veda personifies natural phenomena and makes one or two vague suggestions of Oneness. In the Upaniṣads, however, we are presented with intuitions of Oneness; with immanent and transcendental descriptions; with

paradoxical and personal descriptions and with various sub-divisions which describe Oneness as being in the world, as an all-pervading presence and, again, as wholly transcendent and, therefore, incomprehensible, and so forth.

What, however, if it be claimed that all such differences in description arise because such seemed the only ones that were appropriate to it, A experiencing it as X and B as Y?. In this case, it would seem that a subjective element is immediately introduced which, in no way, assists in deciding which of any contradictory descriptions are true and which are false. Furthermore, to argue that both X and Y may be partially true or partially false fails to resolve the difficulty if the Primary Intuition is to be regarded as revelatory of the nature and attributes of the Brahman.

Yet again, what if it be maintained that any such variety indicates that the Brahman is, in effect, incomprehensible but yet not-unknowable. It is apparent that the term "not-unknowable" is ambiguous and, if we are to interpret this as meaning that the Brahman may be known or experienced, then the argument is not advanced because it merely claims that the Primary Intuition is one of existence and not of a knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Brahman. If, on the other hand, it is interpreted as implying a revelation in the experience of the nature and attributes, the difficulty of accounting, at this stage, for the various and contradictory descriptions of the experience remains. Finally, to accept that the Brahman is incomprehensible merely

supports the contention that the Primary Intuition is one of existence alone, unless, of course, incomprehensible be interpreted as a revelation of a complete and absolute mystery, entirely beyond man's knowledge and understanding - and what kind of revelation is that?.

c. It seems difficult, therefore, to maintain the view that the Primary Intuition is also revelatory of the nature and attributes of the Brahman. It may be regarded as giving a knowledge that S is but difficulties are encountered if it also be maintained that it gives the further knowledge that S is P, P1, P2, P3, and so forth, in any positive sense. It would seem that it is from Secondary statements, then, that a knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Brahman seemingly proceed. However, in view of certain problems which have arisen in connection with this question of secondary description - and especially the problem of variable and contradictory statements about the nature and attributes of the Brahman - we must consider this further.

4. The Problem of Secondary Statements

We are, then, immediately led to ask whether distinctions made in the nature of the One are seemingly facts of any spiritual experience of the Brahman or whether they are merely variable descriptions of a common experience or, indeed, whether there are many experiences and many descriptions of them?. As there are, in effect, three questions here, we must examine each in turn.

a. If it be maintained that distinctions made in the nature of the One are facts of any spiritual experience

of the Brahman, then, of course, a fact of any spiritual experience can only mean that which is known to be true about it or revealed as such, in it. In other words, there can be no doubts about such facts, in so far as they are given in the experience, in much the same way that the statement "The man is angry" is authenticated by the experience or manifestation of the man's anger. Furthermore, the implication is clearly that the Primary Intuition not only yields a knowledge that S is but that S is P, P1, P2 and so forth, so we return to the problem of contradictory statements. The Brahman cannot, for instance, be described as totally immanent and, at the same time, as totally transcendent, unless, at least logically, the terms are being used in an unrelated sense, the former, for example, referring to its total omnipresence and the latter either to its being completely beyond man's knowledge and understanding or in no way exhausted by its manifestation in the world. This device would certainly resolve the difficulty but this cannot be the case if the terms are being overtly used antithetically and as facts of any spiritual experience and, therefore, ipso facto, true.

b. The second question poses the problem of whether distinctions made in the nature of the One are merely variable descriptions of a common experience. This implies that any such variations are the result of individual or subjective reactions to and descriptions of the one experience. However, it is somewhat difficult to maintain this thesis because of a certain measure of agreement found in the testimony of a large

number of mystics. There is, that is to say, an impressive similarity between statements descriptive of the experience, although, of course, the interpretation of the experience may vary, as for example between Christian and non-Christian writers. In this respect, Ninian Smart has claimed, Article in Religious Studies, October, 1965. when referring to R.C.Zaehner's distinction between panenhenic, monistic and theistic mysticism, that, whereas the first and second types are based on different experiences (the first being an extrovertive experience perceived through the physical senses), the second and third types are alike, differing only in the ways in which mystics interpret their experiences. Smart's conclusion, therefore, is that "phenomenologically, mysticism is everywhere the same" and, if we accept this view, then clearly it presents the strongest argument against the thesis that there might be variable descriptions of a common experience. However, Smart would admit that "different flavours accrue to the experiences of mystics because of their ways of life and modes of auto-interpretation" and furthermore that "the truth of interpretation depends in large measure on factors extrinsic to the mystical experience itself". H.P.Owen, on the other hand ibidem, P.87. would disagree that the experiences of all mystics Religious Studies, No 7, Pp.36-37. are phenomenologically identical, although, of course, he is referring to Hilton's "Ladder of Perfection" and Christian mystical experience. He asks that, "If the object is identical why do mystics assert as a fact of experience that only ibidem, P.38. one interpretation of it is possible?". This,

of course, raises issues connected with prior conditioning and indoctrination processes which we do not propose to consider, at this stage, although, as we have seen, there is evidence of this in the verification process previously considered.

See P.116f,
supra.

c. The third question asks if there might be many experiences and many descriptions of them. As far as this theory is concerned, it seems that difficulties immediately arise from the fact that no indication is given of any aggregate to which the term "many" is meant to apply. For instance, it could refer to the various intermediate stages involved in reaching the final goal, stages which were considered when discussing the verification process. Equally, it could be offering the thesis that there were many experiences of the final goal of unity and as many descriptions of it or that there were many descriptions of each of many different experiences. If the first interpretation were accepted, then it would certainly be correct to claim that there were many experiences and as many descriptions as there were intermediate stages in the ascent to unity but, by definition, the final goal would be excluded. If the second interpretation were accepted, namely that there were many experiences of the final goal of Unity and as many descriptions of it, then it seems this must be discounted also, if we accept Ninian Smart's claim that "phenomenologically, mysticism is everywhere the same" , unless, of course, one is to claim, somewhat irrationally, that each of the different distinctions made in the nature of the

See P.138,
supra.

One arises from the exclusive experience of it and of it alone, so that it could be claimed that A only experiences and describes P, and B only experiences and describes P1, and so forth. If the third interpretation were accepted, then it would also seem that the agreement of mystical testimony must be regarded as dismissing the credibility of the theory that there are many descriptions of each of many different experiences.

None of these theories, then, seem able to offer a reasonable solution to the problem of contradictory statements, either by claiming that they are facts of any spiritual experience or by attributing their origins to the number and variety of experience and description.

d. If the appeal to number and variety fails, then might not paradoxical statements arise from other sources. W.T. Stace suggests four possible attempts to resolve or get rid of contradictory statements, namely rhetorical devices, misdescription, double-location and ambiguity.

Mysticism &
Philosophy,
Pp. 253-265.

The first claims that rhetorical paradox is used by the writer for the sake of effect, such as, for example, the statements of the Isā Upaniṣad that "It moves. It moves not. It is far and it is near. It is within all this and it is outside of all this".

Isā 5. See
also B-Gītā,
13.5.

However, the paradox remains, and if one were to know, in advance, that the writer would be using rhetorical paradox for the sake of effect, it would be impossible to interpret its meaning, as either part of the paradox might be true but presumably not both parts, in so far as they were deliberately

juxta-positioned for the sake of rhetorical paradox and for this reason only. The second theory claims that paradox results from misdescription, so that, if the experience were correctly described, then the contradictions would disappear. This must be discounted in view of the large similarity of descriptions of the experience, all of which, in one form or another, contain paradoxical statements. The double-location theory claims that, if a predicate, instead of being located in one object, were doubly located, then the paradox would disappear. In the case of the often quoted vacuum - plenum paradox, for example, if the two predicates, vacuity and fullness, instead of being located in one object, were doubly located, that is one in one and the other in another object, then the contradiction would be resolved. However, this theory does not seem capable of being applied to all mystical paradoxes. For example, the pantheistic paradox claims that the world is both identical with and different from the Brahman, these not being opposite attributes but relational properties and, obviously, relational properties cannot be located in one thing only. How, therefore, is it possible to divide identity from difference, placing one in the Brahman and the other in the world?. Similar difficulties would arise from the attempt to apply it to the paradox that the "I" both ceases to exist and continues to exist.

Finally, the fourth attempt appeals to ambiguity, the using of one word in two, different senses, such as the claim that X is both Y and not-Y, where the predicate may have two meanings, so that X is Y in

one sense and not-Y in another. Once this is realised, it is claimed that the contradiction would be removed. However, if as is stated, the world is both identical with and non-identical with the Brahman and, according to the ambiguity theory, a word is being used in two different senses, about which of them can it be claimed that this is so?. Is it identity or non-identity which is being used ambiguously and, having decided this issue, in what different senses are the two predicates being used?. It seems that no satisfactory answer can be given to either question.

e. All these attempts, then, seem unable to provide a solution to the problem of contradictory statements and it would seem, therefore, that we must look elsewhere for a possible explanation of them. In this connection, two further questions suggest themselves:-

1. In view of the fact that paradoxes are strictly logical problems, is the wrong norm being applied to them, in so far as mystical experience might be beyond the scope of the laws of logic?.
2. May not such paradoxical statements be literally correct descriptions, in so far as the language is paradoxical because the experience is paradoxical?.

If we consider the first question, it is suggested that, as paradoxical statements offend against the laws of logic, the wrong criterion is being used, as such laws might not apply to mystical experience.

See H.D.Lewis, The Elusive Mind, Pp. 316-317, for a criticism of this whole question.

What, then, is the sphere of logic?. Generally, it would be agreed that wherever there is multiplicity, that is where there are self-identical distinguishable items, the laws of logic can apply. In other words,

it is not possible to have a concept if there are no separate items to be conceptualized, so that concepts can only be formed where there is multiplicity or, at the very least, duality. Seemingly, then, the laws of logic apply to all experiences of multiplicity. Even in a dream world, it is claimed that one could not conceive, for instance, of something which was both existent and non-existent any more than one could of a head which was both "hairy and hairless". Furthermore, according to Hume's Treatise, it is impossible even to imagine a self-contradictory state of affairs, which he showed cannot exist in the mind, at all. It would follow, then, that either logic cannot apply to all experience or if it does then no experience is without multiplicity and contradictory.

Stace, op.
cit, P.275.

What, then, of mystical experience? It would certainly seem that, because it is one of an undifferentiated unity and, therefore, without multiplicity, there cannot be any items to be conceptualized. It also being paradoxical, then both items considered above could not apply to it, in which case it would have to be regarded as being outside the sphere of logic. If mystical experience is, then, an area of non-logic, it could be claimed that the wrong norm of truth was being used and, as H.D.Lewis has put it, "We need not be perturbed by paradox and contradiction when we deal with a territory of experience which does not belong to logic". Stace claims that it is for this reason "there is no clash between mysticism and logic", which, of course, is a very bold line to take but

The
Elusive
Mind,
P.317.

Op.cit,
P.271.

it is not without some plausibility, in view of the fact that the world as we find and understand it seemingly points to some Reality beyond it which is altogether different from it and incapable of fragmentation. Of such, no account can be given in rational terms beyond the intimation of it in what H.D.Lewis calls "finite natures", and to this extent he rightly claims that we are in a sphere of non-logic. However, he also cautions that, even if this be so, we are given no licence to make positive assertions which contravene the laws of logic and reason. This is, he continues, sometimes overlooked in theological controversy, some theologians assuming that because they are dealing with a transcendent Reality they can discard ordinary standards of consistency, on occasion even making a merit of unreason and irresponsible paradox.

Op.cit,
P.317.

Yet assigning mystical statements to the sphere of non-logic does not solve the problem. Language is used which, at least, appears to be descriptive, making use of concepts even if, in the process, paradoxical statements ensue. This is not helped by the fact that the Upaniṣads have referred to the experience as "beyond all expression" and "which cannot be spoken of", all of which seemingly claim that language is useless as a means of communicating the experience or insight to others. If the experience is indescribable, then it would seem that such statements as are employed are not descriptive, yet language is used about the experience. What, then, is the function of the language employed?

f. A number of theories have attempted, in one way or

Compare
Mand: 7 & 12;
Kath: 1.2.8 &
1.3.10(R);
2.8. & 3.10
(H).

another, to solve this problem. Perhaps the most important of them is that mystical language is symbolic, that is metaphorical. Briefly, this claims that X is a metaphor for something in the actual nature of Brahman or in the mystical experience. For example, darkness would be a metaphor for the void or undifferentiated unity, in that there are no distinctions in it. This use of metaphor, of course, implies a relation of resemblance and it is interesting to recall that Rudolph Otto developed the metaphor theory in "The Idea of the Holy". He claims that "The consciousness of a 'wholly other' evades precise formulation in words and we have to employ symbolic phrases which seem sometimes sheer paradox, that is irrational, not merely non-rational, in import. --- We are bound to try, by means of the most precise and unambiguous symbolic and figurative terms that we can, to discriminate the different elements of the experience so far as we can in a way that can claim general validity". However, the theory is open to a number of objections. In the first place, it contradicts itself, in so far as it presumes that P, P1, or P2, for example, are metaphors for something in the experience, implying that there is, after all, something in it which can be conceptualized. In the second place, if A is a metaphor for B, then both A and B must be known as well as the resemblance between them, upon which the metaphor is founded. In other words, it cannot produce a knowledge or experience which was not previously known or experienced. If darkness, for example, is a metaphor

Compare Stace, op.cit, Pp. 278-294 for a discussion of some of these theories.

P.74,
Pelican
Edition, 1959.

for undifferentiated unity, then either this is a literal description of the experience or it is a metaphor for something else, and so on, ad infinitum. In the third place, although obviously some of the words used are undoubtedly metaphors, the theory implies that all words used about the mystical experience are metaphorical.

g. It seems, then, that this further attempt to resolve the problem under discussion has failed to provide an acceptable solution. This suggests that the problem might have been incorrectly analysed, in the first place, it being assumed that the experience itself and statements descriptive of it are simultaneous. It is interesting to note that, in this connection, Plotinus, himself a mystic, said that "In this apprehension we have neither power nor time to say anything about it. Afterwards, we can reason about it". This is a clear statement of the belief that descriptive statements and the experience itself are not simultaneous and it is on the basis of this observation that Stace offers his suggestions towards a new theory which might go some way towards solving the problem, and this theory we shall now examine.

W.T.Stace,
The
Teachings of
the Mystics,
Paragraph 3
in section
on Plotinus,
Mentor
Books, New
York, 1962.

Op.cit, P.
295f.

His theory poses two questions, namely, whether words can be used during the experience and whether they can be used after the experience, when it is being recalled. As we have already stated, if the experience is one of an undifferentiated unity, then it is wholly unconceptualizable and incapable of description during the experience. In other words, during the experience there is a different kind of

consciousness from that which Stace terms the "ordinary sensory-intellectual kind". However, when the experience is recalled, it is remembered in the normal kind of consciousness, in which classes, concepts and words do function. In this normal state, he claims it is possible to speak of the "other" experience as undifferentiated, as a unity, as mystical, and the void, and so forth. In this way, concepts belonging to and operating in the differentiated and multiple world are employed to describe a remembered experience, in a unique, mystical consciousness. This means that, in contrast to the Upanisadic claim that the experience itself is "beyond all expression", it is apparent that the remembered experience is anything but this, even if statements about it are contradictory and, thereby, suggestive that they might not be really descriptive.

h. Before proceeding, it seems appropriate, at this stage, to consider the second question raised earlier, namely whether or not paradoxical statements are literally correct descriptions of the experience, in so far as the language is paradoxical because the experience is paradoxical.

Op.cit,
P.297.

See P.142,
supra.

If it is accepted that it is possible to empty the mind of all empirical content, that is of all sensation, image and thought, then, it seems, correct to state that only emptiness remains and that, if all multiplicity of self-identical distinguishable items has been obliterated, then we are left with an undifferentiated unity. In this sense, then, the descriptions used would be literally correct, as would such statements as "neti-neti". What, then,

of paradoxical statements?. Are we to presume that the assertions "It is A" and "It is not-A" are, when taken separately, both correct, in so far as each may be a correct application of the two concepts?. This would, seemingly, have to be accepted as correct, if the experience, being essentially paradoxical, had both qualities. The difficulty, however, arises when Stace makes a somewhat odd claim that if "It is A" and "It is not-A" are both meaningful statements, then it is impossible that the conjunction "and" placed between them should render the conjunction of two meaningful statements meaningless. He would claim that if the compound sentence is false, it is ipso facto shown to be meaningful. For this, of course, he is taken to task by H.D.Lewis who comments that the meaning of the statement must be found in it as a whole, and in what it purports to be as a whole statement it is devoid of meaning, as it does not present any thought we can entertain or consider. This is, of course, true, as far as the empirical consciousness is concerned.

Op.cit,
P.267.

The Elusive
Mind,P.316.

However, the confusion seems to have arisen because a statement to the effect that the Brahman is both "A" and "not-A" contradicts preconceived notions of what is either reasonable or possible. Is it not a fact, however, that one can use concepts correctly but, at the same time, disobey the laws of logic?. This is, seemingly, what the mystic is doing. It would follow, then, that any such paradoxical statements are false from a logical point of view, that is contradictory in form or expression, but true

from a mystical standpoint, that is, correct in substance or content. In other words, there has apparently been a confusion of questions of truth and questions of meaning, as, previously, it had been assumed that the experience and statements descriptive of it were simultaneous.

i. In the light of this, we must now consider more closely the question of meaning. It hardly needs stating that the term "meaning" is highly ambiguous, having at least three pivotal senses. For instance, it may refer to intention or purpose, to designation or reference and to definition or translation, and so forth. Ambiguity also arises from the necessary contrast between the standpoints of speaker and interpreter and, indeed, between the meaning of a specific utterance and the general import of the word. In addition, language may be regarded as having expressive, evocative and referential functions. Some of these ambiguities, though, are obviously eliminated by reference to the context.

However, it is also necessary to distinguish between the primary and secondary meaning of a word. Its primary meaning may be defined as that which is directly meant by the word, whereas its secondary meaning may be defined as that which is implied by the word. As for the sentence, it is from the context that one knows its appropriate meaning and import, so that it is the intention of the sentence rather than the logical connection of the words that necessitates implication. For example, the difference may be illustrated from the sentence "This is that man".

The primary meaning of "This" is a man seen at this time in this place, and the primary meaning of "that" is a man seen at some other time in some other place. From this, it is obvious that the primary meanings are incompatible but the secondary or implied meanings identify "This" and "that" in a single individual devoid of the spatial and temporal qualifications denoted by the primary meanings of these words. What, however, of the answer to the question "Are you happy?" which might be "I am and I am not". Such a reply is obviously a conjunctive unity of contradictory statements simultaneously asserted as true and, therefore, paradoxical. Does it, of necessity, follow that such an answer is false or nonsensical?. The primary meanings would result in the statement's being dismissed as logically contradictory, as we have seen earlier, but the secondary or implied meaning conveys, somewhat cryptically that, with reference to different things in ones life or experience, one feels both happy and unhappy, at the same time. For example, one would feel unhappy if ones new car had been damaged beyond repair, in a serious road accident, but happy that neither passengers nor pedestrians had been injured, so that with particular reference to this somewhat traumatic experience, one could correctly assert that one was both happy and unhappy, simultaneously. This is, of course, an illustration only and the experience of "Being" and Non-Being" is in no way equivalent to it, although it may be similar at the uppermost point of a scale. In such a case, however, it is clearly the person making the statement

Example taken from Religious Experience & Truth, by Daya Krishna, P.234, in Religious Experience and Truth, a Symposium edited by Sidney Hook.

who should know best whether or not the language used is correctly performing its function and, if any such secondary or implied meaning is both intended by the utterer and understood by the recipient, then obviously the statement is not a meaningless one. It is from the context, in other words, that one knows the appropriate meaning and import of the statement.

What, then, of religious statements?. Although, of course, such may contain statements which are both expressive, evocative and referential, it seems clear that such must have, in effect, both primary and secondary or implied meanings. What, then, may we ask of a statement like "That art Thou"?. Here, the primary meaning of "That" is the universal consciousness and of "Thou" the individual consciousness, so that the primary meanings are incompatible. However, the implied or secondary meaning asserts their identity and so, the statement affirms the reality of a non-dual, pure consciousness, exclusive of the limiting adjuncts "universal" and "individual". Furthermore, by affirming that the individual "ātman" is the Brahman, the misconception that the individual is finite and imperfect is removed, as, indeed, is the belief that the Brahman is remote, hidden and unattainable.

However, does the secondary or implied meaning, which makes such a paradox intelligible, presuppose something without which the incompatibility of the primary meanings of the words would remain?. Daya Krishna has stated that "intelligibility presupposes interpersonal communication", claiming that "The success of communication depends upon the fact as

Compare
Chand: Up:
6.8.7 to
6.16.3.

Mysticism &
The Problem
of Intellig-
ibility,
Journal of
Religion,
April, 1954,
Pp. 101 & 104.

to what extent there is a similarity between the experiences of the persons who are trying to communicate with each other" and, furthermore, that "incompatibility is a feature not of the phenomena but of the interpretative framework within which we find them to be respectively intelligible".

Indeed, Wittgenstein's later suggestion was that the meaningfulness of a word or statement is to be found in its use rather than in whether or not it conforms to a principle of verification. In other words, the intention of a statement would seem to necessitate its implication. For instance, the statement "God is good" is capable of being understood, as far as its primary meaning is concerned, even if an unbeliever refused to accept it as meaningful, but it does not follow that it implies anything, unless the recipient understood this to embrace the belief that God is the source of all that is good and that He requires man to live a good life or one in accordance with His commandments. However, any such secondary or implied meaning would seem to depend upon a prior knowledge or understanding of Christian teaching, if not, indeed, upon a preconditioning or indoctrination process. However, the implied or secondary meaning may, obviously, be other than conducive to action of any particular kind. There may well be no response at all but this does not mean that it has not been understood, especially within the context of a common experience, as a clear distinction must be made between intended meaning and effective meaning. A lapsed Christian, for example, would understand the meaning of any such statement about God and, no doubt, also, any implications

arising from them, so to him the intended meaning of the utterance would be intelligible but, unless he were a practising Christian, such statements would be devoid of any effective meaning, as far as he was concerned.

If, then, we ask whether the secondary or implied meaning presupposes something without which the incompatibility of the primary meanings of words or statements would remain, then it would seem that the answer must be in the affirmative, it being identified with a kind of common link which, primarily, must include a similar or identical mystical experience, although some kind of preconditioning or indoctrination process may also be involved.

