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**RELEASE AND REALIZATION: A STUDY OF THE
CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL LIBERATION IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN**

**BY
KEVIN EDWARD SULLIVAN**

**A thesis submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies and Research
of the
University of Ottawa
as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Ph.D. degree in Philosophy**

Ottawa, (Ontario), Canada, 1994



Kevin Edward Sullivan, Ottawa, Canada, 1994



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INTRODUCTION

This thesis encompasses the areas of normative ethics and the philosophy of religion. More specifically, it attempts to examine in detail one response to the question "What is the highest good (*summum bonum*), ultimate value or supreme ideal of human life?" Many answers have been given to this extremely important question throughout the history of Western and Eastern philosophy. My purpose is to focus on one such answer as found in the philosophy of the Hindu thinker and Indian statesman, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975).¹ For Radhakrishnan, and Indian philosophy in general, the highest good is spiritual liberation (Sanskrit: *mokṣa*). This is thought to be the sole intrinsic value, by which is meant the only thing worth pursuing for its own sake or desired for an end in itself. Spiritual liberation is not simply a means to a greater good because there is no greater good imaginable. It is the most perfect jewel in the crown of Indian values. Radhakrishnan further believes that the realization of spiritual liberation is possible only after going through a countless number of different rebirths; for many lifetimes of experience are needed to develop what is required for apprehending the truth about our divine nature.

The aim of the thesis, then, is twofold: in the first place, to meticulously describe Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) in order to show how it conforms to, or is an example of, a perfectionist theory of the highest good; and in the second place, to critically analyse the central notion of *karmic* rebirth (or reincarnation) since it is the means by which one can come to realize *mokṣa*. A main point of the thesis is that the ideal of spiritual liberation, though perhaps impossible to fully realize given that the phenomenon of *karmic* rebirth remains empirically suspect, is still worth pursuing because it can play an

important role in an individual's psychological and moral development. The potentially more damaging criticism, however, about the idea of rebirth itself being logically unintelligible, is dismissed as ultimately unconvincing.

Three basic motivating factors were involved in choosing and investigating this subject. The first was the belief that Radhakrishnan's entire philosophy can be best understood in reference to his concept of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). Numerous scholars have commented on the lack of consistency and systematic thought in Radhakrishnan's writings.² This is undoubtedly true in some cases. But it is equally evident that a common thread links his disparate remarks: his unwavering commitment to idealism. "Idealism" is a term that has often been misinterpreted when applied to Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He himself notes it is "an ambiguous word... used to signify a variety of views."³ In Radhakrishnan's case, the word does not refer to the view that reality is mind-like in character, but rather to the position that "the universe has meaning, has value."⁴ In being imbued with purpose, the world has an end-goal and is governed by a supreme ideal seeking full expression. This best captures what Radhakrishnan means by idealism since the emphasis is on "ideal" in the word and not on "idea." And the supreme ideal is spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*), initially in the form of individual self-realization (*jīvanmukti*), but ultimately in the form of universal emancipation (*sarvamukti*). Thus the key to fully comprehending Radhakrishnan's idealist philosophy resides in adequately grasping his notion of spiritual liberation, a task this thesis hopes to successfully accomplish.

A second reason for working on this topic was the belief that at the heart of many religious traditions lies a theory of the highest good as consisting of