J. It would seem, then, that the proper meaning of mystical statements - and particularly those which are paradoxical - must depend on a similarity of experience which makes communication possible and, in this sense, it would appear that mysticism employs a kind of technical jargon, so that meaning and implication do, in effect, imply a relation between utterance and recipient. In any such relation, intended rather than effective meaning seems to be the more significant, in so far as the latter introduces another factor which is not, of necessity, associated with the former, namely the will to act. It follows, then, that, in our various experiences, of which mysticism is one enjoyed by the relatively few, there must be admitted what Daya Krishna has termed a "principle of multiple validities" so that, as he states, "if the mystic encroaches on the aesthetic, moral or intellectual fields and tries

Op.cit,
P.105,
Journal of
Religion,
April, 1954.

to prescribe criteria of validity for them, he would be as much in the wrong as the others, if they tried to do the same for him". In other words, then, it would seem necessary to accept that paradoxical and contradictory statements, seemingly and inevitably, arise from a process of attempting to make articulate an essential mystery, a transcendent otherness of which there is only an intuitive awareness of Its existence.

k. Before attempting to reach any conclusions, as a result of our survey of the Upaniṣads, we must briefly consider a relatively small number of statements which seem inappropriately classified as either descriptive or interpretative. What, then, are as interesting as they are problematic are the hints of a Personal God and, indeed, of devotion or "bhakti" to such a God. Such claims cannot, convincingly, be regarded as proceeding directly from any experience of an undifferentiated unity, any more than they can from a process of logical inference or explanatory hypotheses. Have we, then, to consider the possibility of a religious source for such claims or, indeed, can they be regarded as proceeding from the Brahma-Atman Equation, as some kind of further articulation of the God-concept?. Any answer to such questions can only be speculative, but it seems that monotheism can be seen emerging in the later Upaniṣads, where the personal God is referred to as "Īs, Īsa, Isāna or Īsvara", meaning The Lord, and the individual soul (ātman) is regarded as the shadow of this Supreme Soul (Ātman): P.D.Mehta

See Svet:
4.8.11;
Mait: 6.8;
7.7, etc.

Kath: 3.1;
Svet: 1.8.

would, however, claim that any such monotheism emerging in the later Upaniṣads, did not develop out of Vedic polytheism, although he does not attempt to explain, or explain away, henotheistic, monistic and monotheistic tendencies occurring in the Xth Book of Hymns. It is, in particular, the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, however, that shows a strange predilection for the personified forms of Brahman, as Savitar, Isāna and Rudra, although the Upaniṣad is not solely theistic, pantheistic conceptions being placed side by side with theistic ones, as also are idealistic conceptions which regard only the Ātman as real, all else being unreal. It has been claimed that the work is an attempt to reconcile different philosophical and religious views which prevailed at the time of its composition and, in this respect, it is not unsimilar to the Bhagavadgītā, as we shall see, later.

Early Indian Religious Thought, P.143.

Compare 2.1-4;
3.2-4; 4.11-12;
4.18, 21-22.

However, in its final verses, the Svetāsvatara advocates devotion (bhakti) to God and it is interesting to note that the Upaniṣads do recognize higher and lower forms of religion. In the Kena Upaniṣad, Samkara argues, according to a note on the text by Radhakrishnan, that the author lays stress on the distinction between the Absolute Brahman, who is one with the deepest self in us, and Īsvara, who is the object of worship. Pure Godhead cannot be objectified but simple, unreflective minds seek a God who is above and not within us, that is not a this that can be worshipped as this. So, meditation on the Supreme Brahman, in the higher form of religion, becomes passionate devotion to the

Compare 1.
5 & 8.(R).

Lord of the Universe, in the lower form, yet the two are, of course, One. It can seemingly be recognized, then, that Upaniṣadic religion is akin to a feeling of reverence and love for the Great Spirit, a kind of spiritualized bhakti recognizing that the distinction between Subject and Object melts away in the heart of religious fervour. It can only be concluded, then, that Absolute and God are One, It being called the Supreme Brahman to emphasize its transcendence, and Īsvara to emphasize the personal aspect so necessary for the religious consciousness and the devotion which is associated with it. No doubt, too, the Brahma-Atman Equation which identifies individual and universal self contributed its part to the belief in a personal God. From this, one can, we believe, readily see how the personal God became regarded as friend and helper, father, Governor of the universe and, above all, Supreme Person or Purusottoma.

Finally, it is hinted that the Ātman is only known by a revelation to His elect. The individual looks upon God as the transcendent and, as it were, feels an acute need of grace (prasāda). Indeed, in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, religious fervour seems to exclaim that it is God who inspires to do good work the men He will "lead up from these worlds". It would seem, then, that the Upaniṣads consider the highest form of religion to be spiritual meditation on the Absolute; next in rank passionate devotion to the One, Immanent Lord and, lowest of all, worship of the Vedic devas and other deities. It is, however, unfortunate that, in the emerging of any such personal

See Kath:
2.23.(H);
Svet: 3.20;
6.23.(H).

Kaus:
3.8.(H).

Compare
Svet: 6.5;
Brh: 1.4.10.

God-concept, the consistent monistic conception is that knowledge exempts from both good and evil and elevates the knower altogether from the region of moral distinctions to the higher one where they are not operative, good and evil being conceptions of partial knowledge which can no longer hold, in the light of full knowledge. The Brahman being, thus, devoid of all ethical distinctions, the knower of Brahman likewise transcends them, in his union with It. Moral distinctions, then, do not obtain for the man who has metaphysical knowledge and, indeed, this is the influence effected on the Bhagavadgītā, when Kṛṣṇa quells the scruples of Arjuna over the murdering of his enemies, by an assurance quoted from the Kātha Upaniṣad.

See
2.19(H).

5. Conclusions

a. For the sake of continuity, we may, initially, remind ourselves that the Rg-Vedic Hymns suggested that statements about deity originated in man's confrontation with and reaction to the world of natural phenomena. From such a reaction, especially to the impressive manifestations of power in the celestial and atmospheric spheres, we believe our introductory survey suggested the possible origin of such attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, transcendence, order and stability, beneficence and, relative to man's finite state, eternity and immortality. Furthermore, statements indicative of such attributes were augmented by the use of analogy from both human emotion and social intercourse, the essentially unknown being described in terms of that which was both understood and capable of explanation.

Of particular interest was the dawning of a concept of Unity, of a relationship with such powers and a vague hint of a personal and almost monotheistic Reality which lay behind or beyond all determinate manifestations in the world of the phenomenal.

b. What conclusions can, then, be reached from the Upanisads, by way of correlating an inward experience of the One with statements about its essential nature and attributes?. Our survey would suggest the following conclusions:-

1. That there is an intuition, awareness or apprehension of the Existence of what is termed the Brahman or Absolute Reality, a completely non-empirical Reality, and that this may be experienced either directly or as the climax to a verification process involving numerous physical and mental disciplines
2. That any such intuition, awareness or apprehension of Existence is to be regarded as the Primary Datum and that upon which any attempted articulation depends.
3. That statements attempting to make such an experience articulate cannot reasonably be regarded as being made simultaneously with it but afterwards, when the experience is remembered or recalled, and that such statements must, therefore, be regarded as Secondary Data. They must, seemingly, function as statements which, of course, are confirmed by the verification process.
4. That such Secondary Data consist of two main classes of statements, namely Literal Descriptions which are merely descriptive, and Interpretative

Statements which involve either or both logical inference and explanatory hypotheses.

a. Literal Descriptions, mainly negative in form, attempt to make articulate the experience of an unlimited and completely non-empirical and incomprehensible Existent. In other words, such statements attempt to portray the experience of an undifferentiated One, and as far as nothing positive can be asserted of any such experience, then the negative statements that ensue may be regarded as appropriate to it, as they are to what is claimed to be an identical experience or awareness reached as the climax to what we have termed the verification process, which could, in this instance, even be regarded as a preconditioned experience, albeit confirming the claims made by the "sruti" texts.

b. Interpretative Statements assert, either by way of logical inference or explanatory hypotheses and presumably based on the Literal Descriptions, that, in the experience, metaphysical Reality is cognized by contact with Pure Spirit or the Brahman and that the individual "ātman" and the universal "Ātman" are One. It is, consequently, asserted to be all-pervading and omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite and eternal, the Inmost Being, Controller and Governor of all. As the source of all things, it is also Creator and possessed of manifold perfections, although, strangely, it is declared to be beyond any distinctions between good and evil. Any reference, therefore, to Its moral nature must be strictly relative to a lower

form of knowledge which cannot apply in the full light of truth.

c. A small group of statements, suggestive of a personal God, of Divine Grace (prasāda) and of Devotion (bhakti), seemingly proceed from a religious source, filling, as it were, a basic need required by both man's religious consciousness and his emotional nature, a need which pure, transcendental knowledge was unable to provide. Such hints not only relate back to suggestions of monotheism made in the Xth Book of Ṛg-Vedic Hymns but anticipate, in a strange way, the monotheism which was to be so impressively portrayed in the later Bhagavadgītā, as we shall eventually discover.

5. That the Primary Datum yields an apprehension of Existence alone and that any knowledge of the nature or attributes of the Brahman must seemingly proceed from Secondary Data, by means of logical inference and explanatory hypotheses.

6. That confusion can result from a literal interpretation of the primary meanings of words and statements used and that their secondary or implied meanings depend on a kind of technical language, by means of which, and in the right context, communication is effected between mystics who have, in common, the experience of the Existence of the Brahman. Many such statements, especially those that appear, from a logical standpoint, to be both paradoxical and contradictory for the non-mystic, can only be regarded as attempts to make articulate an essential mystery of which there is only an intuitive awareness

of Its existence.

7. That it is of no small significance that both Vedic and Upaniṣadic attempts at an articulation of outward and inward-looking experience, respectively, should yield such attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, transcendence, order and stability, benevolence and beneficence and, relative to man's state of being, eternity and immortality. The suggestions of a Unity, of a personal God and of a relationship between man and God made in the R̥g-Veda, recur but, in the Upaniṣads, although the idea of a personal God is, as yet, not significantly developed, albeit there is a hint of grace(prasāda) and devotion(bhakti), that of Unity becomes one of a monistic soleness and that of a relationship is seen as an identity between the individual self and the Universal Self, succinctly expressed in the phrase "That art Thou".

c. What, then, of the question of whether secondary interpretation subsequently defines what is experienced, in the sense that doctrine, as established interpretation, might do just that?. The general import of the question is that if, after going through the various and demanding physical and mental disciplines, one attains an experience similar to that of an undifferentiated unity, then such is to be regarded as an experience of the Brahman, so that, in this sense, secondary interpretation seemingly defines subsequent experience. In other words, the verification process is one through which the seeker after knowledge is able to verify the claims of those who have actually

had an experience, immediate and spontaneous as it was, of the Brahman, by actually experiencing it, for himself or, indeed, to have the experience interpreted, in so far as it may be possible, according to M.K. Venkatarama Iyer, to be Brahman without knowing it.

Advaita
Vedanta,
P.64.

Doctrine, therefore, must be regarded as a translation of mystical experience and the insights which spring from it. Its essential function is to conserve the experience, to enrich and to explain it, and to guard it against what may be felt to be false or inadequate interpretations of it. Its object is as much to transmit an original vision to those unable to or, indeed, unwilling to reach it, as it is to verify the claims of those who have reached it for anyone wishing to do so, for himself. What really matters, however, is the degree of spiritual understanding reached through its definition of similar and subsequent experience.

d. We may, then, turn our attention to the Bhagavadgītā and examine, in a similar way, its teaching about the Ultimate Reality, prior to attempting to draw conclusions about the relationship between Doctrine and Experience, in this "Song of the Lord".

T H E

B H A G A V A D G Ī T Ā

7. Prolegomena to the Bhagavadgītā

1. Whereas the Vedas laid stress on the outer world, the Upaniṣads stressed the importance of the inner world, the world of knowledge of the Transcendent Spirit, as a result of which the seeker after knowledge found himself at one with what H.D.Lewis has termed "the barren Godhead". It could hardly be expected that the popular interest would be gripped by such Upaniṣadic thought and doubtless, as D.W.Gundry remarks, most men were growing weary of an abstract religion and longed for a warmer and more vivid idea of the power that controlled man and the universe. Franklin Edgerton claims that "The great mass of mankind demanded, as always, a personal, quasi-human god or gods to worship; it could not be satisfied by mystic contemplation of a nameless Soul, even if it be the Soul of the universe". Some more acceptable outlet for the religious feelings of the people had to be provided and it may well be that the Gītā was, indeed, the result of the appearance of new teachers who sought to state man's spiritual nature and destiny in fresh terms more appropriate to the age.

The Elusive Kind, P.306.

Religions, P.93.

Bhagavadgītā, P.132.

Compare Floyd H. Ross, Meaning of Life in Hinduism and Buddhism, P.60.

2. Sometime, therefore, possibly around 200 B.C. - the date is uncertain and has been a subject of endless discussion - the poem was originally composed. S.Radhakrishnan states that it is later than the great movement represented by the early Upaniṣads and earlier than the development of the various philosophical systems and their formulation in sutras. W.D.P.Hill suggests that a general consensus

Bhagavadgītā, P.14.

of opinion amongst modern scholars is that the poem is not an original one composed by a single hand but, rather, an ancient work, rewritten and enlarged.

Bhagavadgita,
P.18.

For the most part, the theory of a re-cast document is founded on the fact that the poem attempts to reconcile so many different points of view and appears, in many passages, to be inconsistent with itself. Indeed, at the beginning of the century, E. W. Hopkins stigmatized it as "an ill-assorted cabinet of primitive philosophical opinions", although this would generally be disputed today.

Religions
of India,
P.390,
1908.

J.N. Farquhar states that, in its present form, it can scarcely be earlier than the first or second century A.D. However, it is a religious classic rather than a philosophical treatise and it is set forth "not as a metaphysical system thought out by an individual thinker but as a tradition which has emerged from the religious life of mankind", integrating into a comprehensive synthesis the different elements of Vedic sacrifice, the Upaniṣadic teaching about the Absolute Brahman, Bhāgavata theism, Sāṃkhya dualism and Yoga meditation. By popular assent, the authorship is attributed to one Vyāsa (literally compiler or editor), also called Veda Vyāsa who is thought to be the editor of the Epic Mahābhārata and the reputed author of the Brahma-Sutras and, as such, alluded to under the name of Bādarāyana. It is of no small interest, however, that the poem coincides approximately in time with the development of Mahayana Buddhism and its Bodhisattva ideal.

An Outline
of the
Religious
Literature
of India,
P.86.

Source Book
in Indian
Philosophy,
Edited by
Radhakrishnan
& Moore,
P.101.

Circa 250
B.C.

3. J.N. Farquhar claims that the poem has had an

immeasurable influence on religion in India and that

"It is the expression of the earliest attempt made in India to rise to a theistic faith and theology".

S.C.Roy would go further and claims that "the concurrence of the ancient Indian tradition with the researches of modern scholars justifies us in assigning to the Gītā the same status and independence as to an Upaniṣadic treatise" and it is interesting to note the reasons for this claim.

Apart from a general similarity of thought in the Gītā and Upaniṣads, there is, he states, a peculiar kinship of the text with the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. The problem of the immortality of the soul is the kernel of both and there is a marked similarity of teaching concerning the nature and means of salvation.

Furthermore, a number of verses from the Kaṭha are quoted in the poem. Yet again, a relation between the poem and the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad is seen from the fact that, in both, theistic and pantheistic ideas are placed besides one another and, in both, there is also the representation of a personal God under such names as Rudra, Hara, Devedeva and Īsa, etcetera, and reference is made to reverential love towards

God and to Divine grace (prasāda), as we have already noted. Roy would also maintain that the Gītā was originally an Upaniṣad originating at an age not far removed from the date when the Kaṭha,

Svetāsvatara, Īsa and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads were composed, because it seems to breathe in the same spiritual atmosphere and to follow nearly the same line of religious and philosophical thought, although it attains a higher level and exhibits a more advanced

An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, P.86.

The Bhagavad - Gita and Modern Scholarship, P.145.

ibid, P. 142f.

At least 18.

See Hume, The 13 Principal Upanishads, for a table of recurrences, Pp.560-562.

See P.155 supra.

Op.cit, P.144.

stage of development.

4. However, the Bhagavadgītā falls into the category of "smṛti" and, as such, cannot rank as "śruti". It is not, that is, regarded as Divine revelation, in the sense in which the Vedas are believed to be. Being composed by a human-being, Veda-Vyāsa, it is "pauruseya" (literally, connected with a person), whilst the Vedas, having no author are "apauruseya" (literally, unconnected with a person). Nevertheless, it is set forth as a tradition which has emerged from the religious life of mankind.

See P.68, supra.
See Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedanta, P.203.

5. Before we proceed to examine the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being in the poem, we may outline the background to and theme of this long dialogue, a dialogue which, in fact, is almost a monologue. The two principal speakers are Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, the latter being one of the five sons of Pāṇdu who are the principal heroes of the Epic Poem, the Mahābhārata. When the blind king of the Kurus, one Dhṛtarāṣṭra, decided to give his throne to Yudhiṣṭhira, in preference to the eldest son, Duryodhana, the latter, by trickery and treachery, secured the throne for himself and attempted to destroy Yudhiṣṭhira and his four brothers. Kṛṣṇa, head of the Yādava clan, sought to bring about a reconciliation between the cousins but, when all attempts failed, a fratricidal war became inevitable. Kṛṣṇa proposed that he and his vassals would join the two sides and left the choice to the parties concerned. The vassals were selected by Duryodhana and Kṛṣṇa, himself, joined the Pāṇḍavas as the charioteer of Arjuna. A conversation takes

See Note 1, P.102, in Source Book of Indian Philosophy.

place between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna just before the great battle of Kuruksetra, a vast field near Hastināpura, in the neighbourhood of modern Delhi. Arjuna sees in the opposing ranks, a large number of his own kinsmen and friends and cannot bring himself to fight against these and lays down his weapons, stating that he would rather be killed than kill them. Kṛṣṇa endeavours to remove the philosophical doubts and religious scruples which dimmed Arjuna's vision and clogged his spirit. He justifies the fight on various grounds, the chief being that man's soul or real self is immortal and independent of the body. It neither kills nor is killed and has no part, at all, in either the actions or sufferings of the body. In response to Arjuna's questions, Kṛṣṇa develops views of life and destiny as a whole, which it is the purpose of the poem to explain. He eventually declares himself to be the Supreme Godhead, VASUDEVA KṚṢṆA, and reveals to Arjuna, as a special act of grace, a vision of his mystic, supernal form. The somewhat dramatic absurdity of such a dialogue taking place whilst the two armies are waiting to attack each other is of no serious concern because, obviously, the author was mainly interested in the religious doctrines to be set forth rather than in any dramatic situation which provides a convenient setting for the poem.

The Gītā's distinctive name for the Supreme Being.

6. Kṛṣṇa may be regarded from both an historical and a literary standpoint.

Historically, he was a man who lived several centuries before Christ, one well-trained in the wisdom of his ancestors and one who, in the course of time, became a master of such wisdom, in his own right. There

is ample evidence in favour of the historicity of Kṛṣṇa. For instance, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad refers to Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, and speaks of him as the pupil of Ghora Āngirasa . There is, indeed, a great similarity between the teaching of Ghora Āngirasa in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad and that of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. See 3.17.6.

As a character in a literary plot designed by the author, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa is idealized, as expressing the epitome of wisdom, both human and divine, being depicted as a God, human in form, an avatār or incarnation, functioning in order to reveal such wisdom to men, in general, and to Arjuna, in particular. In order to express divine wisdom convincingly, he assumes the character of the Supreme Being, thereby becoming the voice of Ultimate Reality, Itself, so the voice of God, by implication, is regarded as God.

However, how can one identify an historical individual with the Supreme Being?. This is readily answered in view of the fact that a representation of an individual as identical with the Universal Self is familiar to Hindu thought. For example, in the Ṛg-Veda, Vāmadeva claims to be Manu, Sūrya and so forth. In the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, Indra claims to be the vital breath and conscious self and to be worshipped as life and as breath. Indeed, in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, it is stated that the worshipper becomes one with the god he truly sees, so the divinity claimed by Kṛṣṇa would be regarded as the common reward of all earnest, spiritual seekers. Compare Chand: 3.17.1-6 with B.G. 8.11-13 & 16.1-3. See also A.J. Bahm, Bhagavadgita, Pp.1-2. R.V.4.26.1. 3.2. Brh: 1.4.10.

In connection with our preliminary survey of the Rg-Veda, it is interesting to note that Kṛṣṇa appears as an avatāra of Vishnu, the ancient Vedic Lord of the Sun, and in two places in the Gītā Kṛṣṇa is directly addressed as Vishnu. Such an identification may be because one aspect of Vishnu was the redemption of the world and, so, Kṛṣṇa represents the Vishnu aspect of the Supreme.

W.D.P.Hill endeavours to trace this association of Kṛṣṇa with the Vedic god, but Professor Barth considered that the latter's attainment of supremacy was coincident with and due to Kṛṣṇa's identification with the God, as the supremacy of Vishnu is nowhere anticipated in the Veda, although, in the Katha Upaniṣad, we find that the progress of man's soul is compared to a journey whose end is called "the highest place of Vishnu".

See XI.24 & 30.

Bhagavadgītā,
Pp.9-16.

A.Barth,
Religions of
India, London,
1906, Pp.165-167

See Kath:3.9.
(H); 1.3.9(R).
Compare with
RV.1.22.20a &
1.154.5d.

7. We may, then, now proceed to examine the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā, as far as is possible along similar lines used when examining the Upaniṣads, commencing with a consideration of the Nature of the One, as portrayed in the poem.

8. THE NATURE OF THE ONE IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

1. As we have previously observed, it is evident that the pure monism of early thinkers, according to whom Supreme Being was an unknown, all-pervading conscious principle, was slowly developed until, in the later books, notably the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, it came to be conceived of in both moral and religious terms, albeit somewhat vaguely. A similar process is observable but to a much greater degree in the Bhagavadgītā, although the text of the poem is pervaded by the spirit of the Upaniṣads and it is generally accepted that, as S.C.Roy expresses it, "the purity and sublimity of the teachings of the Gītā must have had their original sources in the soil and atmosphere of the Upaniṣads". Indeed, as we shall see, the doctrine of Brahman in the poem is founded on the Upaniṣads and conceived exactly on the same model.

The
Bhagavadgītā
and Modern
Scholarship,
P.142.

2. Nevertheless, one recognizes in the poem a current of Upaniṣadic thought which stresses the cosmic rather than the acosmic (nirguna) conception of the Absolute and, in addition, a theistic stream of thought mingling with it, so that the theoretical teaching of the Gītā is a blend of these two distinct creeds. It is not surprising, therefore, that the poet-author of the Bhagavadgītā has presented the Supreme both as Brahman and as personal God of the universe, incarnate in Kṛṣṇa. This does not, of course, mean that there has been any real change in the basic philosophy of the Vedānta but, as W.T.Stace has phrased it, "only a change of emphasis from one side of the paradox to the other",

Compare M.
Hiriyanna,
Outlines of
Indian
Philosophy,
P.130.

Mysticism &
Philosophy,
P.164.

that is from the mainly negative statements of the Nirguna Brahman of the Upaniṣads to the mainly positive statements of the Saguna Brahman of the Gītā. In other words, the "darkness" of the former is replaced by the "light" of the latter or what Suso calls the "dazzling obscurity", a phrase which succinctly expresses both sides of the paradox. In this respect, the elaborated simile of the Asvattha tree, which is based on that of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, illustrates the point. In the Gītā version of the simile, there is both a main and a subsidiary Asvattha tree. The latter is an overgrowth which has proceeded out of man and has to be cut asunder "by the strong axe of detachment" before one can reach the main tree. In the light of this, God is both immanent and transcendent, the immanent part being an emanation or development from God, whereas the transcendent part - the root, high-up, which is the basis of all that has grown in the lower world - is the undifferentiated reality, Brahman.

3. This, of course, leads to various contradictions in the poem. Sometimes, for instance, in the same passages and sometimes in passages of the same context, one finds pantheism, transcendentalism and theism which, on the surface, would suggest that no contradiction was felt in the different aspects of God, as Preserver and Controller of the universe and as the transcendent substratum underlying them all. On this problem, however, scholars have disagreed. For instance, M. Winternitz states that some would claim the Gītā is not a

A medieval Christian mystic, quoted by Stace, op. cit., P.162 & elsewhere.