spiritual transformation. It is my contention that the essence of religion (or religious philosophy) is "soteriological" in nature. In John Hick's words, "all the great developed world faiths have a soteriological (from the Greek *soteria*, salvation) structure. They offer a transition from a radically unsatisfactory state to a limitlessly better one."⁵ Soteriology, or the study of the different doctrines of salvation/liberation in the world's religions, conforms in structure to the three stage medical model. The three stages are: perceiving a problem, diagnosing its causes, and prescribing a cure. First there is a perception that something is terribly wrong or defective about the present human condition. Some major disease is detected that negatively affects all of humankind. In Western or Near Eastern religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Islam) such a "fallen" or imperfect life is characterized as sin, whereas in some Indian religions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) the defect is described as a state of bondage (*bandha*). Next there is a diagnosis of the fundamental problem, an investigation of its principal cause. The main culprit is usually construed either in terms of wilful disobedience to God (as in Christianity) or ignorance (*avidyā*) of the Ultimate Reality (as in Hinduism). Finally, there is a prescribed remedy or cure for the virulent problem. This involves both a view of a more ideal (healthy) state of being as well as a recommendation for realizing the ideal. The perception of there being something radically wrong in ordinary life presupposes that there is a right condition. Each soteriological system offers a vision of a more perfect state of human existence, that is, a theory about the good person and the ideal society. There is thus a utopian element present in all soteriological thinking. The ideal state is commonly envisaged either as close communion with the Divine Reality, as in mainstream Christianity, or as oneness (non-difference) with the Ultimate Reality, as in the *Advaita* tradition of Hinduism. Each soteriological system has a name for the individual who has attained and embodies the ideal of spiritual

transformation, such as the "saint" in Christianity, the "sage" in Taoism, the "arahant" in *Theravāda* Buddhism, and the "jīvanmukt" in *Advaita* Hinduism. The prescription also offers a way of realizing the ideal state of being, of moving from sin or bondage to salvation or liberation. The solution indicates the steps to follow in order to cure the distressing ailment. These steps represent a combination of self-effort and/or divine grace. Some degree of individual initiative and moral-spiritual discipline (*yoga* in Hinduism) is needed, along with some assistance from a divine source. Together these elements will eventually cure the dis-ease and transport one from the near shore of an imperfect existence to the far shore of a spiritually transformed life.

Now it is my position that a soteriological theory, one relating to the *Vedānta* tradition in Hindu philosophy, can be gleaned from Radhakrishnan's diverse writings.⁶ Since the *Vedānta* tradition itself is divided into many schools, each differing in important respects from the others, it is essential to clarify the position that Radhakrishnan adheres to. Unfortunately this is not a simple task and is in fact quite complicated. The problem stems from conceiving the relation between the Absolute on the one hand, and God, individual selves and the world on the other. It is usually thought that the two major schools of the *Vedānta*, the *Advaita* (unqualified non-dualism) of Śaṅkara and the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) of Rāmānuja, present two very different views of this relation. Śaṅkara posits an unqualified non-dualism where there is only one Ultimate Reality called the Absolute or *Nirguṇa Brahman* (*Brahman*-without-qualities). This *Brahman* is completely indeterminate, impersonal, and beyond all thought and language. God is simply an appearance (*vivarta*) of the Absolute, meaning that it is the Absolute as conceived by our finite minds through the categories of the intellect. For this reason Śaṅkara refers to God as the *Saguṇa Brahman*

(*Brahman-with-qualities*) who is the highest Lord *Īśvara*. In other words, the highest conception human beings can have of the Absolute is the personal God *Īśvara* who is conceived to be the creator and governor of the world and of individual selves. Ultimately God, selves and the world are merely appearances or limited representations of the *Nirguṇa Brahman*.

Ramanuja presents quite a different picture of this relation. He posits a qualified non-dualism where reality forms a unity-in-difference. Ramanuja completely rejects the idea of an impersonal Absolute or *Nirguṇa Brahman* and affirms God (*Saguṇa Brahman*) to be the Ultimate Reality. God consists of the world and individual selves, all three together representing a unity-in-difference. The latter two exist as the body of God, while God is the controlling power of the body. Hence, the world and individual selves are not appearances of God but form a real part of the divine Reality.

Radhakrishnan attempts to integrate these two views of the relation between the Absolute, God, selves, and the world. Exactly how he accomplishes this is subject to two interpretations. Some of his remarks indicate a genuine synthesis of the two *Vedāntic* positions,⁷ while others suggest he is simply reinterpreting Śaṅkara's *Advaita* philosophy in such a way as to incorporate some of Ramanuja's insights.⁸ In either case his endeavour to integrate the two trends of thought arises from the conviction that they are discernible in the *Upaniṣadic* texts — one philosophical, the other religious. The *Upaniṣads* lend themselves to both a metaphysical non-dualism, where the Ultimate Reality is interpreted as being an impersonal, indescribable Absolute, and a devotional theism, where it is construed as being a personal God. Śaṅkara, as we have observed, emphasizes the former, Rāmānuja the latter. Radhakrishnan slides up

the middle giving equal weight to both aspects of the Supreme Reality. His goal is to bring together philosophy and religion by showing how each is talking about the same reality though in different ways (e.g., philosophy in terms of the Absolute, religion in terms of God). Radhakrishnan combines the two and designates the Ultimate Reality "Absolute-God."⁹ The Supreme has two aspects, which can be understood from either a metaphysical or epistemological perspective. Metaphysically speaking, the Absolute is the passive side of the Supreme or the Supreme-in-repose, while God is the active side or Supreme-in-relation. God, in brief, represents the power of the Absolute. In terms of epistemology, the Absolute is viewed as God from the finite, empirical standpoint, while God is the Absolute from the infinite, transcendental standpoint. Both are equally real since the Supreme Reality is dynamic and all-inclusive.

Radhakrishnan's integral view of reality underpins his soteriological theory. He is in fact quite adamant about the close relation existing between metaphysics and ethics. "Any ethical theory," he asserts, " must be grounded in metaphysics, in a philosophical conception of the relation between human conduct and ultimate reality."¹⁰ Given the integral nature of his metaphysics, Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation can be seen in a double light. From the perspective of philosophy, Radhakrishnan's interpretation of *mokṣa* is essentially *Advaitin*, where liberation is simply the direct experience of the non-duality of the real self (*Ātman*) and the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*). Like Sankara, Radhakrishnan believes that ordinary life is terribly limited and filled with suffering. These imperfections are primarily due to our ignorance (*avidya*) of the true, essential self (*Ātman*) and its non-difference from *Brahman*. The principal means of realizing *mokṣa* is self-effort in the form of *karma-yoga* (the

path of moral action), *bhakti-yoga* (the path of love and devotion), and especially *jñāna-yoga* (the path of spiritual knowledge).

From the religious perspective, Radhakrishnan's position is closer to the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* of Ramanuja. According to this view, liberation involves more of a union with God (or Śaṅkara's *Saguṇa Brahman*) than a non-dual experience of the impersonal Absolute (or Śaṅkara's *Nirguṇa Brahman*). In being free, the individual self (*jīva*) relinquishes all egoistic desires and attunes itself to the will of God. To achieve this salvific state requires self-effort, in the form of *bhakti-yoga* (the path of love and devotion) as well as divine intervention in the form of God's merciful grace. For Radhakrishnan, Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*), through its active power (*Īśvara* or God), is at work at every level of existence, raising the lower empirical realm into the divine milieu.

Radhakrishnan's double vision of spiritual liberation is grounded in his view that *mokṣa* has both a negative and positive sense and is subject to two phases — individual liberation (*jīvanmukti*) and universal liberation (*sarvamukti*). Each aspect has to be examined carefully in order adequately to comprehend Radhakrishnan's soteriological system.

The negative sense of *mokṣa* links Radhakrishnan more to (his interpretation of) Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta*, while the positive sense, though leaning more towards Śaṅkara, represents more of a synthesis of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. The negative sense of *mokṣa* can be ascertained from the literal meaning of the word itself. The term "*mokṣa*," a Sankrit masculine substantive, and its feminine synonym "*mukti*," are derived from the root "*muc*" meaning "release."¹¹ In Hindu thought it basically signifies release from the limitation of

finitude (*māyā*), ignorance (*avidyā*), and suffering (*duḥkha*). The positive sense of *mokṣa* pertains to a freedom *towards* something rather than a freedom *from* something. One is to be delivered *from* an imperfect condition (negative sense) *to* a more perfect state of being (positive sense). (Or alternatively, by *realizing* this more perfect state one becomes *released* from imperfections). For Radhakrishnan, and other *Advaitin* thinkers like Śaṅkara, this perfect existence involves realizing our true, eternal self (*Ātman*) as consisting of pure being (*sat-Brahman*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*). Self-realization represents the positive content of spiritual liberation. But Radhakrishnan also at times describes *mokṣa* along theistic lines, when he talks about liberation as a union or harmony of the individual self (*jīva*) with God's wisdom, love and goodness. This is how it is construed from the religious perspective, which Radhakrishnan tries to incorporate into his overall philosophy. Both the negative sense of *mokṣa* as a freedom from something and the positive sense of *mokṣa* as a freedom towards something are succinctly summed-up in the *Upaniṣadic* prayer:

Lead me from unreality to reality,
Lead me from darkness to light,
Lead me from death to immortality.¹²

For Radhakrishnan, *mokṣa* can be divided into two stages; the first is called *jīvanmukti* or individual liberation, while the second is termed *sarvamukti* or universal liberation. The *jīvanmukti* ideal is actually the penultimate goal leading to the final end of realizing *sarvamukti*. Since the *Advaita* is the only major *Vedānta* school affirming the possibility of *jīvanmukti*, Radhakrishnan can be seen to align himself with it. But his description of the emancipated individual

incorporates some religious concepts and terminology, as does his view of *sarvamukti* which he designates as the *Brahmāloka* or the Kingdom of God. Since the primary objective of the thesis is to piece together and present as clearly as possible Radhakrishnan's soteriological theory, these differences will be duly noted where deemed necessary.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that Radhakrishnan's integral view of reality and *mokṣa*, as briefly outlined above, accounts for many of the inconsistencies and ambiguities that can be found in his writings. It is important to remember that for Radhakrishnan, both philosophy, in the form of *Advaita Vedānta*, and religion, in the form of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, essentially describe the same reality, but from different perspectives. This awareness, I think, helps to clarify some of Radhakrishnan's apparent vacillations between absolutism and theism.

In believing *mokṣa* to be an intrinsic value, Radhakrishnan follows the traditional Indian scheme of *puruṣhārthas* ("What is sought by individuals") which adumbrates the four main values or goals of human life. The first group of three (*trivarga*) are known as values of the village or the goals of time. They are *kāma* (enjoyment or psycho-hedonistic good), *artha* (material wealth or economic good), and *dharma* (moral duty or socio-ethical good). All three are interpreted as extrinsic goods, being secondary goals or means to the realization of the primary goal, *mokṣa* (spiritual liberation or the religious good). *Mokṣa* is sometimes referred to as *parapurushartha*, the highest wealth. It signifies the values of the forest retreat rather than of the village and represents the goal of transcending time. It is, in Paul Deussen's words, "the most precious jewel of Indian faith."¹³

For Radhakrishnan, the intrinsic value of *mokṣa* is indeed realizable. Perfection as spiritual liberation (*Ātman*-realization) is therefore possible.¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, such a spiritually perfected individual in *Advaita* philosophy is called a *jīvanmukta* ("liberated while living") or sometimes an *ātmansiddha* ("perfected person"). This means that the bulk of human existence, by means of successive rebirths, is directed to the full realization of one's essentially divine nature. But it is important to note that individual liberation, the *jīvanmukti* ideal, is not the ultimate goal. The final end, according to Radhakrishnan, is what he, and other Hindu thinkers, term "*sarvamukti*," or universal liberation. In other words, the primary goal is the spiritual emancipation of all human beings. Such a state will usher in the *Brahmaloka* or the Kingdom of Spirit. The whole cosmic process, then, has a ultimate end and meaning — the universal liberation of all.

The third and final motive for writing on Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation was the conviction that Eastern philosophy, or more specifically Indian philosophy, has dealt with issues similar to those that have been copiously discussed in Western thought. The issue chosen for study in this thesis arises from the field known as normative ethical theory. As is well known, normative ethics is divided into two areas of concern: theories of conduct and theories of goodness. Theories of conduct address the question "What should one do?" and attempt to determine what makes an action morally right or wrong. This is usually accomplished by appealing to some principle that is either deontological in nature (e.g., Kant's respect for persons) or teleological in nature (e.g., Bentham's social utility). Theories of goodness, on the other hand, address the question "What should one pursue?" and try to determine what the highest good (*summum bonum*) is in human life. The highest good is that which is judged to be the most valuable, most desirable, or most worthwhile thing one

can imagine. Consequently, it is said to possess intrinsic rather than extrinsic value. This means that it is sought for its sake alone and not because it is instrumental in securing something more important.