Kath: 6.1(H);
1.6.1(R);
B.G.XV.1-4.

B.G.XV.3.

Compare S. Dasgupta, Indian Idealism, P.59.

Compare B.G. IX. 3-5.

History of Indian Literature, P.435.

systematically executed work but a mystical poem and Franklin Edgerton is a consistent exponent of this opinion. Others would claim that the contradictions are due to interpolations and revisions and yet others that the poem was originally a pantheistic poem remodelled by devotees of Vishnu into a theistic work. S.Radhakrishnan, in rejecting the various theories of interpolation, states that the Gītā is an application of the Upaniṣadic ideal to the new situation which arose at the time of the Epic Mahābhārata, that is, an attempt to derive a religion from the Upaniṣadic philosophy. In this respect, it is interesting to note that

See S.C.Roy, op.cit, for various other theories, including that of Richard Garbe.

Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, P.530.

Surendranath Dasgupta comments that "instead of tackling the real philosophical problems, it (i.e. the Gītā) only combines the various elements of Upaniṣadic doctrine which seemingly come into conflict with one another and welds them together in a conception of a super-personal God", adding that "This is not the idealism of philosophy wrought with logical thought but the idealism of religion, effervescent with emotion".

Indian Idealism, P.61.

4. We may observe, then, that the Gītā takes the Upaniṣadic conception of Brahman, as Absolute Reality, and claims that the impersonality of the Absolute is not its whole significance. In consequence, it develops the theistic side of Upaniṣadic teaching, vaguely hinted at in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad. In doing this, of course, the poem's unique contribution to the doctrine of God lies in the thought that the Supreme Being of the Upaniṣads - the all-pervading, unknowable One - appears in human form, speaks through

human lips and is concerned about human affairs.

5. In our examination of what the poem teaches about the Supreme Being, we shall employ the same main headings as were used in our survey of the Upaniṣads, namely the One as Immanent, the One as Transcendent and the One as both Immanent and Transcendent, using a separate section for what is regarded as unique to the poem's teaching about God.

6. THE ONE AS IMMANENT

a. Once again, we must distinguish between "pure immanence" or the equivalent of a pantheistic expression of monism, and "immanence" as implying the existence of something other than deity or spirit, namely that in which it dwells and with which it comes into a relation. We may consider, first, then, statements which might be suggestive of "pure immanence".

b. It is true to say that there is little evidence of any form of absolute pantheism in the Gītā but there are, nevertheless, suggestions of a quasi-pantheism. It is frequently asserted that God is in all or all in God but, on the other hand, it does not state that God is identical with all and all with God. Undoubtedly, therefore, it could be argued that the poem comes very close to claiming an absolute pantheism.

Those statements which are suggestive of a quasi-pantheistic belief express it, as follows:-

1. That God is seen everywhere and everything in Him

"Who sees me everywhere and everything in me".(1). See below

1. VI.30.Hill. Similarly Radhakrishnan and Edgerton.

"Whoso, intent on unity(i.e.attaining to a belief in Oneness), devoutly worships me, who dwell in every being---". (1)

See below for references.

2. That there is nothing beyond or outside God

"Than I there is naught higher---on me is strung all this, as rows of gems upon a thread". (2)

3. That all existence is a manifestation of God

"Great brahma(prakṛti) is My Womb; in that I cast the seed and from it is the birth of all beings---". (3)

See note below.

"That also which is the seed of every being am I, O Arjuna; nor without me can any being exist that moves or does not move". (4).

"I am the Beginning and Middle of beings, and their End likewise". (5).

Hence, in such passages, the Bhagavadgītā uses language suggestive of a quasi-pantheistic relationship between God and the world.

1. VI.34.Hill. Radhakrishnan has "established in oneness" and Edgerton "adopting(the belief in) one-ness".

2. VII.7.Hill. Compare Radhakrishnan who adds a note to the effect that there is no higher principle than Īsvara who effects everything and is everything. Brahman and Īsvara are not distinct entities, of course, but different aspects of the same Reality so that Brahman is Īsvara when viewed as creative power.

3. XIV.3.Radhakrishnan. This verse affirms that all existence is a manifestation of the Divine. Hill has "For me the Great Brahman is a womb" and his note 2, P.180, comments that the use of brahman for prakṛti is not common.

4. X.39.Hill. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton have an almost identical translation.

5. X.20.Hill. Radhakrishnan's note,P.262, comments that "the world is a living whole", whereas Hill's note 1, P.151, adds that "it is my prakṛti which itself comes into being, remains in manifestation and is dissolved again". See also X.32.

Compare also VII.8-10; 19(Vāsudeva is all); XV.12-15. J.N.Farquhar claims "a stark pantheism stares out" from II.27; IV.24 and V.24-26.(An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, P.90,Par.92). XI.40 also states that, as God penetrates all, He is all, but these remarks are made by Arjuna, after the somewhat terrifying vision of God and may be an example of preconditioning, a point which will be considered later. Nevertheless, the truth that we are all the creatures of the One Supreme is frequently repeated.

c. If we now turn to statements suggestive of "immanence" as distinct from "Pure immanence", the distinguishing characteristic of such is that the One is regarded as coming within a relational scheme, being manifest in a world of multiplicity, diversity and change, a dualistic world of knowing subject and known object. Statements expressing this emphasize the One's being in the world, especially as the Reality underlying the innermost, individual self.

1. As all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent

"By me all this universe is pervaded". (1).

"---the All-pervading". (2).

"---the omnipresent". (3).

See below
for
references.

2. As Soul, Self or Inmost Being of all,
that is, Pratyagatmavisayam vastu

"I am the Self dwelling in the heart of every being". (4).

"the essential Self (adhyātma)". (5).

"I am lodged in the hearts of all". (6).

It seems necessary to comment further on what is implied by the statement, in section 2 above, that God is the "essential Self" or "adhyātma" in all individual beings. Brahman manifests itself in the

1.IX.4.Hill. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton almost identical.

2.X.12.Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill,with participle first.

3.XII.3.Hill, Radhakrishnan and Edgerton.

4.X.20.Hill. Radhakrishnan has "seated" and Edgerton translates as "the Soul---that abides".

5.VIII.3.Hill. His note 3, P.132, states that Adhyātma is the manifestation of Brahman in its proper form as Self in individuals, and on P.25 as that "which makes the individual what it is, the principle of pure consciousness, which is the same in every separate being".

6.XV.Radhakrishnan. Hill "seated", Edgerton "entered".
See also V.17; VI.6-7; VI.29; XIII.11 & 22.

universe, in two forms, as Self(ātman) and not-Self(prakṛti) and both forms are real because the Brahman is real. The two forms are regarded as Brahman's higher(parā) and lower(aparā) aspects, It being the life and form of every being. Its universal Being includes the totality of the unconscious in Its lower nature and the totality of the conscious in Its higher nature. In other words, each individual has two sides relatively known as "kṣetrajña" and "kṣetra", that is, Self and not-Self. The individual self, therefore, is a portion of God or a limited manifestation of the Supreme Being. As Self, Brahman is called "adhyātma" or that which makes the individual what he is, the principle of pure consciousness which is the same in every being, so that all individual selves are one with each other and with the Brahman. The Ātman is, therefore, transcendent (paramātman), cosmic and conditioned.

See VII.
4-5.

See XV.7.

d. The concept of the One as coming within a relational scheme is, however, most obviously suggested in passages which refer to the Absolute as God or Īsvara (The Lord) or, to use Upaniṣadic terms, the "saguna" Brahman. In the Gītā, as in the Upaniṣads, Īsvara is both Ruler and Lord and, of course, in the poem, Īsvara is Kṛṣṇa. We may, then, consider the general expression of this under seven main headings.

1. The One as Creator

"I am the origin of all,
From me all comes forth". (1).

1. X.8. Edgerton. Similarly Radhakrishnan and Hill.

"I am the father of this universe, the mother, the creator, the grandsire". (1). See below for references.

2. As Monarch and Ruler of the Universe

"And of men, I am the monarch". (2).

"Lord of beings, Lord of Heaven's Lords, O Ruler of the universe". (3).

3. As Guardian of the eternal laws of duty

"Thou art the changeless guardian of eternal law (dharma)". (4).

"For I am the abode---of eternal law and of absolute bliss". (5).

4. As the Supreme Person

a. The Great Self (Mahātman)

"---exalted Being (mahātman) (6).

b. The Highest Person (Puruṣottama and Paramātman)

"---O Supreme Person (puruṣottama) (7).

"---the Supreme Self (paramātman) (8)

5. As having various perfections

"---brilliance of the brilliant". (9).

"---God of Gods". (10).

"---the Light of Lights". (11).

See note below.

- 1.IX.17.Hill. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton with slight variations.
- 2.X.27.Radhakrishnan.Edgerton uses "king".This verse emphasises the qualitative difference in status which it is,of course, important to recognize and know.
- 3.X.15.Hill. Other versions give "Lord" rather than "Ruler".
- 4.XI.18.Hill. Other versions similarly, with slight changes.
- 5.XIV.27. Radhakrishnan. Hill gives "right everlasting" and Edgerton "eternal right". The One, as the basis of ethical values, is connoted by the use of the word "dharma" or right conduct.
- 6.XI.12. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton. Hill gives "Mighty One". See also XI.20, 37 & 50.
- 7.X.15. Hill and Radhakrishnan. Edgerton gives "Highest of Spirits".Reference is not to the unknown abyss of Godhead but to the Spirit immanent in and moving creation.
- 8.XV.17. Hill and Radhakrishnan.(XV.18 has "puruṣottama). See also XI.3.
- 9.VII.10.Hill. Radhakrishnan gives "splendour of the splendid" and Edgerton "Majesty of the Majestic".
- 10.X.15. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton.
- 11.XIII.17.Radhakrishnan. Compare Svet:3.14;Kath:5.15;Mund:2.2.10.

"From me come memory, knowledge and
disputation". (1).

See below for
references.

"I am the author of the Upaniṣads". (2).

"I know all beings, past, present and to
come". (3).

"Of letters I am the letter A". (4)

See note
below.

"Whatsoever being there is, endowed with
glory and grace and vigour, know that to
have sprung from a fragment of my
splendour". (5).

6. As having Ethical Perfection

a. Without Fault

"For without fault and equal is Brahman".(6).

"For Brahman is flawless". (6).

b. Strictly impartial

"All beings I regard alike; not one
is hateful to me or beloved". (7).

- 1.XV.15.Edgerton. Hill & Radhakrishnan have "memory and knowledge" but Hill adds "and removal of doubt", probably meaning reason.
- 2.XV.15.Edgerton. Hill reads "the Veda's Ends" and Radhakrishnan "the Vedanta".
- 3.VII.26.Hill. Similarly the other versions, with slight variations. This stresses the One's omniscience and, therefore, being unrivalled in knowledge.
- 4.X.33.Hill. Similarly the other versions. This means chief among letters as placed first in Indian alphabets (See Hill, note 3, P.155.). Nataraja Guru(The Bhagavadgita, Note on verse 33, P.453) notes that the vowel A (akāra) is implied in every other sound, whether vowel or consonant, and that the basic sound A is merely modified by the position of the speech organs.
- 5.X.41.Radhakrishnan. Similarly, with slight variants, the other two versions. This verse emphasises that the perfections of the universe are only a fraction of the perfections that belong to the nature of the One. The glory of the Absolute, therefore, is infinite.
- 6.V.19.Hill. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton give "flawless".The Absolute itself is spotless.
- 7.IX.29.Hill. Similarly, with slight variants, the other versions. However, criticism has been made of the fact that VII.17 and XII.13 state that some are specially dear to God, which contradicts the claim to impartiality made in this verse and in V.29 where God is referred to as "the friend of every being". The verse itself, of course, stresses the neutral position of the Absolute, in so far as the question of difference does not arise, and it stands in contrast to passages which refer to Kṛṣṇa's liking or disliking.

c. The goodness of the good

"Goodness among the good". (1).

See below for
references &
notes.

d. Always setting the standard for men to follow

"Men in every way follow my path". (2).

7. As worthy of worship and adoration

"Great Seers and Perfect Ones in hosts praise thee with hymns of praise abounding". (3).

"---reverence, reverence to thee a thousand times, and yet again and again reverence, reverence to thee!". (4).

"Therefore I bow myself and prostrate my body and crave grace of thee, the Lord adorable". (5).

"Meet is it---that thy praise should move the universe to joy and love". (6).

Such passages, then, indicate that the One is related to the world; is immanent in it but not purely so; is the essential self of all beings and functions as Creator, Ruler or Monarch and Guardian of "dharma". It is the goal or object of aspiration and is worthy of worship and adoration. Indeed, the similarity

1. X.36.Hill. Similarly Radhakrishnan. Edgerton uses "courage of the courageous" but "sattva" has many meanings, one of which is Absolute Goodness.
2. III.23.Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill and Edgerton. The active principle of the Absolute, as reconciling opposites and bringing them together, is implied.
3. XI.21. Hill. Similarly, in substance, the other versions. The "siddhas", 88,000 in number, are mortals who have gained perfection and dwell between earth and sun.
4. XI.39. Hill.Radhakrishnan uses "Hail" and Edgerton "Homage".
5. XI.44.Hill. Similarly, Edgerton and Radhakrishnan, with slight variation in the order of words.
6. XI.36.Hill. Radhakrishnan renders "rightly does the world rejoice and delight in glorifying Thee", and Edgerton's version is, in substance, similar. It is interesting to note that this expresses a panegyric of exalted devotion.

between this Bhagavadgītā expression of immanence and that contained in the Upaniṣads is impressive, as can readily be seen from a comparison of the two.

7. THE ONE AS TRANSCENDENT

a. It is necessary, yet again, in the case of the Gītā, to distinguish between statements which relate to a transcendent One, beyond manifestation and, as such incomprehensible, and statements indicative of a partially manifest which, in essence, yet remains transcendent, in the sense indicated above.

b. Passages suggesting the transcendent, as defined above, are mainly negative in form and serve to emphasize, in various ways, its incomprehensibility and its unlimited and undefined nature, as that which transcends the empirical world. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa has, it appears, almost all the attributes ascribed to the Brahman of the Upaniṣads. These may be considered under seven main headings.

1. The One as the Wholly Other

"But beyond this unmanifested, there is yet another Unmanifested Eternal Being who does not perish even when all existences perish". (1).

"It is the Supreme Brahman who is beginningless and who is said to be neither existent nor non-existent". (2).

2. The One as Incomprehensible (Aprameyam)

"---as burning fire or sun resplendent round about, incomprehensible". (3).

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1. VIII.20.Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill & Edgerton.
 2. XIII.12.Radhakrishnan. Edgerton adds "the beginningless Brahman, ruled by me", stating that XIV.27 makes this possible. Modern versions omit the phrase altogether.
 3. XI.17.Hill. Radhakrishnan has "incomparable" and Edgerton has "immeasurable".

3. The One as Infinite and Boundless

See below for references & notes.

"---no end in thee, no middle, nor yet beginning do I see, O Universal Lord, O Universal Form!". (1).

"There is no end to my extent". (2).

4. The One as Primal

"---this my form supreme - glorious, universal, infinite, primal - which none save thee has ever seen". (3).

5. The One as Unborn

"He who knows me as birthless and without beginning". (4).

6. The One as Undefinable, Unmanifest, Unthinkable and Unchanging

"---the Undefinable, the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Immovably Exalted, the Firm, the Constant". (5).

"---but me no one knows". (6).

7. The Ones Paradoxical or Irreconcilable Attributes

Upaniṣads
Compare Brh:
3.9.26 &
Tait: 2.4.1.

"---nor Being nor No-Being". (7).

"---unattached and yet supporting all, free from the gunas (dispositions of prakṛti) and yet enjoying them". (8).

Compare Svet:
3.19.

1. XI.16.Hill. Similarly Radhakrishnan. Edgerton uses "O All-God, All-formed".

2. X.19. Radhakrishnan and Edgerton. Hill has a different order of words.

3. XI.47.Hill. Similarly, with slight variations, the other versions.

4. X.3.Hill. Similarly the other versions. The Absolute strictly belongs to the Eternal Present and, as such, is Timeless.

5. XII.3.Hill. The verse is couched in philosophical terms. Compare also VIII.20 & 21; XI.37.

6. VII.26.Hill. Compare VII.24, however, where only fools are said not to know him. Commentators vary widely in their interpretations of this verse. The majority think that it refers to Kṛṣṇa as incarnate, regarding the incarnate God as an ordinary mortal.

7. XIII.12.Hill. The other versions use "existent nor non-existent". The Eternal Brahman is above all empirical oppositions and cannot, therefore, be characterized by any term.

8. XIII.14. Radhakrishnan. Hill and Edgerton use "strands" for the dispositions of prakṛti.

"Without beings, yet within them;
unmoving and yet moving---far away, yet
near". (1).

Compare
Isa Up: 5.

With reference to such paradoxical attributes, the purpose of such in the Bhagavadgītā, as in the Upaniṣads, would apparently be to deny to the One all empirical predicates, in order to illustrate that it is totally other than anything known. Radhakrishnan, however, states that the attribution of qualities and their denial serves to bring out the immensity of the Supreme Being. Nataraja Guru, on the other hand, claims that the series of paradoxical references are all meant as examples of "the principle of equalization, neutralization or cancelling-out of counterparts or tendencies into a neutral central value which is the Absolute". It is, nevertheless, interesting to note that many of the paradoxical passages in the Gītā are direct quotations from the Upaniṣads, in particular from the Svetāsvatara, Isa and Muṇḍaka.

Bhagavadgītā,
Note, P. 306.

Bhagavadgītā,
Note, P. 554.
Asia
Publishing
House, London,
1961.

According to such passages, then, the One is wholly other than and beyond the manifested; it is Incomprehensible, Infinite, Primal, Unborn, Undefinable, Unthinkable, Unchanging and above and beyond the world of empirical reality.

Compare Svet:
3.16 & 19;
Isa 5 and
Muṇḍ: 3.1.7.

8. THE ONE AS BOTH IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT

a. In general, these statements suggest that, although manifest in the world, the One is not exhausted in it, so that the world is a mere fragment of its unlimited totality, as we may see

1. XIII.15. Hill. Similarly, the other two versions.

from the following passages.

1. The One as not exhausted in the universe

"I with one part of myself have established this whole universe". (1).

"Whatsoever being there is, endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour". (2).

Compare
R.V.X.90.3;
Chand:Up:
3.12.6 &
Svet:Up:3.14.

2. The One as within and without the universe

"Without beings, yet within them--- far away, yet near, is That". (3).

"This is the lower (nature); but know my higher Nature to be other than this". (4).

Compare Mait:
Up: 5.2 &
Mund:Up:2.1.2

See note
below.

Such passages show, then, that, although in the world, the One is yet above and beyond the order of empirical being.

9. ATTRIBUTES WHICH ARE REGARDED AS UNIQUE TO THE BHAGAVADGITA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

a. The Doctrine of Avatārhood and Righteousness

1. Avatār means descent or one who has descended and, from ancient times, India has held strongly to a belief in the reality of the Avatār - the

Compare Sri
Aurobindo,
Essays on
the Gita,
P.10f.

1. X.42.Hill. Radhakrishnan uses "support" and "single fraction of myself". Similarly Edgerton. The Absolute suffers no quantitative decrease in consequence. Supernal manifestations are as nothing compared with its totality.

2. X.41.Radhakrishnan. Hill reads "a part of my glory" and Edgerton "a fraction of My glory".

3. XIII.15.Hill. Similarly, with slight variations, the other versions. Although this particular verse has been quoted previously (P.182 supra), as an example of paradoxical statements, Hill claims the latter part means practically "transcendent and immanent". See Hill, P.176, Note 3.

4. VII.5. Hill. Similarly Radhakrishnan and Edgerton. The lower nature is the Self in the world and all individuals, whilst the Higher is the Real, Supreme and Unknown Brahman.

See also VII.10 & 12 and IX.11.

descent into form or the revelation of Godhead in humanity. The idea of Avatāra, as found in the Gītā, seems to have arisen from Vedantic soil, by a combination of two older modes of thought which may, also, have contributed something to the hints of a personal God found in the later Upaniṣads. These are:-

- a. that Brahman, as the Principle of Unity manifests itself in the multifarious form of reality.
- b. that all individual souls are identical with God.

2. Although the avatār doctrine is a cardinal one for the Gītā, the word "avatār" does not occur at all in the poem and there is no reference, as such, to Kṛṣṇa as an avatār. Nevertheless, the doctrine is expounded in the following words:-

"Though (I am) unborn and myself (is) imperishable, though (I am) the lord of all creatures, yet establishing myself in my own nature, I come into (empiric) being through my power (māyā)". (1)

In so far as all existence is a manifestation of the One, because It is the only existence, so every conscious being is, in some way, a descent of the Infinite into the apparent finiteness of name and form. There is, then, both a manifest or particular avatār, namely Kṛṣṇa, and an Eternal Avatār in man, namely his Essential Self or the Divine Consciousness always present in man. However, in any manifest avatār, that is, Kṛṣṇa, the Infinite does not appear in true or supernal form. That form is not only invisible to the eye of man but also unknowable to his mind,

See S.C.Roy,
The
Bhagavadgita
and Modern
Scholarship,
P.21.

See further,
Geoffrey
Parrinder's
Avatar and
Incarnation,
Pp.32-47, on
Kṛṣṇa in the
Gītā.

1. IV.6.(R).
HL. reads
delusive
power and E.
mysterious
power.

as the following passages suggest, and this would seem to echo what was found in the Upaniṣads, namely that God could not be known, in essence.

"I know the beings that are past, that are present----that are to come but Me no-one knows". (1).

"Neither the hosts of Gods nor the great sages know any origin of me, for I am the source of the Gods and the great sages in every way". (2).

"Verily Thou Thyself knowest Thyself by Thyself, O Supreme Person". (3).

3. What, however, occasions an Avatār? The purpose of any particular or manifest avatār is to inaugurate a new dharma, which is, literally, "mode of being". The conception of dharma is, of course, a development of the idea of "ṛta" which connotes both cosmic and moral order in the Ṛg-Veda. Sri Aurobindo describes the occasion of the avatār in the words, "---when from age to age the Dharma fades, languishes, loses force and its opposite (adhharma) arises, strong and oppressive, then the Avatār comes and raises it again to power". The aim of dharma is, then, the perfection of man and so the avatār generally declares, in so many words, as did Christ, that He is "the way, the truth and the life".

Essays on
the Gita,
P.160. Our
parenthesis.

St. John's
Gospel,
Chpt.14, v.6.

"---whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness ---then I send forth (create incarnate) myself". (4).

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1. VII.26.Radhakrishnan. Similarly, other versions. The exception is those favoured by grace, Kṛṣṇa being one.
 2. X.2.Radhakrishnan. Similarly, other two versions.
 3. X.15.Radhakrishnan. The Absolute is best known to the Absolute by its own norms and standards. Outside norms can only measure through symbolic language or inference.
 4. IV.7.Radhakrishnan. Similarly, with slight variations, Hill and Edgerton.

"For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being, from age to age". (1).

See also J.A. B. Van Buitenen, Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā, Pp.77-78.

In other words, the avatār is manifest to re-establish right when wrong prevails and to disclose the condition of being to which human souls should arise. It is the essential nature of a being that determines its mode of behaviour, so that as long as man's conduct is in conformity with his essential being, he is acting in the right way. This, of course, is a marked advance on the Upaniṣadic concept of Supreme Reality.

4. However, the upholding of dharma in the world is not the sole object of the descent of the avatār. As Aurobindo has stated, this is not "an all-sufficient object in itself --- but only the general condition of a higher aim and a more supreme and divine utility". There are, then, two aspects to avatārhood - the one being a descent, a birth of God into humanity, the other being an ascent, the birth of man into Godhead, whereby he rises into the Divine nature and consciousness. In other words, it is the manifestation from above of that which man has to develop from below, so the purpose of avatārhood is to re-shape the divine law (dharma) "by which the Godward effort of humanity is kept from decisive retrogression".

Essays on the Gita, PP.139-40.

ibid, P.159.

In this way, the God of the Gītā is not a God beyond good and evil, remote and unconcerned with man's struggle with unrighteousness, and instead

1. IV.8. Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill and Edgerton.

of, as in the Upaniṣads, thought or consciousness being the deity's essential attribute, it now seems to be Righteousness.

b. The Love of God - His Kind Bounty

1. If, therefore, finite selves are, in some way, distinct from deity, being sent into the world, sustained in it and finally withdrawn, at the end of each world-cycle, it is appropriate to ask what attitude Supreme Being has towards them.

See B.G.IX,
5-11.

Primarily, this attitude is one of love.

a. Kṛṣṇa is the friend of every being

"---the friend of every being---". (1).

b. Kṛṣṇa's love for Arjuna

"---exceeding beloved art thou of me". (2).

c. Kṛṣṇa, because of His love, reveals Himself to Arjuna

"By My grace, through My divine power, O Arjuna, was shown to thee this supreme form---which none but thee has seen before". (3).

2. So intimate and human is Kṛṣṇa's friendship, that Arjuna is afraid that, through negligence, he might not have shown the reverence due to the Avatār and asks that Kṛṣṇa should bear with him. Indeed, as the previously Unmanifest and Incomprehensible reveals, here, a heart of love and compassion, Arjuna bursts forth, in adoration, at this revelation:-

i.e. the
Brahman.

"Therefore bowing down and prostrating my body before Thee, O Adorable Lord, I seek Thy grace. Thou, O God, shouldst bear with

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1. V.29.Hill. The other versions read "friend of all beings"
 2. XVIII.64.Hill. Radhakrishnan reads "well beloved" and Edgerton "greatly loved".
 3. XI.47.Radhakrishnan. Similarly, with slight variants, the other translations used.

me as a father to his son, as a friend to his friend, as a lover to his beloved". (1).

3. The Bhagavadgītā, then, discloses the Supreme Being as One who, although in Its universal and transcendent nature is unknown and has powers far exceeding human thought and imagination, is yet possessed, amongst numerous attributes and perfections, of both Righteousness and Love. The latter serves as a bond of union between the finite and the Infinite and we have a God with whom a personal relationship is possible, this being, as we shall see later, the object of man's realization through "bhakti" or loving devotion to God.

c. Theism and the Super-Personality of God

1. It must be recalled that the poem provides a solution to a moral problem confronting Arjuna, and the Absolute of the Upaniṣads had to appear as a personal God, the Lord Kṛṣṇa, to listen to his difficulties and bring enlightenment to him by means of a cosmic vision. In other words, the exigencies of the special occasion demanded, as it were, a personal God and this fact seems, to some, to account for the predominantly theistic character of Bhagavadgītā metaphysics.

See M.K.V. Iyer, Advaita Vedanta, Pp.14-15.

2. In general, however, theism may be regarded as synonymous with a belief in a personal God and has characteristically held to a combination of both His immanence and transcendence. His immanence entails agency in the world, by presence, revelation and involvement in the historic process,

Compare Runes' Dictionary of Philosophy, P.316.

1. XI.44. Radhakrishnan. Similarly, with slight variations, the other versions. The verse implies that the Supreme is as close to us as the relations indicate.

whereas transcendence removes God from human affairs and from human understanding but yet preserves His Majesty and absoluteness, as the Ultimate and Supreme Being whom it is impossible to know, in essence. Immanence and transcendence are, of course, complementary terms and are generally regarded as the contrapletes of personality, or two opposite poles of a relationship in which, whilst they stand over against each other, at the same time fulfil each other. The common core of any theistic doctrine, then, is, in C.A.Campbell's words, "belief in One God, Perfect in Power, Wisdom and Goodness, an Infinite and Eternal Spirit who is the ultimate ground of all that is, who is the Moral Governor of the world and who is, at the same time, a Living Presence in the hearts of men".

On Selfhood
& Godhood,
P.262,
Par: 6.

3. In many ways, indeed, the theism of the Gītā would conform to any such definition but there has been endless controversy as to whether it ultimately teaches theism or Upaniṣadic Absolutism, and this certainly seems to be a question relevant to our enquiry. A.B.Keith claims that the theology of the poem is a most imperfect theism and if, indeed, this was because its theism was not consistently presented, it would be true, by virtue of the fact that it strives, not really successfully, to combine pantheistic, deistic and theistic assertions. W.D. P.Hill, however, claims that many apparent inconsistencies of doctrine are only regarded as such owing to a misapprehension of their significance. It is, nevertheless, interesting to observe that E.W. Hopkins, who stigmatized the poem as "an ill-assorted

J.R.A.S,
1915,P.548.

Bhagavad-
Gita,P.20.

cabinet of primitive philosophical opinions" also stated that "the anomalies astound no less the reader than the hero to whom (the poem) was revealed". Hill more cautiously concludes that it is not improbable that the writer was rather attempting a reconciliation of beliefs than carelessly throwing together an inconsistent medley.

Religions of India, Boston, 1908, Pp. 390-400.

Bhagavadgītā, P.20.

Franklin Edgerton, however, claims that the poet - author avoids careful definition of either Brahman or God, in so far as he does not seem able to get rid of the Upaniṣadic Absolute but strives, perhaps unwittingly, to colour it with his personal theism.

Bhagavadgītā, P.152.

At the other extreme, Floyd H. Ross states that the Gītā is theistic in that the Lord Kṛṣṇa is thought of as a personal form of deity but its theism is a pedagogical device or pointer. He who does not need theistic language can move ahead without being criticized and it is through lack of understanding that a person mistakes the form for the reality or the signpost for the objective.

The Meaning of Life in Hinduism and Buddhism, P.76.

4. However, in numerous places in the poem, the impersonal Brahman is more or less distinctly subordinated to the personal God, which has given rise to the belief that the poem teaches the Super-Personality of the Supreme Being. In this way, the Brahman of the Upaniṣads seems absorbed into God who assumes all its characteristics, or is differentiated from God and placed in some sort of subordinate position to Him, or, indeed, is made a lower manifestation of Him. It seems, therefore, necessary to examine such contentions more carefully.

a. Ninian Smart illustrates what he calls the "priority of the personal over the impersonal" with particular reference to quotations from the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of the poem:-

Reasons and
Faiths,
P.148.

"For I am the foundation of Brahman, the changeless and immortal, of the everlasting law, and of absolute bliss". (1).

1. XIV.27.
Smart's
version, P.148.
ibid.

"Since I am beyond the perishable and beyond the imperishable also, in the world and in the Veda I am proclaimed the Supreme Person (puruṣottama)". (2).

2. XV.18.
Smart's
version, P.149.
ibid.

The first verse conveys the impression that God upholds Brahman even as He upholds the world, and the second verse implies that beyond the imperishable Brahman is the Supreme Person. S.N.Dasgupta would support this point of view when he states that "Though the Brahman is again and again referred to as the highest abode and the ultimate realization, the absolute essence, yet God in His super-personality, transcends even Brahman, in the sense that Brahman, however great it may be, is only a constitutive essence in the complex personality of God". Can there be seen, in such a declaration, a slight echo of the henotheistic tendency evident in the Rg-Veda?

History of
Indian
Philosophy,
Vol.2, P.524.

b. The first passage, above, proclaims "For I am the foundation of Brahman", the implication clearly being that the personal God is above and beyond the Absolute Brahman. However, Saṅkara claims that, in this context, Brahman is the conditioned (savikalpa) Brahman, so the passage really means "I am the ground of that Brahman (the conditioned) and myself am unconditioned (nirvikalpa)", which is the equivalent of stating that Kṛṣṇa is the power of Brahman in

Quoted by
Radhakrishnan,
Bhagavadgītā,
Note, P.325.

manifestation and, therefore, Brahman, itself. In other words, it states "For in me abides Brahman, the Supreme Self (paramātman), as (or because) I am an avatār or incarnation of Him", so that Kṛṣṇa represents the unconditioned Brahman. However, in a recent translation, and commentary, R.C. Zaehner claims that Kṛṣṇa's present statement "---can only mean that He, as personal God, transcends even the absolutely transcendent". On the other hand, Nataraja Guru claims that there is a paradox involved and, in determining the meaning in favour of a transcendent Absolute (parabrahman) or an immanent Absolute (aparabrahman), one has to rely on the nature of the chapter of which this verse is the conclusion. The existential or ontological aspect of the Absolute has been the main issue of Chapter fourteen and, consequently, Kṛṣṇa describes himself, in the first place, as the basic foundation of the transcendent Absolute, or "the pedestal supporting here the statue of the transcendent Absolute". He continues that the verse should be compared with the opening verse of the next chapter referring to the Asvattha tree, a tree with roots above and branches below. So, he claims, the Absolute can be spoken of as having a basement below (XIV.27) or as having roots above (XV.1).

c. If we now consider the second statement quoted by Ninian Smart, which asserts "I am beyond the perishable and beyond the imperishable also --- I am proclaimed the Supreme Person (puruṣottama)", it is necessary to distinguish between the two

The
Bhagavadgītā,
P. 358,
Oxford, 1969.

Bhagavadgītā,
P. 593,
Asia
Publishing
House,
London, 1961.

ibidem.

B.G.XV.1.

ibidem,
P. 594.

See P. 191,
supra.

B.G.XV.18,
condensed.
See Svet:Up:
1.10.

categories mentioned. The perishable is prakṛti or all that is not imperishable, whereas the imperishable is the Essential Self, both universal and individual. Hence, Brahman is described as Puruṣottama (Supreme Person) or as Paramātman (Supreme Self), so, in relation to individual souls conjoined with prakṛti, Brahman is Supreme. Any supremacy, according to Saṅkara, lies in the difference between the free or Brahman and the bound or individual self conjoined with prakṛti. According to Rāmānuja, however, in as much as God transcends both, He is the Supreme Puruṣa or Puruṣottama. It is significant that even such ancient commentators as Saṅkara, 9th century monistic interpreter, and Rāmānuja, 13th century theistic interpreter, were unable to agree.

Compare
J.A.B.Van
Buitenen,
Rāmānuja on
the
Bhagavadgītā,
P.154, B.G.
XV.18.

d. Another statement which implies the priority of the personal over the impersonal occurs in Chapter Thirteen, namely "(It is) the beginningless Brahman, ruled by me", a version given by Edgerton alone, in the three translations we are employing. Here, again, Saṅkara and Rāmānuja disagree over the interpretation of "anādimatparam". Saṅkara, as does Radhakrishnan, interprets the phrase as "anādimat - param", meaning beginningless or supreme, whereas Rāmānuja renders it as "anādi-matparam" meaning beginningless and ruled by me. Nataraja Guru, on the other hand, translates "anādimat-param" as beginningless and having me as its supreme, culminating factor, the Absolute, and comments that, in the light of the essential paradoxical nature of the Absolute, such different interpretations are but

XIII.12,
Edgerton
only.

Sanskrit as
given by
Radhakrishnan
P.305.

Op.cit,
P.551.

natural. R.C.Zaehner states that it is not easy to say which reading should be followed but, as so often in the Gītā, it seems to him that the ambiguity may well have been intentional. He prefers to think that the author of the Gītā, who is a master of subtle gradation, leaves the division of the words entirely open to the theological bias of the reader.

Op.cit.
P.338-9.

e. We may, briefly, refer to one more statement which occurs in Chapter Eight and reads - "This Unmanifested is called the Imperishable. Him they speak of as the Supreme Status. Those who attain to Him return not.

This is My Supreme abode". Like the others, this verse is capable of different interpretations but it seems to fit into the idea of the conditioned Brahman being grounded in the

B.G.VIII.21.
(R). Hl.reads "my highest dwelling place" and E. "my Supreme Station".

Supreme or unconditioned Brahman. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Radhakrishnan states that "The supreme abode of the personal God, Īsvara, is Parabrahman, the Absolute". Nataraja Guru comments

Bhagavadgītā,
P.234.

that the word "mama" (my) which refers to the personality of Kṛṣṇa himself as a representative of

N.Guru,
Op.cit,
P.373.

the Absolute, makes such a Supreme Station or value come well within the ambit of human interests. It gives the Absolute a status as a value and not merely a logical or academic abstraction.

Compare also
R.C.Zaehner,
op.cit, P.268.

f. What, then, may be said, by way of conclusion, about the idea of the Super-Personality of God?

E.A.Burtt has claimed that "The most outstanding difference that has affected religious thinking through the ages is the difference between a non-personal and a personal interpretation of

Man Seeks
the Divine,
P.262.

transcendent reality". At least, the Gītā points out that the impersonality of the Absolute is not to be regarded as its whole significance and, in consequence and as we have seen, the poet-author, admittedly presenting his own ideas on the subject, develops the theistic side of Upaniṣadic teaching by presenting a God who, is claimed, exceeds both finite and infinite. Nevertheless, if the Supreme Being is to be regarded as a Super-Personality rather than Suprapersonal, it seems obvious that this must be relative to the point of view adopted. B.G.Gauchwal claims that the Absolute, when looked upon in relation to human aspirations and ideals, is God or Īsvara, the Highest Person (puruṣottama) and Lord of the Universe, dwelling in the hearts of every creature. S.Radhakrishnan asserts that the Supreme Spiritual Being, with energy, is Puruṣottama, but the same, in a state of rest, is Brahman. From the religious standpoint, however, Puruṣottama is the Supreme, Personal God, with whom men can have personal relations, and it has been claimed by A.K.Banerjee that the conception of God, as the Absolute Person, is not only not inconsistent but is the only conception of Ultimate Reality which can satisfy both the metaphysical and spiritual demands of the rational mind. It is not, however, without some significance, that Radhakrishnan has further claimed that, despite the devotee's union with Puruṣottama, the Gītā recognizes nirguna bhakti or devotion to the qualityless as superior to all else, the other road being regarded as easier and less exacting.

Concept of Perfection in the teachings of Kant and the Gita, P.78.

Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, P.542.

Discourses on Hindu Spiritual Culture, P.196.

Indian Philosophy, P.565.

See B.G. VIII.14.

Then, of course, the Absolute becomes the ultimate category and, when devotion is perfected, both the individual and his God reveal themselves as aspects of One life, as Absolute Monism is, he claims, the completion of the dualism with which the devotional consciousness starts. The Personal God is the Cosmic Lord whilst Brahman is the Supra-Cosmic Reality and, indeed, the distinction between Godhead and God, the Absolute and the Personal God, Brahman and Īsvara, is clearly enunciated in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. In other words, the difference between the Supreme Being as Spirit and Person is, it appears, one of standpoint and not of essence, between, that is, God as He is and God as He seems to be.

Māṇḍ:Up:
Vs.6f.

Hence, it would seem that super-personal and personal representations of the Real are the absolute and relative ways of expressing the One Reality. When we emphasize the nature of Ultimate Reality in Itself, we get the Absolute Brahman and, when we emphasize Its relation to us, we get the Personal God. In other words, the Bhagavadgītā teaches personal theism on the empiric plane and J.N.Farquhar remarks that "---the contention that the same Brahman is fully represented by a being who walked the earth in human form bodies forth the personal idea in the most vivid way possible".

Outlines of
the Religious
Literature
of India, P.87

Whereas, then, the Saguna Brahman personified becomes Īsvara, the Reality which is above the category of whole and parts is Nirguna Brahman, the Absolute. At this level, the essentially mysterious nature of God is preserved and the distinction

between personal and impersonal, finite and infinite, inner and outer, one and many, action and inaction, motion and rest, loses all its significance in the supra-personality of the Supreme Being.

10. Having, then, considered what the Bhagavadgītā teaches about the Nature of the One, what can be drawn by way of conclusions? That it is not possible to extract from the poem its exact metaphysical position is, according to Aurobindo, "shown by the divergence of the original commentaries which have been and still are being written upon it; for they all agree in each disagreeing with all the others, each finding in the Gītā its own system of metaphysics and trend of religious thought". Indeed, the poem is syncretistic, constantly striving to include different points of view and what we do find is a change of emphasis, from the mainly negative statements of the nirguna Brahman of the Upaniṣads to the mainly positive statements of the saguna Brahman, in the Gītā. However, as Aurobindo continues, like the earlier spiritual synthesis of the Upaniṣads, this later synthesis, at once spiritual and intellectual, avoids naturally every such rigid determination as would injure its universal comprehensiveness. The poem makes no attempt to be logical or systematic in its philosophy, in so far as it is frankly mystical and emotional. Frequently, it deliberately brackets two opposing views and asserts the validity of both and finds no difficulty in saying both "Yes" and "No", at the same time. What, indeed, may be said is that Deity, in the poem, appears to be one whom, though in His transcendent

Essays on
the Gītā,
P.3.

ibidem, P.6.

Compare F.
Edgerton,
Bhagavadgita,
P.193.

aspects is essentially unknown, is revealed in His relation to the universe as Supreme Self or Person, possessed of many varied and wonderful powers and excellencies. Of the two alternatives, impersonal Absolute and personal God, the Gītā, with the catholicity of the true mystic, chooses both and neither.

It would, then, appear necessary to examine what the poem has to say about the sources of knowledge of the Supreme Being, and to this we shall now turn our attention.

9. THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

1. The quest on which the great spiritual explorers of the Upaniṣads were engaged is admirably expressed in the prayer of the Prastotṛi priest which occurs in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:-

See 1.3.28.

"From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality".

From their quest emerged something of immense significance - the most profound and, indeed, quite revolutionary statement about the nature of Reality which, prior to that time, had ever been made. In effect, it proclaimed that everything in the world was a manifestation of Spirit and there was nothing in the world which was not Brahman. Man, indeed, was no longer a conglomeration of constantly changing sensations and memories, of physical transformation and decay - all things of which he was only too obviously aware. His real self was the immortal Ātman, the unborn and changeless Brahman, the That, the Supreme Self which was not only behind every self but, indeed, was every self. Such represented, of course, a highly intellectualistic position and the saving knowledge, which led to the highest self-realization and which released man from the endless karma-samsara cycle, was attainable after the most rigorous training and preparation, by means of meditation upon the non-manifest Brahman.

2. Remarkable as were such mystical insights, the mysticism of the Upaniṣads, however, was primarily a mysticism of knowledge and understanding and, as such, did not lead to a mysticism of action. As long

as man was in the world, however, then action was inevitable and so, it seemed, that either he must withdraw completely from it and lead the solitary life of a hermit, engaged on meditation alone, or be unable to escape from his inexorable fate. For the great majority, therefore, the liberating knowledge was quite unattainable and beyond their grasp, as was, indeed, the "barren Godhead" of these writings.

The mysticism of the Upanisads, then, lacked both warmth and humanity, and the heart could not rest content with the conclusions of the intellect alone. It demanded love and action, as well as knowledge or spiritual wisdom. What was missing, then, was to be added in the Bhagavadgītā but - and this seems most significant - not in the poem alone for, as we have previously noted in passing, the poem coincides approximately with the development of Mahayana Buddhism and its Bodhisattva ideal. The Bodhisattva, who has attained a state of supreme wisdom or knowledge and whose essential nature is a loving heart which embraces all sentient beings, is able, through faith in him, to act as a mediator between God and man and, so, assist ordinary men on their path to Nirvana.

3. What knowledge or wisdom, therefore, is to be sought in the teachings of the poem?. It is basically knowledge of God or, that is, a direct experience of God which occurs as soon as obstacles to its realization are removed. Numerous passages refer to the importance of such knowledge which, as in the Upanisads, leads to the highest self-realization.

"This is sovereign knowledge, sovereign secret, supreme sanctity, known by direct experience, in accord with the law, very easy to practise and imperishable". (1).

"He who, undeluded, thus knows Me, the Highest Person, is the knower of all and worships me with all his being (that is, with his whole spirit)". (2).

In so far as such is declared to be known by direct experience, it seems clear that it is meant to be understood as knowledge by acquaintance and not by description, hearsay or report. It is, in other words, the truth awaiting to be seen if the obstructing veils are removed - to be seen, of course, through ones developed and purified intuition. It is what R.C.Zahner has called "the intuitive apperception of Ultimate Reality beyond space and time".

Bhagavadgītā,
P.18.

4. So, therefore, such knowledge or wisdom would appear to have three qualities - it is super-sensuous, in so far as it transcends the senses; it is intuitional, coming by means of the "faculty" by which we get the spiritual experience, and it is centrally initiated, that is coming from within.

As such, it would appear similar to the knowledge of Brahman which is also obtained super-sensuously, intuitively and from within. The spontaneity and directness of the experience is somewhat poetically emphasized, when the poem makes the point that the human eye can only see outward

Compare R.D. Ranade, The Bhagavadgītā as a Philosophy of God - Realization, P.232.

1. IX.2. Radhakrishnan. The other versions use comprehensible, either clearly(Hill) or immediately(Edgerton), instead of known by direct experience.

2. XV.19. Radhakrishnan. Similarly, in substance, the other two versions used.

forms, the inner soul or Self being perceived by the "eye of the spirit" which is elsewhere in the poem called "jñānacakṣuṣā" or "wisdom-eye". In other words, the spiritual experience or vision of God as the all-pervading life of the universe but yet immeasurably beyond it, is not a mental construction but the disclosure of a truth and, sometimes, God bestows a direct knowledge of spiritual reality, by means of His Divine Grace (prasāda), when He gives to the devotee, as He does to Arjuna, a "supernatural eye".

See XIII.34,
& XV.10.

"But since thou canst not see me with this thine own eye, I give thee an eye divine; behold my power as Lord (Ishvara)".

XI.8.(H).
Similarly,
R. and E

5. We said that the third of the qualities such knowledge appeared to have was that it was centrally initiated, and we may consider this point further. In this respect, we may recall that the Brahman sends forth or manifests Itself as "puruṣa" or self and "prakṛti" or all that is not - self. The former is variously known as man, person, spirit, self or ātman, whereas the latter is synonymous with nature, material nature or matter. The self is absolutely unitary, undifferentiated and without qualities, not subject to change or alteration and not participating in any action. Material nature, on the other hand, is what performs acts. It assumes manifold forms and is constantly subject to change, to evolution, devolution and variation.

Compare
XIII.29.

The individual self or ātman, then, is what R.C. Zaehner describes as "a timeless monad or minute

op.cit,
P.10. See
XV.7.

part of God, Himself", and although, in essence, it is the same as the Universal Spirit, the Paramātmān, it regards itself as different from It because of its deeply-rooted sense of identification with the various adjuncts such as the mind, the senses and the body, as well as with the numerous objects and experiences of the phenomenal world. Self-realization, then, consists in the final dissolution of the eternal "monad" from the ultimately material personality to which it is bound or, as the poem concisely expresses it - "disunion from union with pain". The embodied self, then, "in so far as it is one with the Transcendental Divine, can share this life of infinitude and perfection only when it has discarded all limitations of prakṛti". The problem facing man, then, is the integration of his personality, the centrally initiated development of a divine existence in which the spiritual principle has the mastery over all the snares and powers of prakṛti to which it is conjoined.