Now some contemporary moral theorists have asserted that throughout the long history of moral philosophy two prime candidates have been proposed for being the sole intrinsic value in life. The contenders are called perfectionism and welfarism.¹⁵ Perfectionism, which is the older theory of the two, states that the highest good (*summum bonum*) is to be found in the full realization or actualization of that which constitutes the true essence of human beings. By essence here is meant the nature of something or that which makes something what it is, distinct from other things. The complete fulfillment (perfection) of our essence is something intrinsically valuable and for this reason should be the ultimate goal of our existence. A variety of answers have been given to the question of "What precisely is the essence of a human being?" Aristotle, for instance, believed it to be rationality, Nietzsche opting for wilful creativity. In any case, a common element to these different theories has been the idea of self-realization. Many philosophers in the West (from Aristotle to Bradley) have posited the full realization of one's self to be the highest goal in life. The self to be realized, however, is not thought to be the ordinary, empirical ego, but our ideal self. All our actions, then, should be directed towards actualizing this ideal, essential self.¹⁶

The other contender for being the only intrinsic value is welfarism. According to this view, the highest good is a person's welfare. Unlike perfectionism, which focuses more on a universal human essence as the standard of the good, welfarism appeals to the individual's own desires and

preferences in determining the good. The good, in short, is what is good for the subject. There are numerous ideas of what constitutes a person's welfare, the most popular being happiness. But there have been many definitions or theories of happiness. Probably the most long-standing are "mental state theories" (e.g., hedonism), which equate happiness with the presence of certain mental states such as pleasure and the corresponding absence of pain.¹⁷ The welfarist would argue that perfectionist values are actually extrinsic because they are worthwhile only in so far as they contribute to promoting happiness. Hence, happiness should be the ultimate goal of human activity.

This debate between perfectionism and welfarism has been predominate in the history of Western moral philosophy and continues to this day.¹⁸ It is my intention in this thesis to show how an Indian philosophical view — Radhakrishnan's neo-Vedāntic idealism — presents a particular theory of perfectionist value in the form of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). Radhakrishnan's view is a variation on a self-realizationist ethics. It is a version that is spiritual in character. For it insists the ultimate aim in life should be to directly and fully realize our divine self (*Ātman*), which is identical to the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) conceived of as pure being (*sat-Brahman*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*). In realizing this divine self, we are realizing our essence. And this perfect state of self(*Ātman*)-realization, of apprehending the divine essence within, Radhakrishnan, following the Hindu tradition, calls *mokṣa* (spiritual liberation). "*Mokṣa* or spiritual freedom is the aim of all human life."¹⁹ It is the highest good, the sole intrinsic value. Thus Radhakrishnan's conception of *mokṣa* as self(*Ātman*)-realization proves to be an example of a perfectionist value, thereby linking his normative ethical theory more to perfectionism than to welfarism.

In order to thoroughly explicate Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation and critically evaluate his key notion of rebirth, I have divided the thesis into three sections consisting of eight chapters in all. The first section, entitled "Spiritual Liberation As Release," focuses on Radhakrishnan's negative meaning of *mokṣa* as a freedom from what I term metaphysical, epistemological, and affective limitations.

The section contains three chapters. The first chapter describes *mokṣa* as a release from finitude, which can be understood as a metaphysical limitation of *Brahman's* pure being (*sat*). This is captured in the crucial Indian concept of *maya*, a term referring to the finite world of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṁsāra*), and causality (*karma*). The beginning of the chapter attempts to clarify Radhakrishnan's conception of *maya* by both examining his criticisms of the standard "illusional" interpretation and describing his integral view of the Supreme Reality. The chapter then proceeds to explain in detail each of the components of finitude (*māyā*) — matter, time, causality — and to demonstrate how Radhakrishnan believes them to be confining and so something to be ultimately freed from.

The second chapter describes *mokṣa* as a release from ignorance (*avidyā*). This involves an epistemological limitation since it represents a limitation of *Brahman's* pure consciousness. The chapter first defines the concept of ignorance in terms of lack or absence of knowledge about the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman/Ātman*). In this context, ignorance functions to conceal the truth about the essential self (*Ātman*) and its non-difference from *Brahman*. The second chapter then goes on to examine the second sense of

ignorance as mistaken or erroneous knowledge. Here ignorance functions to actually distort the truth about the oneness of *Brahman/Ātman* by projecting onto it an appearance of a finite, changing world. The primary application of this superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is to the true self (*Ātman*) which is mistaken to be the empirical self (*jīva*). A detailed exposition of the empirical self is then carried out in reference to its different layers (*kośas*) or component parts.

The third chapter depicts *mokṣa* as release from suffering (*duḥkha*). This is defined as an affective limitation because it represents the limitation of *Brahman's* pure bliss. The chapter shows how Radhakrishnan is influenced by Hindu, Buddhist and Western existentialist views on the subject, where suffering is characterized as a psycho-physical experience of radical unsatisfactoriness involving deep insecurity, overwhelming anxiety, and inner discord. The chapter, and the first section, end with delineating the interrelationship between metaphysical (finitude), epistemological (ignorance), and affective (suffering) limitation and with linking Radhakrishnan's notion of bondage to the modern Western idea of fundamental narcissism.

The second section of the thesis is entitled "Spiritual liberation As Realization." It attempts to analyse Radhakrishnan's second meaning of *mokṣa* which involves a direct realization of one's true self (*Ātman*) and its non-difference from *Brahman*. In other words, this section concentrates on the positive sense of *mokṣa* as the full realization of *Brahman/Ātman's* pure being (*sat-Brahman*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*). The section also shows how Radhakrishnan employs religious concepts to describe the positive meaning of *mokṣa* as a union with God, who is the active side of

Brahman. So whereas the first section deals with freedom *from* certain imperfections, the second section outlines freedom *towards* certain perfections.

There are also three chapters in this section. The fourth chapter of the thesis focuses on the epistemological aspect of self-realization, namely, the realization of pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*). This is characterized as the fourth and highest state of consciousness (*turiya*), since it is free from ignorant-dualistic awareness, and is self-luminous, eternal, spaceless, uncaused, and self-validating. The chapter next specifies what Radhakrishnan believes are the particular means for realizing pure consciousness, as developed in the Hindu doctrine of the three *yogas* (paths) — *karma-yoga* (the path of moral action), *bhakti-yoga* (the path of love and devotion), and *jñāna-yoga* (the path of spiritual knowledge). It also reveals Radhakrishnan's reliance on religious concepts by focusing on his view of divine grace. Since Radhakrishnan, however, in typical *Advaitin* fashion, stipulates the first two *yogas* to be preparatory to *jñāna-yoga*, it is the latter that is analysed in more detail.

The fifth chapter examines the realization of pure bliss (*ānanda*), which represents the affective aspect of self-realization. This is explained in both the negative sense, as an absence of psychological suffering, and in the more positive sense, as inner peace and outward love. The liberated individual (*jīvanmukta*) possesses a tranquil mind that is best characterized in terms of equanimity and non-attachment. He or she also has an unconditional regard for all living things, a trait aptly captured in the Indian concept of *ahimsā* (non-violence), the Christian idea of *agapē* (selfless love), and the Buddhist notion of *mettā-karuṇa* (kindly compassion). All three traits express the principles of

nonmaleficence and beneficence, which are the defining actions of someone who has fully realized pure bliss.

The fourth and fifth chapters together are best understood as providing an exposition of the *jīvanmukti* ideal, that is, of the living, liberated individual. Such a being is said to radiate pure consciousness and pure bliss, particularly in the forms of a non-dualistic awareness and a peaceful, all-loving character.