The root cause of attachment is desire, which springs from avidyā or ignorance of the true nature of things. To return to the "life divine" such ignorance must be overcome and the means to this is wisdom or knowledge. Wisdom, in this context, therefore, is the opposite of spiritual blindness, and the kindling of spiritual vision. In essence, therefore, wisdom is a direct experience of God and when man grows into such wisdom, he lives in the Supreme.

6. How, then, may all such obstacles to the realization of the Ideal be removed or overcome? The Upaniṣads, we may recall, stated that knowledge

See VI.23
(HL).

B.S.Gauchwal,
Concept of
Perfection in
the Teachings
of Kant and
the Gītā,
P.87.

Compare
Radhakrishnan
Bhagavadgītā,
P.52.

See V.20.

was the royal road to spiritual attainment, a knowledge which could eventually be verified by the decisive experience of unity and sameness with the Brahman. In the Bhagavadgītā, however, there are three different roads, all leading to the goal of perfection and distinguished according to the emphasis placed on the theoretical, practical or emotional aspects of each. The three are accordingly named Jnāna-yoga, Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga, in so far as they assist in attaining the saving truth by a knowledge of Reality (jnāna-yoga), by the subjection of the will to the Divine Purpose (karma-yoga) or by adoration and love of the Supreme Person ('bhakti-yoga).

The word "yoga", from the root "yuj" meaning to "bind together", basically implies the binding, balancing and enhancing of man's psychic powers and, in Radhakrishnan's words, "By yoking together and harnessing our energies by the most intense concentration of personality, we force the passage from the narrow ego to the transcendent personality. The spirit tears itself away from its prison house, stands out of it and reaches its own innermost being". We may, then, briefly examine these three roads to a direct experience of God.

Bhagavadgītā,
P.50.

7. The Way of Knowledge - Jnāna-Yoga

This is the way of philosophical reflection or, as some would term it, the speculative way. Franklin Edgerton reminds us that "---so ingrained in Hindu culture is the belief in the power of supreme, esoteric knowledge that probably no Hindu system would venture to deny it", and certainly the Gītā does not do so. Jnāna is primarily concerned with the

Bhagavadgītā,
P.164.

realization of the oneness of the self with the Absolute and, as such, it seems to be regarded as the primary means of salvation, all other methods being, in origin, secondary aids to the gaining of such knowledge, however much they may seem to overshadow this primary aim. Indeed, the following verse serves to emphasize this very point:-

"Though thou art of all sinners the most sinful, by the boat of knowledge alone shalt thou pass over all crookedness". (1).

Jnāna-yoga, then, is said to bring about the union of the finite with the Infinite Self through spiritual intuition. There is, as in the Upaniṣads, a prerequisite of faith (sraddhā) and such knowledge See IV.39. may, likewise, be attained by using the proper means - by reverent questioning of those who know and have had the experience of God; by careful study of the sacred scriptures and by subjecting the self to severe control and discipline. The attainment, then, of the necessary knowledge which leads to salvation depends on the extirpation of all egoistic desires, all base emotions and passions, that is on complete self-mastery and on the destruction of all attachment or desire. When, then, one attains realization of the true nature of the self and matter, and their fundamental independence of each other, "by virtue of this perfect, mystic knowledge" release is obtained.

Compare
IV.10 &
IV.34

Edgerton,
op.cit,
P.144.

However, intellectual apprehension is not enough. It must be confirmed by experience, that is by a consciousness of the Beyond, by a personal contact, this being the difference between truth

imparted and truth attained. Once Supreme Knowledge is attained, Gauchhwal reminds us that "----
individuality yields to the recognition and realization
that the Self within us is Brahman in all this All.
He is in possession of the knowledge, direct and
intuitive, that he is in essence and truth the very
being of the Supreme".

The Concept of Perfection in the Teachings of Kant and the Gītā, P.110.

The Gītā, then, allows validity to this severe and toilsome path, the path of pure knowledge, but few are able to travel this road. It is hard to attain and the difficulties of this intellectual method are emphasized in many places in the poem, particularly so in the following:-

Compare VII.3 & 19.

"The difficulty of those whose thoughts are set on the Unmanifested is greater, for the goal of the Unmanifested is hard to reach by the embodied beings".

See XII.5(R). Different wording in the other versions. See comment on this verse, by N. Guru, op.cit, P.517.

In other words, and as we shall see, the same goal is reached, more easily and naturally, by the path of devotion to the Personal God, by, that is, turning godward all ones energies, knowledge, will and feeling.

8. The Way of Action - Karma-Yoga

The doctrine of action (karman) traditionally stated that every deed performed by man, whether good or bad, inevitably produced its consequent effect and, by necessitating rebirth into the karma-samsara cycle, became an obstacle to the self, in its search for salvation. It is not surprising, therefore, that, taken to its logical conclusion, the highest self-realization could only be obtained by a complete cessation of activity. However, the Gītā recognizes that, as long as the self is in the world, a certain

amount of activity is inevitable, and so it presents an entirely different teaching on activity which contrasts with both the Upaniṣads and the jñāna-yoga method, just considered. The essential difference is that, whereas Jñāna-yoga involves a renunciation of action and, hence, presents a negative ideal, Karma-yoga stresses the discipline of action and, so, represents a positive ideal. The claim is made, then, that all the results which accrue to the follower of the intellectual method may also be obtained without withdrawing from activity:-

"The renunciation of works and their unselfish performance both lead to the soul's salvation. But of the two, the unselfish performance of works is better than their renunciation". (1).

"Do thou thy allotted work, for action is better than inaction; even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without action". (2).

In both these statements, of course, the reference is to the superiority of action over inaction and does not imply that action is superior to wisdom or knowledge. A progressive scale of activities leading to such knowledge is what is recommended, instead of a mere vacuity of inaction as is implied by renunciation. As Nataraja Guru has commented, "In preferring Karma-yoga, the Gītā neither advocates action nor recommends quietism but helps to find a via media in revalued terms, in which a samnyāsi (man of renunciation) still engages in normal activity as a form of yogic discipline". We may regard Karma-yoga, then, as an auxiliary means useful in gaining knowledge.

Op.cit,P.
260,
commenting
on V.2.

Compare
Edgerton,
Bhagavadgita
P.168.

-
1. V.2.Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill but Edgerton refers to "discipline of action" as superior.
 2. III.8.Radhakrishnan. Edgerton uses "religiously required".

However, it is important to understand that the disciplined activity involved consists in doing unselfishly whatever action seems to be required in any given circumstance, and taking no interest in the results of such action, but yet not seeking to evade responsibility by refusing to act at all. Acting unselfishly, however, is not to be regarded as the opposite of acting selfishly. We are told that there are two kinds of satisfaction, both internal and external. External satisfaction results from the senses through external stimulants and is both transitory and illusory. Internal satisfaction, on the other hand, is that arising from the bliss of internal illumination, that infinite bliss quite beyond the senses and which can only be grasped by spiritual intuition. This is the goal of any such disciplined activity.

"Whatever pleasures are born of contacts (with objects) are only sources of sorrow, they have a beginning and an end". (1).

1. V.22(R).

"He who has joy within, pleasure within and light within, the Ascetic, becomes Brahman (brahma-nirvāna)". (2).

2. V.24(HL).

What, then, is involved in Karma-Yoga? Succinctly stated, it is the equivalent of a disciplined activity undertaken in order to annihilate any sense of egoism and individuality, so the ethics of God - realization stresses the fundamental importance of an inner purity of motive and intention, acting without any interest in consequences and for the sole purpose of realizing ones Real Self. One has to cultivate equality, impartiality and the ability to be unperturbed and unruffled. Equally, one has to conquer envy, greed, boastfulness, hypocrisy,

malevolence, harmfulness, lust, greed and pride. All work has to be done as a sacrifice so that, in other words, the lower mind has to be sacrificed to the higher. Thus emptied of lust, anger and greed, the principal sources of egoism and attachment, and freed from the impulses and passions of the natural order of prakṛti, "He works as God works, without any binding necessity or compelling ignorance, and even in performing works he is not involved. When his egoism is removed, action springs from the depths and is governed by the Supreme secretly seated in his heart".

Compare
II.57,70-71;
XII.15,17-18;
XIV.24-25;
XVI.3,10,12,
16-18,21;
XVIII.53.

Radhakrishnan,
Bhagavadgītā,
P.134.

How, then, does Karma-yoga assist man in reaching the Supreme?. Simply because it assists him in reaching that state of detachment which leads to salvation. It takes us to perfection indirectly through the attainment of purity of mind and the man, in Sankara's words, "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".

A.M.Sastry,
Bhagavadgītā
with Sankara's
Commentary,
P.6.

If undertaken, then, in the true spirit and with the right motive and intention, all work culminates in Knowledge:-

"Therefore, without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment". (1).

1.III.19(R).

"---for all works without exception culminate in wisdom". (2).

2.IV.33(R).

However, all works must be performed with the realization that the self is separate from prakṛti and one with the Great Self or Paramātman and that it is not-self that acts. Such knowledge

frees the reason from delusion, endows the aspirant with non-attachment and releases him from the consequences of action and eventually leads to a claimed direct experience of God:-

"Thus making the self ever harmonized, the yogin who has put away sin, experiences easily the infinite bliss of contact with the Eternal". (1).

In other words, God is no more a mere rumour or a vague aspiration but a vivid reality with which one can be in actual contact, after undergoing the necessary preliminaries.

Compare Hill,
Bhagavadgītā,
P.61.

1. VI.28(R).
E. and HL.
have slightly
different
wording.

9. The Way of Devotion - Bhakti-yoga

a. It is claimed that the path of Bhakti-yoga seeks, as effectively as the other disciplines, to accomplish the same purpose and achieve the same goal. Indeed, for the poem, bhakti-yoga is the immediate and all-sufficient way to final union with God and, consequently, it is the cardinal doctrine of the poem:-

"He who serves me with unflinching devotion of love ----he too is fit for becoming Brahman".

XIV.26.(R).

"This---is the Person Supreme, to be gained by undivided devotion; wherein do beings abide, whereby all this is pervaded".

VIII.22(HL).

b. It is interesting to note that the original meaning of "bhakti" was "participation" or "being a part of or belonging to". However, it is equally interesting to observe that there was little, either in the Rg-Veda or the Upaniṣads, to foster and encourage "bhakti". We may recall that the gods of the former inspired awe rather than affection, with the possible exception of Agni who, as the "divine-fire" was found in every house and regarded as the "friend of man". Similarly, the

See A.A.
Macdonell,
Practical
Sanskrit
Dictionary,
P.200,O.U.P,
1965 reprint.

intellectual speculation of the Upaniṣads was hardly fertile ground for bhakti, except, of course, where it is hinted at in the final verses of the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad

Svet:Up:
6.23.

c. Bhakti-yoga, therefore, is the emotional way or the approach of love to a personal Lord. It requires a personal God for its manifestation and demands, as well, a pious faith (śraddha). As S.K. Belvalkar has stated, "The faith approach figures forth the Absolute as a concrete personality, giving rise to a sort of personal relation between the aspiring devotee and the object of his loving faith", so bhakti represents man's side of a personal relationship with God.

Lectures on
Vedānta
Philosophy,
P.114, Vol:1.

d. What, then, is involved in bhakti-yoga? The emotional road to salvation is, for the majority of mankind, an easier road but devotion can only be felt for a divine personality. It is, then, repeatedly stated in the poem that, by devoted love to God one can attain knowledge of God and, so, indirectly, the salvation that comes through such knowledge:-

"Through devotion does he recognize me in verity, what and who I am; then, knowing me in verity, at once he enters into me".

According to Sankara, "what and who I am" means,

"my divine manifestation where I appear to be conditioned and my real nature, as without

conditioned differences". Rāmānuja comments that

"Through such bhakti a man will know God in all the majesty of his proper form and nature, virtues and manifestations, and immediately after knowing, he will attain God, in virtue of his boundless,

XVIII.55(HL).
R. and E.
read "comes to know me"
instead of
"recognize me".

For Sankara,
see A.M.
Sastry, op.
cit, P.492.

For Rāmānuja
see J.A.B.
Van Buitener
op.cit, P.17

supreme bhakti". It would seem, then, that knowledge again gains primacy, here.

"But by devotion undivided --- in such a form can I be known, and truly seen, and entered". Sankara, commenting on this verse, states that "devotion undivided" or, as he translates it, "undistracted devotion" is "That devotion which never seeks any other object except the Lord and in virtue of which no object other than Vasudeva (Kṛṣṇa) is cognized by any of the senses. By this sort of devotion, it is possible not only to know Me as declared in the s̄āstras but also to intuitively realise Me as I am and to enter into Me". Rāmānuja, commenting on the same verse, remarks that "It is only through bhakti that God may be either known by the s̄āstras, or experienced directly, or approached as He really is".

If grounded in personal or egotistical likes and dislikes, of course, love and attachment become the most potent cause of bondage but, if determined by the spiritual urge for perfection, they acquire a unique excellence. It all depends, apparently, on outlook, faith and training as to which direction ones attitude takes and what it attains, and without inner conversion, purity of heart and total surrender of the sense of egoism, devotion cannot ripen into a direct and immediate vision of God. However, the path of bhakti-yoga is beset with certain difficulties, in particular the recurring urge of passions and impulses which can so easily jeopardize the attainment of the chosen ideal. Hence certain disciplines are advised to assist in the abandonment of pride, egoism and hypocrisy, in so

XI.54(HL).
See also R's
note on this
verse, P.289.

A.M.Sastry,
op.cit, P.301.

J.A.B.Van
Buitenen,
op.cit,
P.132.

Compare B.S.
Gauchhwal,
The Concept
of Perfection
in the
Teachings of
Kant & the
Gītā, P.112.

far as self-purification presupposes self-control, but the mere mortification of the senses is insufficient, as both motive and intention must be equally pure.

Compare XII.13-20 for details of what is involved.

e. The approach of devotion, then, meets with the response of Divine grace (prasāda), by means of which God not only ensures that the true devotee surmounts all difficulties involved in striving for the attainment of the ideal and, as did Arjuna, has an experience of God, in all His glory and Majesty, but that he finally wins through to the realm eternal and gains supreme peace in that immutable resting place:-

See XII.6-8, for further details of prasāda.

"Though he do every work at every time, yet, if he rely on me, he by my grace wins to the realm eternal and immutable". (1).

In other words, it is through bhakti that the devotee obtains Divine Grace (prasāda) and the power of understanding. Prasāda, that is, gives a particular bent to man's intellect and that power of understanding (buddhiyoga) or devotion of mind by which he gains the wisdom or knowledge which sees the One in all the forms which pass and change.

1. XVIII.56 (HL). Compare Kath:Up: 2.23(HL) & 1.2.23(R) & Mund:Up: 3.2.3.

f. Finally, we may ask whether bhakti-yoga teaches devotion to a single avatār, namely Kṛṣṇa Vasudeva, or to God, and whether it begins with duality, ultimately aiming at unity?

Compare Radhakrishnan Bhagavadgītā, P.259, Note.

a. As far as the first question is concerned, it would seem that the conception of God, as represented in the Gītā, is not compatible with His embodiment in a particular finite form to the exclusion of all others nor with His incarnation in

an historical human being. S.C.Roy states that bhakti in the Gītā "is used unmistakably in the same sense of devotion towards the Highest Self (paramātman) or Brahman, who is present everywhere and lives in the heart of all creatures, and whose manifestation is to be seen in all men and all gods and not in the person of Kṛṣṇa alone". In taking this stand, of course, Roy is directly opposed to the views of Bal Ganhadhar Tilak who, in his monumental work Gita-Rahasya, claimed that the bhakti of the poem was directed towards Kṛṣṇa. It would seem, then, from the overall teaching of the poem that bhakti is directed towards One God, thought of as a Spiritual Being, and not to any single avatār or manifestation of Him in incarnate form.

b. Does, then, bhakti, beginning as it does, with duality, aim at an ultimate unity? In the initial stage of the devotional frame of mind, there is clearly an explicit recognition of a personal God, endowed with all perfections, and as long as the personality of God persists, he is looked upon as that which the devotee is not but aspires to be. According to B.S.Gauchhwal, this is a relative point of view, in so far as bhakti begins with duality but aims at unity and this, presumably, is why Sankara speaks of the gradual evolution of an absolutistic unity, after devotion has borne its fruit. Sankara claims that "By this Supreme devotion the aspirant knows the Lord as He is and immediately afterwards all consciousness of difference between the Isvara and the Kshetrajna disappears altogether". Rāmānuja, commenting on the

See the Bhagavad - Gītā and Modern Scholar - ship, Par: 336, P.235.

Quoted by Roy, ibidem.

Op.cit, P.116.

ibidem.

See A.M. Sastry, op. cit, P.493, on XVIII. 55.

same verse, also states that "Through such bhakti a man will know God in all the Majesty of His proper form and nature, virtues and manifestations, and immediately after knowing, he will attain God in virtue of his boundless, Supreme bhakti".

J.A.B.Van
Buitenen, op.
cit, P.172.

Although, then, in the beginning, the self is in search of "another", devotion leads it to lose itself in the other, because it is ones own being.

However, it is difficult to reach any firm conclusion, on this particular problem, by virtue of the comprehensive nature of the teachings which are presented in the Bhagavadgītā, and it has to be recalled that the poem looks upon the Absolute (Brahman) as both personal and impersonal, as a result of which perfection has to be accounted for in terms of both these aspects. When thought of in terms of a personal God, the goal to be realized is explained as, in some way, attaining to a qualitative sameness of existence with Him, the highest goal being described as dwelling in God, so it becomes a question of whether this goal is to be interpreted as an ultimate unity. In its impersonal aspect, on the other hand, the state of perfection is simply described as "being Brahman" and, presumably, the problem does not arise:-

"--- In Me alone shalt thou live, thereafter.
Of this there is no doubt". (1).

1. XII.8.(R).

"--- the Ascetic (i.e.yogin) becomes Brahman,
and reaches the Calm of Brahman". (2).

2. V.24.(HL).

10. Having now considered the sources of knowledge, the factor common to them all is that they are regarded as leading to the attainment of a direct experience of God, by means of which the devotee

R.translates
"becomes
divine" rather
than "becomes
Brahman".
See also V.24;
VI.27; XIV.26
XVIII.53.

is able to confirm the knowledge of the union of his individual self with the Infinite Self, through a kind of spiritual intuition. As in the Upaniṣads, such knowledge is reached by the various roads of discipline leading to perfection and knowledge. The different yogas, however, are special applications of that inner discipline which leads to the highest self-realization and, although each is recognized as equally efficacious, despite the fact that the Gītā states its preference for bhakti-yoga, which of the three roads the devotee decides to follow will depend on the innate bent of his temperament. There is, however, a certain interdependence between the three roads. For instance, the follower of jñāna-yoga cannot be perfect in his knowledge unless he utterly devotes himself to the One he knows. Duty, likewise, cannot rightly be done without devotion nor, indeed, devotion rightly expressed apart from duty. Duty must also be done with knowledge, offered with devotion, to God.

Compare
XII.2-3.

What really matters, however, is that the goal can be attained if one opens ones inmost being to divine love, divine knowledge and divine will, by a total surrender to God. The highest of which we are capable is already in us - it remains to be known through self-determination, being, according to the Gītā, essentially knowledge by acquaintance and not by description, that is known in that direct experience of God which goes beyond either thought, action or devotion.

So, we must pass to consider the U_nitive Vision of the Absolute.

10. THE UNITIVE VISION OF THE ABSOLUTE

1. We may remind ourselves that, in the Upaniṣads, it was possible by means of the verification process to obtain intuitive confirmation of the truths taught by the gurus and contained in the śruti and that this, the direct apprehension of the highest truth, was sufficient. It is interesting to observe, then, that after a lot of preliminary instruction given by Kṛṣṇa, himself, on the nature of the Absolute, Arjuna is left with a feeling of dissatisfaction and, consequently, makes a specific request to be given a more definite view of the Supreme Being. In other words, he wishes to see the Universal Form, the visible embodiment of the Unseen Divine, by means of which abstract, metaphysical truth will be given visible reality.

"As Thou hast declared Thyself to be, O Supreme Lord, even so it is. (But) I desire to see Thy divine form, O Supreme Person". (1).

1. XI.3(R).

2. It seems equally important to appreciate that Arjuna, as it were, seems to have been theologically conditioned, in so far as Kṛṣṇa had taken the initiative, in instructing him, and immediately before the vision is presented to him, he is told not only to behold the universe, both moving and unmoving, but whatever else he desires to see.

See Chapters IX and X.

"Here today, behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving, and whatever else thou desirest to see --- all unified in My body". (2).

2. XI.7(R).

It must be admitted, of course, that the phrase "whatever else thou desirest to see" is clearly ambiguous, in so far as it could mean either a

visual apprehension of whatever else he had been taught, a kind of experiential confirmation akin, in a way, to the verification process of the Upaniṣads, or the extension of his imaginative powers to include whatever else he may be capable of visualizing. Indeed, we are told that, if necessary, he will be given a "divine eye" to assist him, which See XI.8. suggests that whatever is objectively divine presupposes its counterpart in the devotee, namely the capacity to recognize divinity or spiritual truths and values. It is the intuitive element implied in such a vision which is elsewhere called "jnanachakshush" or "wisdom-eye", as we have previously observed. Kṛṣṇa states that the vision is not to be regarded as a static one, being both moving and unmoving, in so far as there is, apparently, no fixed mould into which it is supposed to fit, and he who has it can see what he desires to see according to his prior conditioning. Hence, without conditioning or, in other words, in the absence of religious or theological prejudices, the implication appears to be that there is no vision or that the vision is of neither importance nor significance, unless it provides, as it were, experiential confirmation in a visual form of what is already known in a religious or theological sense.

Compare
XIII.34 &
XV.10.

See XI.7.

3. What, then, prior to the vision, had Arjuna been taught about the nature of the Absolute?. We may briefly recall that, in Chapter seven, he was given an integral knowledge of the Divine and of Its manifestation in the world. God is the origin of the world and its dissolution, and it is held together

or sustained by the Supreme Spirit. Certain empirical or ontological aspects are also presented to him and he is instructed that God is the basic essence of all things and that all forms are His manifestations. In Chapter 9, such categories are further sublimated in terms of the personalized aspects of the Absolute, it being referred to as Father, Mother, Supporter, Upholder, Lord, Witness, and so forth, and, in Chapter 10, he is again told that the Absolute is the origin of all entities involved. Personal endowments and qualities of the contemplative life are referred to and the Absolutist touch, in persons and entities, is recognized indirectly through what seem to be somewhat vague generalities, such as perfections and valid truths. Such an approach through the ontological aspects did not make the notion of the Absolute clear enough and, hence, the request to see the "rūpam aisvaram" or divine form as a visible reality.

See IX,
17-19.

See X, 4-5.

See XI.3.

4. It may be presumed, then, that Arjuna has already heard what Aurobindo terms "the highest spiritual secret of existence, that all is from God and all is the Divine and in all things God dwells and is concealed and can be revealed in every finite appearance", and is about to see the whole world related to and unified in Supreme Reality. The vision, then, is to be regarded as a spiritual experience of the highest order and is not, as Radhakrishnan expresses it, "a mental construction but the disclosure of a truth from beyond the finite mind, an experience both spontaneous and direct, which gives a knowledge of spiritual realities". Despite the

Essays on
the Gītā,
P.363.