The sixth chapter deals with the even higher emancipatory ideal of *sarvamukti*, the liberation of all human beings. This involves the realization of pure being (*sat-Brahman*) and so indicates the metaphysical aspect of self-realization. The *sarvamukti* ideal is explained by reference to Radhakrishnan's idea of the *Brahmaloka* (the Kingdom of Spirit or God), which is not to be conceived of as a heavenly abode, an earthly paradise, a personal immortality, or a liberation after death (*videhamukti*). *Brahmaloka* is more positively depicted as the end point of the whole cosmic process, the furthest manifestation of the World-Spirit, eternal life, a radical transformation of consciousness, and a spiritual community.

To recapitulate, the first six chapters describe in minute detail Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) as consisting of a release from finitude (*māyā*), from ignorance (*avidyā*), and from suffering (*duḥkha*), towards a realization of pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), pure bliss (*ānanda*), and pure being (*sat-Brahman*). Spiritual release and realization, in short, sum up the concept of *mokṣa* found in Radhakrishnan's writings.

The method used in describing Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation involves carefully interpreting what he says about it in his numerous books and articles. In this regard, the thesis seeks to utilize both those texts which clearly adumbrate his own position (e.g., *An Idealist View of Life*, "Fragments of a Confession") as well as his own "Introduction" to other translated texts (e.g., *The Principal Upaniṣads*, *The Bhagavadgītā*, *The Brahma-Sūtra*), where his remarks reflect to some degree the points expressed in the works authored solely by himself. And since Radhakrishnan often compares his ideas to those found in other religious and philosophical traditions (e.g. Buddhism, existentialism), the thesis has sought, where deemed necessary, to expose such comparisons in order to clarify Radhakrishnan's own position. Certain similarities between Radhakrishnan's philosophy and more recent views have also been discussed for the same purpose.

A word should be said about the order of presentation in Section II as compared to Section I. In Section I the thesis deals first with finitude (*māyā*), and then ignorance (*avidyā*) and suffering (*duḥkha*) because these are seen as apparent limitations of *saccidānanda* — pure being, pure consciousness, pure bliss — in that order. Moreover, I felt it necessary to follow the order of the liberation process itself, which for Radhakrishnan represents one grand cycle of involution and evolution. First is the involution of pure being as described in Radhakrishnan's notion of *māyā*, which sets the stage for understanding how bondage operates at the individual level in the form of ignorance (the logical starting point of bondage) and suffering (the experiential starting point). From here one starts the evolutionary ascent towards *mokṣa*. As a result, Section II begins with the process of individual liberation (*jīvanmukti*), as expressed in the traits of pure consciousness and pure bliss, and then describes the process of

universal liberation (*sarvamukti*), which is the (re)affirmation of pure being. The presentation of Radhakrishnan's concept of spiritual liberation, therefore, follows the movement from the general to the particular (involution) and then from the particular to the general (evolution).

The third and final section of the thesis, entitled "Critical Evaluation," takes a more sceptical rather than a descriptive approach. The section aims to scrutinize one of the key concepts in Radhakrishnan's view of spiritual liberation, namely, *karmic* rebirth or reincarnation. Since realizing *mokṣa* is a difficult process, some say as arduous as trying to climb over the edge of a razor, many lifetimes are needed to accomplish the task. Rebirth is thus a necessary ingredient in Radhakrishnan's emancipatory scheme.

Two chapters are contained in the third section. The first, or seventh chapter of the thesis, is concerned with demonstrating how the notion of *karmic* rebirth or reincarnation confronts some serious empirical problems. Ultimately, there seems to be no solid empirical evidence for its existence. The chapter castigates Radhakrishnan's attempts to support the hypothesis of rebirth by appealing to certain observed patterns in nature (i.e., continual renewal) and to unique facts about human existence such as past-life recall, special skills and talents, romantic love, and inequalities. Despite these problems, the chapter concludes by showing how Radhakrishnan's ideal of spiritual liberation, and the metaphysical assumptions (i.e., *karmic* rebirth) it rests upon, can be "demythologized" or reinterpreted in an existential and moral way. The value of *mokṣa*, though perhaps difficult to fully realize, can still serve an important purpose by facilitating an individual's psychological and moral development.