Bhagavad-
gita, P.272.

fact that Radhakrishnan also states that the whole account of what is to follow is a "poetic device to indicate the unity of the cosmic manifold in the Divine nature", we may find, in the history of religious experience, numerous accounts of supernatural visions and one recalls, for example, the Transfiguration of Christ; the vision of Saul, the Persecutor, on the Damascus Road; the Emperor Constantine's vision of the cross inscribed with the words "In hoc signo, vinces" and, in more recent times, the visions experienced by Joan of Arc. There are, of course, those who would condemn all such as instances of unhealthy cerebral activity whilst others, "the intransigent votaries of the supernatural", accept, for no apparent reason, what Evelyn Underhill states is "the objective reality and absolute value of visions, voices and other experiences which would, in any other department of life, be classed as the harmless results of a vivid imagination, and claim as examples of miraculous interference with 'natural law' psychic phenomena which may well be the normal if rare methods by which a certain type of intuitive genius actualizes its perceptions of the spiritual world". However, the rational or psychological explanation of supernatural visions is outside the scope of this enquiry but we are concerned with what is claimed to be seen and described, especially as such might appear to be related to, if not dependent upon, Arjuna's theological conditioning prior to his unitive vision of the Absolute. We may, then, turn our attention to the direct presentation of God in His form

ibidem

See Mark, IX,
2-8 and Acts,
IX, 3-9.Mysticism,
P.267, 1957
reprint.

of Absolute Superiority and as Sovereign, Creator, Maintainer and Dissolver of all entities.

5. The Vision, then, may conveniently be divided into three sections, according to subject-matter, namely that dealing with the manifestation of the Universal and Unitive Form; that dealing with Its Wonder and Terribleness and, finally, that dealing with Arjuna's Adoration of such. The vision passes from conditioned ideas of a cosmological person, through one conceived in theological terms, until it attains to the full status of a positive picture of the Absolute, in terms of an Imperative Force of Becoming.

a. The Manifestation of the Universal and Unitive Form.

The initial description of Universal Being is, in many ways, reminiscent of the cosmic man, the Purusa Sūkta of the Ṛg-Veda. He has many mouths and eyes, presumably symbolic of his all-devouring and all-seeing nature, and has faces on all sides, as the Self of all beings. He has many divine ornaments representing, as God of Gods, every deva, and bears the symbols of each. In addition, he wears divine garlands and vestures, being anointed with divine perfumes and unguents, all of which remind one of an almost iconographic deity. At this stage, no element of awe is present and, indeed, He is presented as a somewhat benign and luxury-loving God more associated with ritualistic worship than with the Absolute of the Upaniṣads. It seems clear, then, that both cosmological and theological conditionings are present, as it illustrated in the following verses:-

XI.10-11.

R.V.X.90.
Compare
Mund:Up:
2.1.4.

"Many his mouths and eyes, many his wondrous aspects, many his divine adornments, his brandished weapons many and divine". (1). 1.XI.10(HL).

"Divine the garlands and the robes he wore, divine the perfume of his anointment; all-marvellous was he, a Lord of Heaven, infinite, facing every way". (2). 2.XI.11(HL).
E. uses "marvellous" instead of "divine", as in the other two.

Immediately following, the somewhat comforting imagery is discarded in favour of a more positive aspect - the brilliance and splendour of a thousand suns which, as it were, penetrates every object. However, even in this super-brilliance, the Divine Being is referred to as "Mahātma" or Great Soul, a device which probably avoids Its becoming a mere abstraction. See XI.12.

There then follows the Unitive vision of the One in the Many and the Many in the One, as if all things are suddenly interfused, the manifold divisions of the universe disappearing into the body of the God of Gods (devadeva), within which they are unitively established. At this sight, Arjuna is awe-struck and attempts to describe his own experience of the Universal and Unitive Form. See XI.13.

The use of the word "devā" would seem to suggest that the vision, as a whole, is still theologically conditioned or limited. See XI.14.

b. The Wonder and Terribleness of the Universal Form

Arjuna begins his account of the experience by covering the same cosmological and theological entities already dealt with by Kṛṣṇa. He sees all the gods - presumably a reference to the gods of the Ṛg-Veda - in God's body, and in this are included the nāgas or divine serpents, a remoter worship See XI.15.

superseded by the Vedas. He also sees Brahmā, the first God of Creation. This verse, of course, widens the vision, taking one beyond the world to the abode of the gods and indicating that the world is merely an insignificant part of the cosmos, of the whole which rests in God. It also confirms Kṛṣṇa's claim to be the source of the gods and great sages, in Chapter ten. The next verse moves from a relative to an Absolute standpoint. Earlier references to the Absolute as a source, a beginning, middle and end, are abolished and the "many" of Chapter XI, verse 10, is replaced by the infinity - boundless, multitudinous, without beginning, middle and end - of the Universal Form.

See X.2;
XI.16.

See X, 2 &
23.

It seems that this transition from the relative to the Absolute is continued, by a reference to Viṣṇu, with his traditional diadem, mace and discus, who is now, apparently, regarded as transcending the more conventional and relativist limits usually associated with him, as a beneficent god, in so far as he is included in the Universal Form. In other words, a theological Viṣṇu is now regarded as a stage in a scale of values representing the Absolute.

XI.17.

The transition continues, in a somewhat synthetic vision, in which God is recognized as Imperishable, Supreme, Ultimate Basis of the universe, Custodian of dharma and immemorial Person. In this acknowledgement of God as the Supreme, both Brahman and Īsvara, Absolute and God, there is a combination of almost philosophical, ethical and cosmological values and, no longer in doubt, Arjuna exclaims "mato me" - I believe!. There is, then, a repetition of the idea

XI.18.

XI.19.

of pure becoming, knowing neither beginning, middle nor end, and the cosmic puruṣa, with sun and moon for eyes, and the fire of Vedic sacrifice suggests that the whole universe is being consumed by the radiant glow of the Absolute.

See XI.19.

The three worlds, Heaven, Earth and the Space between, are then telescoped unitively, into a yet more comprehensive vision, all being pervaded by the Absolute alone, and different orders of spiritual beings are brought together, as praising the Absolute. In other words, the status of the Absolute, as seen in the vision, has the approbation of all kinds of spiritual entities, without distinction or exception, as is seen from the fact that even the Asuras, the demoniac enemies of the Vedic gods, are included.

XI.20.

XI.21.

However, this is not all, as the Terribleness of the Unitive Form is then introduced with the allegory of the cosmic man. Beholding his many mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, stomachs and terrible teeth, the worlds and Arjuna quake with fear. The object, presumably, is to recall God's destructive aspect, as was suggested, in Chapter 7, when Kṛṣṇa described himself as both the origin of this world and its dissolution, as well.

See VII.6.

In this irresistible process of becoming, all specific entities have to be absorbed, and the poet attempts to portray this by the highly overpowering effect of the vision, with the cosmic man scraping the sky, rainbow-coloured, its flamelike teeth spreading everywhere. This seems a portrayal of an accelerated process of becoming as is, indeed,

suggested by the use of the word "kālānalasamñbhāni", XI.25. which may be interpreted as "the fire of time, the doomsday fire". Such an experience clearly has in it elements of astonishment, terror and rapture and, in a specific reference to the context of war, Arjuna describes how he sees warriors rushing into the fearful mouths, only to have their heads crushed to powder. Then, this somewhat terrifying process of destruction is modified to the picture of a cosmic principle absorbing into itself, like the ocean, all the manifold items of becoming found in the existing cosmos. The simile of the moth and fire also illustrates how, in the world of human values, all strive to reach the Unitive Absolute, only to be extinguished in Its Supreme Value.

"As moths rush swiftly into a blazing fire to perish there, so do these men rush into Thy mouths with great speed to their own destruction". (1).

1.XI.29(R).
HL. and E.
have
"worlds"
instead of
"these men".

The limit of the vision is then reached, although such has only covered aspects of the Absolute, in so far as the Absolute, Itself, is still to be known.

"Tell me who Thou art with form so terrible. Salutation to Thee, O Thou Great Godhead, have mercy. I wish to know Thee (who art) the Primal One, for I know not Thy working". (2).

2.XI.31(R).

Arjuna is, then, left, as it were, with a feeling of tremendous mystery, beyond which it seems impossible to go by means of visions and descriptions. He does not understand why God has been revealed to be the Destroyer and seeks even deeper knowledge than that already given in the vision.

God then explains the meaning of His terrible aspect and describes Himself as Time (kāla), the mighty, world - destroying, prime-mover. As Time, He is perpetually

creating and destroying and, as Nataraja Guru expresses it, is "an irreversible, inexorable factor of necessity in terms of the flow of outward physical events". Against this, of course, all protestations of self-determination are of no avail, and Aurobindo comments that "destruction is the first condition of progress" and, indeed, the man who does not destroy his lower self cannot rise to a greater existence. In other words, "God, the Time-Spirit, does not destroy for the sake of destruction, but to make ways clear in the cyclic process for a greater rule and a progressing manifestation".

Op.cit,
P.494.

Essays on
the Gītā,
P.370.

ibidem,
P.372.

c. The Adoration of the Universal Form

There follows a panegyric of exalted devotion and Arjuna prostrated himself with great fear and began his Hymn of Praise. It is interesting to recall that Rudolf Otto refers to this particular verse as an example of the "mysterium tremendum" associated, according to him, with the presence of the numinous, in religion, representing the transcendent aspect.

XI.35.

Idea of the
Holy, P.77.

"When he heard this word of Kesava (Kṛṣṇa), the Wearer of the Crown (Arjuna) folded his hands and trembled, and did once more obeisance: bowing, he spoke to Kṛṣṇa, with faltering voice and all afraid" (1).

1. XI.35,
(HL).

Arjuna has seen, not only the destructive power of Time (kāla) but also the spiritual presence in, and the law governing, the cosmos. The former produces terror and the latter a sense of ecstasy, expressed in adoration. This Hymn of Praise should be compared with the previous one expressing awe-struck terror as the universe is seen dissolving into the cosmic fire, whereas the present Hymn gives

XI.14f.

expression to what Sri Krishna Prem terms "the rapture with which he sees, within the waves of flame, the shining spiritual cosmos".

The Yoga
of the
Bhagavadgita,
P.108.

God is then acknowledged to be that Infinite Being whose attributes had previously been taught to the warrior and identified, yet again, with the Vedic gods and with traditional ancestor-worship, including also the great Prajāpati, a term applied especially to Brahmā, as Creator. There is then the implication that God is not only a transcendent mystery but as close to us as those intimate social relationships which find their fullest realization in God alone.

"Therefore I bow myself and prostrate my body and crave grace of thee, the Lord adorable; as father with his son, as comrade with his comrade, as lover with his beloved, so shouldst thou bear with me, O Heavenly Lord!". (1).

Finally, and presumably, unable to endure any further blaze of blinding light surrounding Kṛṣṇa's whole being, Arjuna asks for a resumption of the more comforting form of the four-armed Viṣṇu. He apparently has to draw the line between the vision of the Absolute that he can bear and that which is natural to his own previous conditioning. As Nataraja Guru comments, "A more philosophic temperament would perhaps be able to approximate to an abstract or unconditioned idea of the Absolute".

See XI.46.

Op.cit,P.504.

Thus ends the vision of God's Highest Form, a manifestation in which Arjuna was given, it is claimed, a vision superior to all other approaches

1. XI.44. Hill. Similarly Radhakrishnan. Edgerton has "be pleased to show mercy, O God".

whether through Vedas, sacrifices, studies, ritual or austerity. God, Himself, revealed himself to Arjuna, as He had to no-one else. It is interesting to recall that, when Kṛṣṇa comments on the vision, he states that even the gods were aspiring for it, and the use of the adverb "nityam" (ever) seems to imply that they can never attain to such a vision so it is, apparently, to be regarded as completely outside the scope of the theological context to which the gods belong. The vision is, then, obviously thought of as being of a highly mystical or contemplative order. See XI.54.

6. We may note, then, that, in the case of the Unitive Vision of the Absolute, it would at least appear to be different from the "barren Godhead" of the Upaniṣads, portrayed in mainly negative statements which were seemingly appropriate to it. This is certainly so when a somewhat exaggerated imagery effuses from the fertile imagination of the poet-author's mind, as various metaphysical truths are, so to speak, illustrated in full-colour. In this visual actualization - an example of what Evelyn Underhill would term the rare methods "by which a certain type of intuitive genius actualizes its perceptions of the spiritual world" - astonishment, terror and ecstasy all issue from the apparent realism of the vision.

H.D.Lewis,
The Elusive
Mind, P. 306.

Mysticism,
P. 267.

After the vision, Arjuna confirms those attributes or aspects of God which he had previously been taught by Kṛṣṇa, in much the same way as experience of the unitary consciousness in the Upaniṣads confirmed the teachings of śruti. This suggests that what was seen See XI, 37-40.

might have been conditioned by what had been taught prior to the experience, that is that it was a kind of progressive externalization, on the part of the self, of those concepts or intuitions which seem to form the basis of all such states and that the poet-author, himself, had experienced such a vision. Indeed, J.B.Pratt has claimed that "the visions of the mystics are determined in content by their belief and are due to the dream imagination working upon the mass of theological material which fills the mind". Evelyn Underhill, however, is of the opinion that such is far too absolute a statement, despite the fact that, as we have already noted, she states that visions may be the rare methods by which a certain type of intuitive genius actualizes its perceptions of the spiritual world. On the other hand, Aurobindo states that, in the vision, "transcendent, universal and individual Godhead, spirit and nature, Infinite and finite, space and time and timelessness, Being and Becoming, all that we can strive to think and know of the Godhead, whether of the Absolute or the manifested existence, are revealed in an ineffable oneness".

However, it is not without significance that, although Arjuna sees even all the gods and other infinite forms in his vision, he is unable to see the beginning, middle or end of the Universal Form. Beyond and behind all manifestations there remains the mysterious and Ultimate Reality, functioning, as it were, as an unknown background to the never - ending procession of finite things. Even when Arjuna requests to be told who God actually is, with

The
Religious
Consciousness,
Pp.402f.

Op.cit,
Pp.267 &
281. See
P.228, supra.

Essays on
the Gita,
P.380.

form so terrible, the answer given only states that, as the perpetually creating and destroying power, He is Time (kāla), the Prime Mover of the universe. In other words, it is a statement of that within which His modus operandi functions, He, Himself, being outside such a temporal sphere. This, then, would seemingly confirm the mystery of His Being and we are reminded of the statement which was made, by Kṛṣṇa, himself, in an earlier chapter, to the effect that:-

"I know the beings that are past, that are present, O Arjuna, and that are to come, but Me no one knows". (1).

It would seem, then, that although ample illustration was given, in the vision, of what the Supreme Being's manifested forms comprised, no indication is given as to what It, Itself, actually in essence, is. Its Existence is not doubted but Its Essence remains unknown. In this context, then, Kṛṣṇa would appear to function as the highest manifestation, the personification of every excellence and the symbol of the Fathomless Mystery of God, but not God, the Absolute. It is interesting to recall that Evelyn Underhill, when discussing the personal form of the imaginary vision, states that "the imagery seized upon by the subliminal powers is so vivid, so closely related to the current beliefs and spiritual passions of the self and so perfectly expresses its apprehension of God, that it is not always recognized as symbolic in kind".

Mysticism,
P.288.

1. VII.26. Radhakrishnan. Similarly Hill & Edgerton. Sankara excepts the genuine votary (Bhagavadgita, A.M. Sastry, P.219) whereas Rāmānuja interprets it as meaning that no-one knows that God is his refuge. (Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgita, J.A.B. Van Buitenen, P.106) See also X.2.

Nevertheless, in the vision, one can recognize, at least, not only the unearthly light which is so persistently reported as a feature of transcendental experience and which, we may recall, was present in the experience of the unitary consciousness of the Upaniṣads, but also the type of ecstasy or Upaniṣadic "ānanda" which so many mystics of all times, lands and creeds have told of and which can, apparently, only be realized at first hand and not described in terms which are comprehensible to another, unless the other be one who has, himself, enjoyed the experience.

7. We must, then, turn our attention to a consideration of the relationship between doctrine and experience in the Bhagavadgītā.

11. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE
IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

1. Having now considered the teaching of the poem about the Supreme Being, the sources of knowledge and the content of the unitive vision of the Absolute, we are presented with the problem of the possible relationship between doctrine and experience in the poem.

Whereas, in the Upaniṣads, it was claimed that the truest knowledge of Reality was presented, in mystical experience, as an intuition of an undifferentiated unity, in the poem there is, by way of contrast, what we might term a unitive vision or visual actualization of the perceptions of the spiritual world or what Evelyn Underhill has termed "a pictured thought".

Mysticism,
P.269.

Already, we have, at least tentatively, suggested that, after the vision, Arjuna seems to confirm those attributes which he had previously been taught by Kṛṣṇa, in much the same way as experience of the unitary consciousness in the Upaniṣads confirmed the teachings of the śruti. This, indeed, would suggest, *prima facie*, that what was seen might have been conditioned by what had previously been taught, so that the vision was a kind of progressive externalization, on the part of the self, of such concepts and intuitions. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that the late G.Dawes Hicks, in his Hibbert Lectures of some forty years ago, claimed that what the mystic took to be immediate intuition or vision was

The
Philosophical
Bases of
Theism,
P.119f.

clearly an interpretation. He writes, "The mystic has acquired his religious beliefs precisely as his non-mystic neighbour acquires his, namely through instruction and tradition, through habitual ways of thinking and through rational reflection", from which he concludes that the mystic brings his theological convictions or conditioned beliefs to the experience; he does not derive them from it. Evelyn Underhill is also of the opinion that the mystic's "description of the experience will be conditioned by his temperament, by his powers of observation, by the metaphor which comes most readily to hand, above all by his theological education". It is along these lines, we feel, that H.D.Lewis may be thinking, when he writes that "Account must be taken of the context within which religious experience is formed. Religious Experience does not happen in a vacuum". Indeed, the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, itself, within which, as we have seen, there are hints of a personal God concept, states that God is fashioned by the heart, the understanding and the will, in other words that religious experience is not a pure, unvarnished presentment of the Real, in Itself, but a presentment of the Real already influenced by the ideas and prepossessions of the perceiving mind.

However, it seems reasonable to claim, from our study of the statements made about the Supreme, in both the Upaniṣads and the Gītā, that the mystic must be regarded as an acceptor and not a rejector of the creeds within which he moves and has his

Mysticism,
P.102.

Our
Experience
of God, P.93.

See 4.17, in
Hume, The
Thirteen
Principal
Upaniṣads,
P.405.

being, in so far as his experiences generally confirm the teachings of the sruti or what, as in the Gītā, has been taught by the avatār.

2. Yet, in the poem, to objectify the Absolute, whether concretely or through abstract concepts, can only be indirect and it would seem that an externalized vision is not what is meant but rather a kind of sympathetic intuition, by means of which Arjuna sees the unitive vision of the Absolute through the eyes of Kṛṣṇa, that is as the avatār would see it. Indeed, it seems apposite to recall what R.C.Zahner has stated, namely that "Hindu mystical classics are not autobiographical and are not the record of actual experiences undergone by given individuals. They are either mystico-magical tracts, like the earlier Upaniṣads, or the exposition of mystical doctrines in verse form like the later Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā".

Mysticism,
Sacred and
Profane,
P.130.

In effect, then, whether or not the account of the vision is treated as an allegory or as a fact does not seem to be as important as the theologico-philosophical character of statements made about the Supreme and the latter must, therefore, claim prior significance. To this end, then, it would seem that two questions directly relevant are those relating to the origin and signification of statements made about God in the poem and to a consideration of these we may proceed.

3. The Origin of Statements

1. Whereas, in the R̥g-Veda, statements appeared to originate in a confrontation with and reaction to a world of natural phenomena, such statements

referring to the objective world and conceptions of divinity being expressed in objective terms, in the Upaniṣads the interest shifted to meditation on the significance of the self, a self which, in so far as it persisted through the changing manifold of experience, was believed to contain the clue to the understanding of Reality. The contrast lies in the fact that the more positive statements made about the R̥g-Vedic gods are replaced by those mainly negative statements which ensue from a mystical experience of the Transcendental Spirit and the individual's oneness with It. In this respect, of course, it could be claimed that metaphysical theory reflects religious belief, although we are not maintaining that any such reflection implies that metaphysical theory defined religious belief, rather the other way round seems a more probable theory.

2. In the Bhagavadgītā, however, it is not quite so straightforward to account for the origin of statements made about deity, in view of the fact that the poem is basically both a synthetic and syncretic work. There are three different sets of descriptions found in statements relating to the unitive vision, as distinct from the more obvious statements and attributes which can be traced back to Upaniṣadic influence. These relate to conditioned ideas of a cosmological person; to those conceived in theological terms and to those which provide a positive picture of the Absolute, in terms of an Imperative Force of Becoming.

As far as conditioned ideas of a cosmological person

are concerned, we need only remind ourselves of the pictures of the cosmic man bent on destruction and annihilation. It seems evident that, in this, Vedic conditioning is present, as indeed is a certain conventional complacency. Arjuna's standpoint, however, is coloured far more by theology than cosmology, ranging, as it does, from the somewhat conventional starting point of a Viṣṇu known to mythology, through various other forms of religious exaggeration, to numerous references to Vedic gods and Īsvara. In this connection, of course, Īsvara is a theological concept belonging to the relativist rather than to the absolutist standpoint. However, Arjuna also uses terms clearly derived from the earlier Upaniṣadic doctrines so that, in effect, there is a seemingly theologico-philosophical orientation of ideas, concepts and attributes present or what, indeed, one might call a theological compromise. It is interesting to compare, in tabular form, the more important similarities between Kṛṣṇa's teaching and the attributes bestowed by the warrior, during and after the vision.

<u>Kṛṣṇa's Teaching</u>	<u>Arjuna's Attributions</u>
7.6. Dissolution	11.32. World-destroying Time. 11.40. Terminate all
7.13. Imperishable	11.18. Imperishable
7.19. All that is	11.40. All
7.30. The One	11.31. Primal One 11.37. Exalted One

8.8. Supreme Person	11.38. Primal Person
9.4. All universe pervaded by God	11.40. Penetrating All
9.11. Lord of all Existences	11.16. Lord of the Universe
9.19. Being and Non-Being	11.37. Being and Non-Being
9.15. Facing in all directions	11.16. Infinite in form
10.2. Source of the Gods	11.13. God of Gods
10.8. Origin of All	11.43. Father of the World

The third set of descriptions relates to Kṛṣṇa's declaring his own absolutist nature, his own innate spiritual supremacy and his own form - supreme, luminous, universal, infinite and primal.

See XI.47.

It is evident, therefore, that there is much in Arjuna's statements which belongs to both Vedic theology and Upaniṣadic doctrine, but it must be acknowledged that such statements are augmented by the use of analogy drawn from both human relations and emotions, especially from that element of devotion (bhakti) which would today be regarded not only as characteristic of man's attitude to a Personal God but, indeed, definitive of his response to such a Being. In this way, it appears that both intellect, will and feeling are embraced within a far more comprehensive expression of religious experience, as this is made yet more articulate than it had previously been in either the R̥g-Veda or Upaniṣads.

We see brought to a head, as it were, both polytheistic, henotheistic and monistic terms, in an almost uncompromising monotheism, even if such has, as its basis, an Absolute of which all three seem earlier and less articulate manifestations.

Nevertheless, the Personal God concept is very much in evidence and, for this reason, we must not be preoccupied with the origin of statements to the neglect of what they they may mean or signify.

4. The Significance of Statements

1. We may, initially, remind ourselves that our examination of the R̥g-Veda, Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā has suggested that the transcendent should be regarded as a pervasive factor in experience, especially for those peculiarly gifted individuals whose testimony is incorporated, albeit not necessarily autobiographically, in the various writings, and one which is immanent from the beginning. In consequence, it would seem that diversity is a result of change in the expression of man's awareness of the One, attempting, as it does, to comprehend divinity in its totality, with its manifold names, forms and personalities, its power, as it were, being expressed in the richness or abundance of its epithets. The common or basic factor, in all three writings, is unity which suggests that experience provides an insight into or intuition of an underlying unity present, however vaguely, in it, and that this seemingly requires explication or further articulation - indeed, progressive articulation - by means of diversity of expression, reflection and interpretation. Whereas,

in the Upaniṣads, such a unity was conceived of, almost exclusively, as an all-embracing yet completely non-empirical entity described in mainly negative terms, the Gītā portrays this positively as that in which all things are seen in the One.

However, the Gītā further departs from the intellectual conception of unity, by introducing the concept of a Personal God to whom devotion or bhakti is not only due but regarded as the highest means of obtaining knowledge, and the poem also introduces the concept of a discontinuous incarnation or avatār, and we must consider the significance of these, in view of their prominent, indeed unique, position.

2. The Personal God Concept

The difficulty of trying to understand what is or may be meant or implied by a personal God concept cannot be under-estimated. In Scholasticism, for instance, the classical definition of a person or self is that given by Boethius - that a person is an individual substance of a rational nature. Others have held that it is that in which individual characteristics come together, as accidents in a substance. It appears, though, that, if we are the better to understand the Gītā's ascription of personality to the Supreme Being, such simple definitions need a fuller analysis and, to this end, we must consider what the idea of person or self implies or involves. It is as well, however, to recall that the meaning of "self", with its various metaphysical, linguistic and psychological distinctions, has become so ambiguous that it is

necessary to distinguish between the self, as applied to the bearer of subjective experiences, and the self, as applied to the contents of such experience, that is, the psychological self. From this distinction, it would seem that the term "personality" is more promising because it appears to denote the nearest approach to multiple being in one coherent form.

In other words, it seems to denote the One Self made up of an infinite variety of physical and non-physical components and which maintains its selfhood most fully in relationship with other selves.

a. If, then, we now consider what the idea of personality implies or involves, it would, we feel, be generally agreed that there are four basic requirements, as follows:-

- a. A self-conscious ego and the notion of a free, self-determining will, which, of course, implies unrealized ideals.
- b. The idea of individuality or that is an individual distinguishing itself from all other similar beings.
- c. A plurality of ideas, feelings, experiences, and desires, of all of which the self is conscious; from which it distinguishes itself; which it regards as belonging to itself and which it must, in some way, control, systematize and unify.
- d. A distinction of the objects of consciousness from one another, in addition to a distinction of the subject from such objects.

See H.D. Lewis, The Elusive Mind, for a full and very interesting analysis.

However, it has to be appreciated that personality is possessed by obviously imperfect rational beings who distinguish themselves from one-another and who

struggle and strive for the realization of certain ideals, such as moral and spiritual self - realization. If, therefore, Supreme Being is conceived of as infinite, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omnipresent, undifferentiated, absolute and perfect, it would certainly seem that personality cannot be applicable to such a One, and especially as the notion of personality also involves duality and plurality, change and relativity, causality and reciprocity. Furthermore, human personality functions on different levels, being constituted of different layers or strands, both physical, mental and spiritual, but can a Supreme Being be thought of as existing at different levels?. Man surely cannot know Supreme Being at any one particular level in himself any more than he can reach out towards a specific level or point in Supreme Being. Hence, it would seem that there cannot be any direct access from human personality to God. How, then, indeed, can Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Absolute Spirit be a knowing, willing and feeling personality?. Nevertheless, for devotion or bhakti, the idea of personality seems to be indispensable for any adequate conception of a theistic God, in so far as the Supreme Person, the Puruṣa, is conceived of as One with whom man can have a personal relationship and, in the Gītā, God is clearly regarded as the Supreme Knower, the Perfect Will and the Great Lover - three sides of a complex personality.

Compare
Tillich,
Systematic
Theology,
Vol.3,P.
113f.

b. It seems that any solution to such difficulties must recall that the poem is a synthetic and

syncretic work and, in consequence, distinguish between two fundamentally different approaches, namely the religious and the metaphysical conceptions of God. In other words, it would appear that there is a confusion between the intellectual or metaphysical approach so predominant in the Upaniṣads and the religious or popular approach which emerges to the forefront in the poem. As both approaches appear side by side, in the Gītā, is there, then, any possibility of a reconciliation between the religious ideal of a Divine Personality and the metaphysical ideal of an Absolute and Supreme Reality?. There have been numerous attempts to bring about such a reconciliation. For instance, the Personal God of religion has been given a subordinate place as one who has a relative existence, like all other consciousnesses, in the Absolute, although of course superior to them all. We are reminded of F.H. Bradley's contention that "Since the Absolute has everything, it must of course possess personality. And if by personality we are to understand the highest form of finite spiritual development, then certainly in an eminent degree the Absolute is personal". Others would regard the Personal God as a manifestation, although clearly a unique and supreme manifestation, of the Impersonal Absolute. In both cases, ignorance is claimed as that which gives such a God a real existence, so that, when such ignorance is, as it were, transcended, there remains One, Undifferentiated Absolute Being, the Impersonal Brahman and Sole Reality. However satisfying to the metaphysical

Appearance
and Reality,
P.470.

conception such may be, it is clear that the giving of a subordinate place or status to the Personal God cannot satisfy the religious conception which has, in contrast, tended to regard Absolute Being as part of or absorbed in the Supreme Personal God, which, of course, is equally unsatisfactory for the metaphysical conception.

c. Before considering a possible reconciliation between the two different approaches to the problem, we may consider whether a further analysis of human personality can suggest, however vaguely and tentatively, why certain attributes are, in fact, bestowed upon the Supreme Being. What, in other words, is there in the self which apparently leads the religious mind to bestow personality upon God?. It would seem that it is by means of contrast with itself that the human mind seeks beyond itself and its finite limitations for that which can provide an explanation of finite, related and changing plurality in One, Infinite, Absolute and Eternal Unity. For instance, it would appear that the experience of imperfection in this life and death as its termination would seemingly reflect the image of a Supreme Being in man's need for self-transcendence. The self-consciousness of a creature must surely indicate its limited, created, finite, imperfect and dependent nature, and there is ample evidence of this in the Rg-Veda, with its propitiation of the gods for personal favours and benefits. Yet such a self-consciousness must also realise that the human self subsists its experiences which are transient and that, in human personality, there is a unity of self -

consciousness which must give rise to a monistic urge of thought. Again, in human personality, there seems to be a union of immanence and transcendence which, indeed, appears to be a peculiar if not a defining characteristic of all personality. That is to say, it is a natural, empirical fact of common human experience. For example, in judging ourselves, we are both outside the field, as judged, and yet inside it, as experienced, so that we are both transcendent of the experience and immanent in it. Furthermore, we must all be conscious of the limitations which confront us; of the inability to attain all our ambitions; to fulfil all our desires and to realise to the full our altruistic motivations; to bring about a miraculous cure for a loved one, dying from an incurable disease; to prevent wars and natural catastrophes; to bring about a better world for all to enjoy, and so forth. All these and countless other instances must impress upon the human personality its limited and imperfect nature, especially in times of crisis, and impel it to seek for an explanation of such finitude and imperfection in that which is beyond all limitations and not only omnipotent and omniscient but also Absolute, Infinite and Eternal. By contrast with itself, then, the human mind would seemingly seek to indicate, in general terms, the way in which universal mind - if there be one - must differ from its own. Man cannot, though, realise, either in thought or imagination, what this difference positively means; he cannot tell us what such a God is, in Himself, but only what He is or means to us.

Hence, the limitations of his conceptual capacity compel him to represent God in ideas and forms drawn from, yet contrasted with, his own being and that of the objective world of his experience. For man, therefore, it seems correct to claim that human personality cannot but be the most appropriate as well as the highest and worthiest category in his experience and, as C.A. Raven has said, it is "in personal categories that the finest, truest and most effective interpretations are to be found and only so can awe be quickened into love", as, indeed, it is in the poem. Experience and Interpretation, P.48.

By contrast, then, with man's realization that he is created, limited, finite, dependent, imperfect and transitory, there must be an apparent awareness or realization, in experience, of that which is devoid of and infinitely superior to such creaturely attributes and, as such, thought of as Unlimited, Uncreated, Infinite, Absolute, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Perfect, but yet capable of responding to man's love and devotion and, indeed, desiring it.

d. If, then, we now return to the question of a possible reconciliation between the religious and metaphysical conceptions of Supreme Being, between a Personal and Impersonal God, it seems that the three attributes, Absolute, Infinite and Eternal, give rise to some difficulty. If these are to be regarded as constituting a negative, abstract concept, it seems that they cannot be regarded as providing any real explanation for the existence of finite, changing and related plurality: On the contrary,

the former would seemingly derive their meaning from the latter. Likewise, if Absolute, Infinite and Eternal are accepted as having a positive meaning, in contradistinction with the finite, relative and changing objects of our experience, then it seems that the former would be limited by the latter, so the three terms would be quite meaningless.

Furthermore, if we deny the existence of a world of finite, relative and transitory realities apart from the existence of the Absolute, Infinite and Eternal, is it indeed possible to deny the relative without, at the same time, denying the Absolute when it is conceived as real only in contrast with the relative?. Nevertheless, and despite such difficulties,

A.K.Banerjee claims that it is the concept of personality alone that can give adequate positive meaning to Infinite, Absolute and Eternal, and his contentions are worthy of note.

Discourses
on Hindu
Spiritual
Culture,
P.192f.

He claims that a positively infinite being is one of whom all finite existences are self-manifestations; in whom all finite existences do exist; who is the true self of all finite existences and from whom all such are substantially not different. Likewise, all spatial existences belong to his self - manifestations, he being above all spatial limitations and differences and alone being positively eternal, because past, present and future are all present to and united in his consciousness. Temporal distinctions are the conditions of finite and transitory existences which are his own self-expressions and, therefore, not different from him. When emphasis is placed on the aspect of Unity, thereby ignoring his

self-manifestation in plurality, we conceive of him as Impersonal Absolute. On the contrary, when emphasis is placed on his self-expression and manifestation in plurality, he is conceived of as possessing Perfect Self-Consciousness and Freedom of Will or Perfect Self-Determination, in consequence of which we feel rationally compelled to think of Him as Personal God. In other words, Supreme Being is regarded as both personal and impersonal and Perfect Self-Consciousness essentially implies that there should be no real existence outside consciousness of the self and so no reality apart from and independent of the Self.

This idea of contrast between empirical and Perfect self-consciousness may be summarized, as follows. As constituting the personality of a finite being, self-consciousness and self-determination involve the notions of finitude, change and relatedness, the finite self only being directly acquainted with the imperfect in both fields, so that the finite self is seeking for Perfection. By contrast, Perfect self-determination implies no condition or limitation of the will; no occurrence anywhere which is not the expression of the will and no ideal which is unrealized by the will. In consequence, the Absolute, Infinite and Eternal is perfectly self-conscious and perfectly self-determined and, in this sense, is the Perfect Personality. Hence, according to Banerjee, the Puruṣa or Supreme Person is the only conception of Ultimate Reality which will satisfy both the religious and metaphysical demands of the rational mind. In other words, on or at the highest

Op.cit,
P.196.

level of spiritual self-consciousness, the difference between the finite and infinite, the temporal and eternal, the One and the Many, loses all significance and, then, the self experiences The Self in all and all in The Self, infinite as finite and finite as infinite, there being, as it were, no inconsistency in Arjuna's seeing the entire universe in the mouth of Kṛṣṇa and his experience of all the past, present and future in the body of his charioteer.

See XI.
15-30.

e. Are we, then, to understand that there is an immediate, intuitive knowledge of God as Person or is such to be regarded as reached through a thought process?. The latter suggestion would generally be regarded as associated with traditional theology whereas a more modern conception would claim that such knowledge of God as Person is immediate, by means of a direct, personal acquaintance analogous with our acquaintance with human persons. Indeed, as far as the Gītā is concerned, the somewhat lyrical and, indeed, dramatic language of Arjuna's vision seems to assume that there is such an immediate knowledge of a Supernatural Person. The suggestion is, then, that any theory which is to conform to the "facts" of religious experience must include an immediate knowledge of God as personal, in a way analogous with our knowledge of human persons. But, immediately, the problem arises as to how we know other minds or, that is, how we can have a direct acquaintance with other selves. Although, we feel, few would wish to deny that other selves exist, the claim to know other selves is far from certain. In the first

instance, it seems that we come to know other selves by means of behavioural communication and only at a later stage through the medium of words. Intelligible communication, as distinct from behavioural communication, takes place through language and we accept that other selves exist because they communicate like we do ourselves. In both cases, however, the caution is required that, by this means, we only know other selves as they manifest themselves, either by behaviour or language, and not as they are in themselves. We may, for example, know A as a person who engages in acts of charity or kindness, either in word or deed, but we do not know why A acts in this way; we remain completely ignorant of what motivates him to this, although, no doubt, reasons both good and bad could be conceived. In other words, although we may in consequence attribute kindness and charity to him, these spring from outward manifestations and not from a real knowledge of his real self. Hence, to stretch the argument and claim that, in a similar way - that is, by behavioural and intelligible communication - we know God's reality as a person must clearly be of quite a different order - an extension by means of analogy to the Divine Personality of God. It seems difficult to accept that a man could be in communication with Supreme Reality, as such, and, in consequence, proceed to the claim that such a Reality must, henceforth, be known as a Personal God. This would surely seem fatal to the contention that there is a direct knowledge of God as person, because such knowledge seems to be mediated in the language of

mankind. Any certitude of God as person, then, can seemingly only be mediated and indirect and, as such, must contain both anthropomorphic and symbolic elements. The concept of God as personal may well seem applicable, in a supreme degree and, by way of contrast with finite and limited human personality, He may, indeed, be spoken of as Perfectly loving, trustworthy, righteous and so forth, and one capable of decision and action perfectly executed, all of which may, indeed, be regarded as marks of individual personality but, however, extended by analogy to what is conceived of as Perfect Personality. It would seem, therefore, that God can only be intuited as personal in attributes as they appear in and are necessarily conditioned by human personality. To this extent, any such intuition would appear to be symbolic and nurtured by contrast with the limitations of and within which the finite self functions. It seems correct, then, to conclude with H.D.Lewis that, although God is transcendent and thus beyond our experience, He is also within it "in the sense that all we know about Him comes from within our finite experience---". Even Tillich, we may recall, conceded that it was fundamental to think of God as personal because man cannot be ultimately concerned with anything less than personal.

Our
Experience
of God,
P.144.

Systematic
Theology,
Vol.1,
Pp.244-245.

3. The Avatār Concept

It is interesting to observe that some would claim that the avatār doctrine occurs, for the first time, in the Bhagavadgītā, being necessitated by the identification of Kṛṣṇa with the Supreme Being.

Compare
Hill, op.
cit, P.24.

Geoffrey Parrinder, however, has hinted that the idea of avatāra may possibly have originated in the popular religions which existed in the Indus Valley cultures before the advent of the Vedic Aryans but owing to the fragmentary evidence available, at this stage, on such early cultures, no firm conclusions can be drawn. Yet others would see the germ of the doctrine in the Hymn of Puruṣa, in the Rg-Veda. However, there is a wealth of Vedic and later literature which does, in fact, express Hindu beliefs in a relationship possible between human and divine and, even if such are dismissed as merely and mostly mythological, the idea is certainly older than the Gītā. Whatever the origins, though, it seems that it was from a religious reaction of the thoughtful and, to a lesser degree possibly, from a popular level that there arose a belief in divine speech to man and one that proclaimed that, if men appealed to God, He would come to them, to guide, help and protect them.

In what way, then, does the avatār concept, which seems to follow almost naturally from a belief in a Personal God, seem to enrich man's concept of the Supreme Being?

a. In the first place, it emphasises the closeness of God to man who is, as we have already seen, as near as father to son, as friend to friend and as lover to lover, this latter probably being the most intense of all human relations. Of course, it could be claimed that, even in the Rg-Veda, man was conscious of the presence of numerous, unseen forces which he propitiated for benefits and

favours, but these were mostly to be feared and any such relationship could hardly be accepted as based on bhakti or devotion, even if it were anything more than a one-sided relationship. Yet again it could be objected that what indeed could be closer than a relationship cemented on the Upaniṣadic formula "That art Thou", but this is merely an impersonal identity with an Absolute and Ultimate Reality. It is surely in the Supreme Being of the Gītā that any such relationship can find its fullest realization and, in this way, the avatār is, as it were, a mediating symbol which is reassuring to man. In other words, man is neither alone nor isolated in the world and may, indeed, enjoy a relationship with the Supreme Being which may not only be cultivated by man but is actually desired by God and is founded on a mutual love. The possibility of any such divine-human relationship, of course, would seem to rest on the belief, so generally proclaimed in the Upaniṣads, that the divine spirit is within man, as his true or essential self, the difference being between the self-conscious Being of the avatār and the same shrouded by ignorance in man. As S. Radhakrishnan has expressed it, "Kṛṣṇa's avatāra is an illustration of the revelation of the spirit in us, the Divine hidden in gloom". No longer, then, can it be believed that Supreme Reality is a totally transcendent mystery, unknown and incapable of being known by man.

b. In the second place, and by way of contrast with the earlier Upaniṣadic monism, the avatār concept illustrates that man can live in the physical body,

Op.cit,
Pp. 34-35.

enjoy an active life and yet come to possess the truth simply by devoting himself to God and His service. So human nature is not to be regarded as a fetter or bond but can, in fact, be an instrument of divine life, for all. In a way, therefore, the avatār concept seems an expression of the moral consciousness in man, an awareness by means of which the self sees itself in all and all in the self and, thereby, realises in action its divine nature. A limited, egoistic personality is to be replaced by taking up all human relations into a higher, divine meaning and becoming, in Aurobindo's words, "free, unegoistic, disinterested, impersonal, universal and full of divine power and divine love". Essays on the Gītā, P.166.

In this way, the avatār reveals the divine nature in man who is, in consequence, "liberated out of ego into infinity and universality, out of birth into immortality". So, by relinquishing the insufficiency of their human wills and the strife of their human fear, wrath and passion, men may come to live in the "calm and bliss of the Divine". ibid.

g. In this way, then, the avatār concept brings about an ethico-religious synthesis and especially in so far as the realization of a moral world order by a providential God underlies the very avatār doctrine. This, of course, is emphasized by identifying Kṛṣṇa with the Supreme Being and by symbolizing, in the vision, the whole universe and all in it as the body of God. It is, in other words, an expression of man's increased spiritual awareness that the whole universe is the body of God, with all men living, moving and having their being in God, and

the realization that the Divine Being is ever-present and ever-active, both in natural and mental phenomena and, thereby, in all the events of history and the relations of society. It must, therefore, be regarded as a distinctive expression of the religious experience of mankind, by which a developing self-awareness involves a fuller and richer interpretation of man's wide range of experience, especially in the religious, moral and social spheres. Whereas such experience gives his religious life a real, human relevance, a developing self-awareness gives it a direction and a purpose. As Dasgupta has stated, "The God of the Gita is not a God of abstract philosophy or theology but a God who could be a man and be capable of all personal relations".

History of
Indian
Philosophy,
Vol.2,
P.525.

In this way, then, and probably for the first time, the Supreme Being is conceived of as a God of compassion, of closeness to and concern for humanity, and this must surely be a reflection of his increasing religious, moral and social awareness. However, it is to the much later Christianity that we have to look to find the Christ, regarded by many as an avatār, prepared through love to sacrifice himself for the atonement of the human race.

5. Conclusions on the Relationship between Doctrine and Experience in the Bhagavadgītā.

a. As we have already seen, both Vedic and Upaniṣadic attempts at articulating outward and inward experiences, respectively, yielded an impressive similarity of attributes, including hints of a personal God concept, but the pantheon of the R̥g-Veda

inspired awe rather than devotion and the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the Impersonal Absolute equally failed to enter the hearts of men.

b. When, however, we attempt to reach conclusions about the relationship between doctrine and experience in the Gītā, the task is not made easier by what almost amounts to theological compromise. It is not possible to extract from the poem its exact metaphysical position, because it is not the exposition of a metaphysical system but a tradition which has emerged, through various stages of articulation, from the religious life of mankind, culminating in a kind of religious idealism, effervescent with emotion and being, therefore, an inspirational writing in which Supreme Being is described as appearing in human form, speaking through human lips and being concerned about and involved with human affairs and human destiny. However, it would seem that our survey suggests the following conclusions:-

1. That there is an underlying belief in or acceptance of the existence of the Brahman, as postulated, experienced and described in the Upaniṣads, and that this generally permeates the poem.
2. That this belief should be regarded as the Primary Datum upon which any further articulation of the God-concept depends and that, from Rg-Vedic times, at least, man has attempted to find out more about such a Supreme Being, in a series of what we may term progressive articulations, proceeding from the pantheon of the Rg-Veda,

gradually reaching the Absolute, Eternal and Undifferentiated One of the Upaniṣads, and finally postulating the predominantly Personal God of the poem, a God whose existence had, at least, been hinted at in both the earlier works.

3. That the expression of any such progressive articulations should be regarded as Secondary Data which are dependent upon the Primary Datum, as it presents itself to or is intuited through experience.

4. That, in the Gītā, such Secondary Data may be regarded as consisting of three main types of statements which we may term, for purposes of differentiation, Conditioned Expressions of realized truth; Literal Descriptions of Experience and Didactic Statements. However, these three broad types of statements should not be regarded as being found in isolation, as they frequently and more often than not occur, one kind with another, in the same context.

a. Conditioned Expressions of realized truth are those statements which are based upon and repetitive of Upaniṣadic pronouncements about Supreme Reality and, to a limited extent, on earlier beliefs about the various mythological gods of the Rg-Veda. In other words, such statements originate from earlier articulations and are, therefore, conditioned by them and by a tacit acceptance of them, even if eventually they are not only adopted but further articulated in terms of the poem's somewhat revolutionary teaching, at least as far as Upaniṣadic doctrine

is concerned, about the Supreme Being. Although the God of the Gītā is regarded as having all the attributes hitherto ascribed to the Brahman, he has more, and such conditioned expressions of realized truth do not constitute the poem's unique contribution to and further articulation of the God-concept, rather and clearly intentionally serving to link the old with the new teaching.

b. Literal Descriptions of experience are those statements which attempt to portray the Unitive Vision of the Absolute, in vivid contrast to the non-empirical experience of oneness with the Impersonal Brahman of the Upaniṣads. In this attempt to give abstract metaphysical truth a visible reality, such literal descriptions reveal the form of the Personal God and the potential divinity of all earthly life. They also illustrate how God ordains and decides all things, and how he is, as it were, a general cosmic necessity which pursues its own unrecognizable aims and against which all protestations of self-determination are, in the last resort, of no avail. In a reshuffling, fusion and meeting of values and a new order of things constantly emerging is to be found the true meaning of cosmic process and destiny. Whereas, then, the Literal Descriptions of the Upaniṣads attempted to make articulate an apprehension of Existence but without any comprehension of it, those of the Gītā attempt to give an understanding, not only of God and His Divine Form, but of His purpose and destiny

for the world.

c. Didactic Statements, forming the greater part of the poem, consist of what the avatār taught, although also including a relatively small number of statements, in the form of general inferences, made by Arjuna, after listening to the avatār or experiencing the unitive vision of the Absolute.

Such didactic statements proclaim that the Brahman of the Gītā is the Brahman of the Upaniṣads, which, of course, is the central doctrine of the poem, and that such is the ultimate unity lying behind the manifold universe. However, metaphysical reality is not cognized by contact with Pure Spirit alone but with a living, Supreme and Personal God, the soul of all things and all persons, and possessed of a heart of love and compassion. In such statements, we witness the tendency, as both speculation and articulation advanced, to move away from pure monism and, in the God-concept, to make allowance for moral and religious ideas, and this is a contribution of no mean significance in the process of progressive articulation, showing, as it does, that the most important attributes of the Supreme Being are righteousness and love. God, then, is conceived of as an ethical being for whom righteousness is so important that He considers His infinitude of no account when it needs to be re-established, and the individual who would realise Him must also be ethical and follow the standard of disinterested activity set for all. The new ethic taught by the avatār states quite clearly that, in contrast with the Upaniṣads where the individual

counts for little if anything in the eyes of the Impersonal Absolute, the Personal God loves the individual and wishes to possess him completely. God is, therefore, thought of as playing an active part in redeeming the soul from worldly existence and man is not left completely to work out his own salvation but is assisted by the grace (prasāda) of the Deity. Indeed, He is not unwilling to extend His grace to the most undeserving, even apart from any or all qualifying conditions, if the latter comes to Him for refuge and is filled with devotion (bhakti) to Him. This is, indeed, the language of religion, the true meaning of God in human experience, and we are left in no doubt that man must turn his whole being, his energies, knowledge, will and feeling, Godward. God decides and ordains all things but His purposes are worked out through human instrumentality and the wise man acts so that he is an instrument in His hands. Man must realise that every deed of heroism, every life of sacrifice and every work of genius is, in essence, a revelation of the Divine within man. Such, indeed, is the supreme degree to which the vague hints of a personal God, in the R̥g-Veda and Upaniṣads, have been progressively articulated.

5. That the concept of the Primary Datum, although considerably developed in the literal and didactic statements of the Secondary Data of the poem, with the marked change of emphasis from the mainly negative statements about the nirguna Brahman to the mainly positive statements about the saguna Brahman, still remains a mystery. Even if inspiring not only awe

but also a response of sinfulness and humility, of self-resignation and devotion, in so far as it is realized to be of infinitely more significance in the life of the world, it still remains, in essence, both unknowable and unknown.

6. That, although the R̥g-Veda and Upaniṣads yielded such attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, immanence and transcendence, order and stability, to a degree benevolence and beneficence and even a hint of personality, grace and love, from their outward and inward looking experience, respectively, the developed self-awareness witnessed in the poem shows that an introspective analysis of the self, penetrating even deeper into its nature, can also yield similar attributes. In the first place, it becomes aware that the self subsists its experiences and that, in human personality, there is a unity of consciousness. It also realises its limited, created, finite, imperfect and dependent nature, in contrast with which can be postulated that which is unlimited, uncreated, infinite, perfect and free from necessity and determination, either from within or without, as well as immanent and transcendent, Absolute and Eternal. In addition, as the self comes to know itself as a moral being, active in the world and aware of the difference between right and wrong, love and hate, indifference and concern for others, as well as appreciating and understanding the true nature of purposive activity and co-operation for the highest good of all men, so Supreme Reality, it seems, becomes possessed of righteousness and love. In other words, it would seem that, as man's knowledge

of his true self grows, so, indeed, does his understanding of the Supreme Reality in the progressively articulated God-concept which he formulates or makes from his experience. It is through his self-understanding that he discovers more about the Reality which is beyond yet within him, and in a synthesis of experience he puts together the pieces in a way that reveals an ever-increasing intensity of a higher light. It is at the higher levels of his experience that Truth can be known although, of course, he also comes to know such truth through the collective experience of mankind and is, as it were, conditioned by a firm foundation upon which he can build. It would surely be difficult to accept that there is a pure and unvarnished presentment of the Real, in Itself, but not if we regard religious experience as the presentment of the Real already influenced by the ideas and prepossessions of the perceiving mind and to this extent, being conditioned, it must be regarded as psychologically mediated.

7. That such doctrinal statements, in the poem as in the Upaniṣads, effectively provide man with a new dimension of hope and the idea of the transcendent, as experienced by him, becomes an experience of potentiality, all life being, as it were, reorientated around the individual's potential oneness with Supreme Reality. In the Gītā, however, the theology of developing self-awareness strengthens the concept of personality as well as providing a far more effective channel for understanding that which is ultimate. It confirms human experience and the fact that man can be

more than a cog in a vast and impersonal system - no less, indeed, than an instrument for the realization of God's purpose for the world, for the whole human race. These ideas, at least, represent some of the more significant theologico-philosophical developments found in the poem and suggest that man's increased spiritual, moral and social awareness is, indeed, reflected in his God-concept.

8. Doctrine, therefore, must not only be regarded as a translation of mystical experience and the formulation of insights which spring from it. Its essential function must not only be regarded as that of conserving the experience, as well as enriching and explaining it and guarding it against what may be felt to be false or inadequate interpretations of it. It must also, and as we have seen from the poem, be so related to experience that it also elevates the degree of spiritual understanding which makes religious experience relevant to life in the world.

9. It only remains, then, to bring our enquiry to its close, by briefly considering what general observations may be made about the relationship between doctrine and experience, as we have examined its progressive articulation through the ages, in the three great writings of Hinduism.

12. EPILOGUE

a. The purpose of this enquiry has been to try to determine what relationship might be said to exist between doctrine or statements about deity and experience of it, especially as evinced in the Upaniṣads and Bhagavadgītā, but, by way of introduction and, therefore, briefly, in the Rg-Veda, as well. To this end, we have endeavoured to consider the thesis that knowledge of Supreme Reality is derived from the experiences of the self, both as it looks outward from itself to the empirical world of its physical environment but more particularly as it looks inward, in an introspective analysis of its own nature. Any progressive articulation of the God-concept or, as some would claim, the making articulate of what had been latent from the first, would, therefore, seem to reflect a deeper insight into the nature of the self, to the extent that, as self-knowledge develops, so does the content of the God-concept, as, for example, a higher moral consciousness in man might be expected to imply a higher conception of the nature of his deity, it being inconceivable that a highly developed moral awareness in man could be associated with an immoral deity or, for that matter, with an amoral deity. The underlying assumption, therefore, has been that doctrine is primarily an assertion and summary of such experience, whether outward or inward, and that, if such doctrine is to possess any degree of authority, it must clearly be closely related to experience. Such experience, then, seems

to be based upon evidence or information which is collected through the normal exercise of human functions and related to issues of a personal or social character, such issues readily arousing feelings and emotions, hopes and fears, longings and ambitions, and especially when these are associated with the highest self-realization.

b. Initially, it was seen that the various statements which arise in the earliest literary phase in the evolution of the religious consciousness reflected the outpourings of poetic minds struck by the immensity of the universe and the inexhaustible mystery of life. Such statements are indicative of man's reaction to these primary or basic factors in his experience. In so far as such powers were seen, in man's natural environment, to be partly friendly and partly untoward, they evoked not only wonder, awe and dread, but admiration and gratitude, as well. As conscious thought developed, such vague and encompassing potencies were endowed with name and form and, thereby, objectified, man becoming conscious of himself as a distinct subject, over and against them. Out of such primary apprehensions, there arose attempts to construct some kind of coherent thought-form, in terms of which man could, as it were, order his experience and make sense of the world. However, such statements as ensued, positive rather than negative in form, followed an endeictic rather than a discursive mode of expression, that which was being described being hinted at or expressed in somewhat veiled form, by means of symbols, myths and images rather than in a strictly defined and

articulate or conceptual language. It is significant, however, that a tendency towards belief in some form of unity is evident, and this is seen initially emerging in henotheistic trends of thought, generally regarded as representing a transitional stage from polytheism to monotheism and, thereby, bringing into consciousness something which had, as recent scholarship would suggest, been latent in it from the beginning. It is worthy of note, too, that this tendency took two forms - a tentative monotheism where the first principle functioned as a kind of personalized entity, and a philosophical monism where the first principle was without qualities or attributes, limitless, boundless and impersonal.

At this stage, it was concluded that there appeared to be three main sources for the ascription of predicates to deity, namely the natural world of sense objects, suggesting power, order and stability, transcendence and yet omnipresence, creativity and luminosity; by analogy from human emotions which, no doubt, was at least partly responsible for the personification of such powers, and from sociological sources which ascribed family groups and relationships to the gods, as well as specialized functions associated with organized community life, and co-operation, mutual help and service, in working together for a common cause defined in terms of the maintenance of a single, all-comprehensive cosmic order. In other words, if one attempts to relate statements about Supreme Reality to experiences of It, we see, in pre-Upaniṣadic writings, both emotional and rational processes at work, attempting to describe

such Reality in terms of man's total reaction to his total environment. All such statements refer to the objective world and are expressed in objective terms, the meaning and significance of such Reality being approached through the existence of powers and manifestations of powers both different from and external to the experiencing, individual self. Nevertheless, there is the belief that man has a kind of relationship with them, which may be fostered by both worship and ritualistic propitiation but which is basically nurtured in an atmosphere of awe, wonder, fear and fascination rather than in one of love and adoration. It is significant, however, that, although predicating certain attributes to deity, no attempt is made to define It in essence, in so far as there still remains that which is yet undetermined, above and beyond all such manifestations, and basically a mystery. Yet, three ideas are worthy of note, at this stage, as they seem to be involved in any progressive articulation which is to ensue, namely, the concept of Unity, of a Personal God and of a common cause or Purpose for and in the world, and we shall see how these ideas are changed and developed, in the light of a deeper insight into the nature of the self.

c. In the next stage, it was found that emotional processes sank into almost total obscurity, as the quest for the One, within himself, occupied man's intellectual activities, exclusively, knowledge being regarded as the key to the mystery of the universe. There was the realization that man had an inward being and, if any such were controlled by

man's external circumstances, then inward being would be external to and, thereby, limiting the unlimited. As everything which is external stands in a relationship to something else, it was concluded that Supreme Reality must be something which was not external. If any such One is immanent, in inward being, however, this not only suggests some kind of correlation between man's psychological nature and the physical world but that man can find the One within himself and so come to know It in Its very essence. Introspective analysis suggested that there must be, in man's experience, something beneath the multiplicity of powers, senses, capacities, imagination, feeling, thought and desire, which remains identical and persists through his various states and experiences. This was declared to be man's essential nature, his real self, so that, if the individual is a world in miniature, he may be able to throw light on the One, the individual writ large. Hence, man claimed to have reached, not only a knowledge of his real self but, through such, a knowledge of Supreme Reality and of his identity with It, in a state of mystical or transcendental awareness. The One was all and all things were the One. What ensued, although tolerable philosophy, was far from satisfactory for any religious consciousness.

In consequence, it had to be concluded that descriptive statements relating to such an experience, completely non-empirical and undifferentiated as it was, were inevitably negative in form, in so far as it was impossible either to grasp or define it positively. Logical inference and explanatory

hypothesis apparently attributed to It such metaphysical attributes as all-pervading, omnipresent, omnipotent, the source of all things, both transcendent and immanent and, somewhat surprisingly, Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss, the three latter predicates all involving, as we concluded, a negative connotation, in so far as they served to emphasize Its completely non-empirical nature.

If man, by introspective analysis, therefore, did find the One within himself, and a new meaning to the concepts of Unity and self, yet again did he fail to discover what any such One was, in essence, and the mystery remained. As for any purpose in life, this became one of purely subjective interest, namely the realization of the highest self, involving inactivity and disinterest in the cultivation of contemplative meditation which would finally lead to the desired goal. Descriptive statements, then, could only refer to a unitary consciousness, although there are a few predicates which are seemingly derived from human and social relationships, particularly those of Ruler and Governor, and even a hint that such a Reality may be perfect in the more usual moral sense, as pure, steadfast and stainless, but even here the implication remains that such must be non-empirical virtues attributed more by lack of activity than by any moral conduct in an empirical, and therefore a meaningful, sense. Nevertheless, such a "barren Godhead" failed to stifle those hints of a personal God found in the earliest writings but, as they survive, particularly in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, VI.23.

they appear with the addition of an appeal for bhakti or devotion to God who will, in consequence, make manifest, through grace or prasāda, a knowledge of Himself. So the personal God concept is seen to have developed slightly, although this is not, as yet, sufficient enough to be able to state categorically that such is indicative of an emergence into consciousness of what had always been latent in it, from the beginning. What does seem significant, however, is the quite impressive similarity of attributes predicated to Supreme Reality from both objective and subjective experience, unless, of course, the latter is merely to be regarded as a new way of establishing old predicates, a kind of by-product in the quest for the real essence of God. However, it is to the Gītā that we must finally turn, in order to see the results of the Upaniṣadic identification between man's innermost self and Supreme Reality, an identification which, we feel, had important consequences for both concepts.

d. In the final stage of the enquiry, we saw a definite movement away from pure monism, seemingly to make room, in particular, for moral and religious ideas which must have reflected an increasing spiritual, moral and social awareness, as these presented themselves in man's experience and made demands upon his response to them and the sense of obligation which would ensue. This would suggest that a growth in insight is, as it were, an on-going process. No longer was Supreme Reality an intellectual idea or, for that matter, a moral principle, but the perceived Reality present in all men and giving to

each the reality they possessed. It is possible, also, if not, indeed, probable, that such an advance in the God-concept could be regarded as a further and deeper articulation of the claimed unity, as this was expressed in the Brahma-Atman Equation. If, in other words, the real, individual self was a microcosmic part or manifestation of the Whole, then a deeper self-awareness must also be reflected in the attributes predicated of the Whole. So, if man has intellect, will and feeling, albeit in a limited sense, so must the Whole of which he is part, but in a Perfect sense.

It was felt, therefore, that divine attributes tended to become a glorified reflex of the attributes of the ideal man. The highest category known to man was that of self-conscious personality and, whereas man had personality, then God had Perfect Personality, defined by contrast with the limited self. The predominantly personal theism of the final stage, therefore, is necessarily anthropomorphic and clearly suggests that man can only conceive of God in terms of human faculties and in the light of human emotions, together with his moral, intellectual and spiritual experience. So intellect, will and feeling must be embraced in a far more comprehensive expression of experience and, because of his actual nature, man must seemingly have had a richer, more valuable and rewarding spiritual life, by establishing his religious orientation towards a Personal God rather than towards an Impersonal Absolute. In this way, a developing self-awareness would seem to lead to

a developing spiritual awareness which gives man's religious life a real relevance, a real direction and a real purpose.

God is, then, finally seen as the whole universe which is his body, all men living, moving and having their being in Him who is ever-present and ever-active, both in natural and mental phenomena and, thereby, in all the events of history and relations of society, in consequence of which there arises a sense of relation with, of obligation to and of dependence upon such a One. An ethico-religious synthesis is, as it were, superimposed on earlier teaching and such a synthesis is understood especially as the realization of a world order by a providential God who is redefined or more deeply articulated as a God of compassion, of closeness to and concern for humanity. Man is, therefore, neither alone nor isolated in the world and can enjoy a relationship which must not only be cultivated by him but which is actually desired by his God. In bhakti piety, in particular, there is seen an intensely personal apprehension of God who becomes a God of grace and favour, of righteousness and love.

Finally, we saw how the three ideas of Unity, of a Personal God and of Purposive Activity, hinted at in the Rg-Veda, have been developed or redefined. Unity is no longer a mere unity of Godhead or merely a unity of self with Supreme Self. It is both but far more besides, as it becomes a oneness or concord of will, of co-operation and concern, with God, in working for the greatest good of all, in so far as

God is all and all are God. In other words, it is a conscious unity of God, Soul and Nature, in man's own consciousness, which is the sure foundation of his perfection and his realization of all harmonies.

As for the Personal God concept, it is no longer a cosmic man, although, indeed, the apotheosis of man does, at this early Rg-Vedic stage, seem to have begun, in so far as gods and men appear on equal terms, as consequences of a sacrificial dismemberment. It is no longer merely the soul or self or inmost being of all things, the Ruler, Governor, Inner-Guide or Controller. It becomes, in addition, a God with will and feeling, purpose and activity, compassion and concern, righteousness and love. Man must, therefore, realize all the Divine potential within himself to elevate himself Godwards and strive to be Perfect, in order to return to that complete Oneness, of which he is a part.

Likewise, Purposive Activity is no longer for purely selfish satisfaction, whether through ritualistic propitiation for the attainment of worldly benefits or through contemplative meditation to escape from the karma-samsara cycle. It is in order to be an instrument for the realization of God's Purpose for the world, by co-operating with the Most Perfect Being, in a mutual response of devotion and love. Hence, the Lord of Nature may inspire and sustain, the Ineffable may exalt and overwhelm but it is the Incarnate who transforms and integrates when the Divine Will meets man, not merely as a gracious concern for his self-realization but as an absolute claim to his service and co-operation.

e. What general conclusions, then, may be drawn, as a result of our enquiry, about the relationship between doctrine and experience?.

1. Religious experience is an awareness of Another, upon which or whom man feels dependent and with which or whom he should have some kind of relationship, but this is not what it should be without some effort on man's part. Such experience is based upon evidence or information which is collected through the normal exercise of human functions and is related primarily to issues of a personal or social character. At its highest or most developed level, it is an activity of the whole self and an indistinguishable blend of emotion and reason, of feeling and meaning. In other words, man must correlate his experience of the mystery met in religious experience with his cognitive, conative and emotional interpretation of it. In this sense, religious experience cannot be assigned to any particular instinct or faculty, as it is basically a property of the whole self.

2. Doctrine is primarily an assertion or summary of such experience. Its statements are undertaken, in order to impart to oneself and others a communicable account of what has been experienced and it is assumed, thereby, that the mind can translate an experience by the whole self into categories appropriate to the self as a subject of fragmentary and partial episodes, that is, describe or interpret an experience of the Absolute into adequate or as near adequate as possible spatio-temporal symbols. If doctrine is to possess any degree of authority, it must be closely related to experience, and the essential thing in such experience

is what is apprehended.

3. Doctrinal statements may be classified, according to their source, as derived from either the physical world, the human mind and body and abstract ideas, and are generally descriptive, interpretative or didactic in nature. It seems that, in the most fundamental sense, doctrinal statements must adopt one or another of two forms or bring about some combination of them, as, for example, in the Bhagavadgītā. Briefly, such forms are:-

a. As well as the Natural Order, there is another order, impersonal like the world of nature itself, but such that, within it, all the limitations of the Natural Order, in relation to human life, can be overcome.

b. As well as powers that work in the Natural Order, there is another power, personal in character, vast and unfettered, and with this to assist him, man can overcome all his own limitations, in relation to the Natural Order.

In this way, the two main conceptions are monistic or monotheistic or a combination of both and, in all three, some kind of relationship with such a Power is necessary, for any personal well-being.

4. Such statements arise from both Objective and Subjective experience, both by a reaction to the manifestations of powers therein; by analogy from human emotions and from sociological sources, and from an introspective analysis of the self, mystical intuition and an ever-developing moral, social and spiritual awareness. In the case of objective experience, in particular, emotional

and rational processes are at work in the production of statements attempting to describe divinity in terms of man's total reaction to his total environment. In the case of subjective experience, in particular, we find, first of all, what appear to be literal descriptions of a mystical experience of Unity which are further articulated by logical inference and explanatory hypotheses, producing insights which spring from it. In the second place, a deeper insight into the nature of the self and its personal relationship with Supreme Reality, produces an absolute claim on man, by means of a sense of dependence upon and obligation to God, and it is from this source that we see earlier concepts of Unity, of a Personal God and of Purposive Activity, both redefined and developed. In general terms, metaphysical attributes basically express the numinous or transcendent nature of the experience and the sense of mystery associated with it, where personal attributes basically convey a feeling of closeness, of intimacy and of dependence, of adoration and love for the Perfect, by means of which hopes and aspirations can be realized.

5. However, doctrinal statements are not, of necessity, static. The interpretation of Highest Truth, it seems, will change as generations come and go. Traditional statements are, therefore, sometimes transcended by a process of progressive articulation, and as man looks inward, so religion becomes more inward and spiritual, and human conduct comes to depend on inward rather than outward standards, on man's moral and social conscience rather than on

worship and ritualistic propitiation. By a synthesis of experience, the parts are, as it were, put together in a way that reveals a Higher Light, and there seems to be a deeper articulation of what was latent or there to be discovered in man's consciousness from the earliest times.

Man's destiny is self-discovery, self-knowledge and self-fulfilment, and the seeking for the highest and inmost self is the seeking for God. His evolution towards this end is a constant self-transcending until, finally, he reaches his potential and ultimate nature which the appearances of life conceal or, at least, inadequately express. This involves the process and result of balancing the different sides of his nature, body, mind and spirit, objective and subjective, individual and social and the finite and infinite, and as his self-knowledge and awareness increases, so this is reflected in his concept of God. Furthermore, as man thinks Ultimate Reality to be, so he behaves, and it seems true to say that the relation of life to a larger spiritual world betrays itself, quite clearly, through man's intellectual ideals, his moral aspirations and his longing for perfection. Again, as these change and develop, so does his concept of God. It is by experimenting with different religious conceptions, or God-concepts, and relating them to the rest of life that it becomes possible to know the adequate or sound from the inadequate or unsound and, as knowledge grows, so doctrine develops. In the West, increased knowledge of God is regarded as coming about by

development which is the key to the diversity and change in man's expression of his consciousness of God. In the East, however, this is brought about by a progressive articulation of what is believed to have been latent in man's consciousness, from the earliest times, so that diversity is a change in the expression of man's consciousness of the One.

6. It must also be stated that limitations seem to be necessarily imposed upon any such doctrinal statements as ensue from experience, even if these are of a subtle and unrecognizable kind. Minian Smart, for example, has stated that they are subject to a certain conceptual ambience and a certain religious milieu. They are involved with the significance and relevance of an earlier or later illative process and with conventional and traditional statements. They are shaped and coloured by idiosyncrasies of speech, standpoints and the culture of the age in which any experient lives. It must also be noted that the history and interests, temperament and convictions of the experient will not only supply the language but will colour the whole substance of the statements. Furthermore, it seems that both positive and negative statements are inevitable because of the different levels of spiritual perception in different persons and because of the nature of human language through which thought and experience are forced to express themselves. Metaphysical statement, then, has always this peril and uncertainty about it. It is an attempt to define

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what is really infinite - an attempt which has been made but which can never be quite satisfactory, quite final or ultimate. In other words, the highest spiritual truth can be lived, can be seen but can only be partially stated.

7. In conclusion, then, it would appear that Doctrine is dependent upon man's Experience, of however varied a kind in the complex of objective and subjective, empirical and mystical, moral, social and spiritual. In this way, doctrine is centrally-initiated, coming from within and, as self-knowledge increases, so the God-concept appears to grow and develop. We have witnessed its development from polytheistic, henotheistic and personalized entities, through a philosophical Absolute predicated with basically metaphysical attributes, to a Personal God, rooted in man's affective and volitional nature, as Creator perhaps, but more especially as Father, Helper and Friend. In the process, the whole self is involved and, as the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad rightly claimed, all those centuries ago, God is fashioned by the heart, the understanding and the will, in terms of His effects upon us and of His relevance for the whole of life. Perhaps another might wish to trace such a progressive articulation through to the Christian concept of God, and there seems to be much which is in common with the Personal God-concept of the Gītā, but this is outside the scope of the present enquiry.

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