Chapter eight takes a more positive view of Radhakrishnan's concept of rebirth and argues for its logical coherence. Although the phenomenon of rebirth may be scientifically dubious, the idea of rebirth itself is at least logically possible. After describing how some philosophers (i.e., Flew and Penelhum) have believed the notions of disembodied existence and resurrection of the body to be unintelligible, because of their inability to account for a sense of personal identity (or continuity) after the death of the physical body, the chapter argues that Radhakrishnan's idea of rebirth, as involving the so-called subtle body, establishes a form of personal, psychological continuity across different incarnations. In my view, this renders it logically meaningful.

Finally, the conclusion both sums up what was accomplished in the thesis as well as addresses two major criticisms of perfection (e.g. spiritual liberation), as opposed to welfare (e.g. happiness), being the only intrinsic value and highest good in human life.

SECTION I

SPIRITUAL LIBERATION AS RELEASE

CHAPTER I

RELEASE FROM FINITUDE (*MAYA*)

(I) THE CONCEPT OF *MOKSA*

Before proceeding to analyse Radhakrishnan's notion of liberation as release, it will be necessary to place his theory in a historical context. The concept of *mokṣa* is a salient feature of Indian philosophy. All of India's major philosophical traditions, except the materialist *Cārvāka*, affirmed *mokṣa* to be the supreme end and ultimate value of human life. Despite this, the idea of *mokṣa* was slow to develop. The concept itself is not found in the ancient *Vedic* texts including the *Samhitās* (*Collections*) and *Brahmanas* (commentaries on sacrificial rituals).¹ Interestingly, many of the early *Vedic* texts were more concerned with the enjoyment (*bhukti*) of earthly existence rather than the search for release from it. In fact, it is not until the sixth century BCE that the idea of *mokṣa* becomes more evident. In the early *Upaniṣads* *mokṣa* mainly appears under the feminine synonym term "mukti," though occasionally it is expressed under the compound "*vimokṣa*" which has the same meaning.² And the word "*mokṣa*" itself only appears three times in the later *Upaniṣads* (i.e., *Śvetāśvatara* 6.16 and *Maitrī* 6.20,30.) where it signifies release from the weary cycle of rebirths (*saṁsāra*). The word "*mokṣa*" begins to be used more often in the *Vedantic* texts of the medieval and modern periods. These were principally commentaries on the *Brahmā* (or *Vedānta*) *Sūtra* of Badarayana, a text composed somewhere between 250 BCE and 450 CE that summarizes the *Upaniṣadic* teachings in 555 concise aphorisms. The most influential commentaries were those of Śaṅkara (8th century), Bhāskara (9th and 10th centuries), Rāmānuja (11th and 12th centuries), Nimbārka (13th century),

Madhva (14th century), Vallabha (15th century), and Bālaḍeva (18th century). Each of these thinkers interpreted the *Brahma Sūtra* in a particular way, with their different interpretations giving rise to the various schools of the *Vedānta*. The 19th century in India saw, in response to British colonialism and Christianity, the emergence of a Hindu renaissance which, among other things, eventually led to the development of a neo-*Vedāntic* philosophy. The thinkers associated with this trend of thought included Vivekanada (1863-1902), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948), and Radhakrishnan. All these thinkers attempted to show the positive features and life-affirming aspects of Hindu thought and practice. And central to each was the concept of *mokṣa* as the apex of all values.

Despite the consensus in Indian philosophy about the supreme importance of *mokṣa*, disagreements abound concerning its nature. Two views regarding the nature of *mokṣa* are evident in the history of Indian philosophy. The first interprets *mokṣa* in a strictly negative sense and is associated with the schools of early Buddhism, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, the later *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, and *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*. According to these traditions, *mokṣa* is simply freedom from all suffering and rebirth. It is, in short, the complete cessation of all the miseries and imperfections of mundane existence. In early Buddhism this liberated state is known as "*nirvāṇa*" (Pali: "*nibbāna*" — "to blow out"), meaning the total extinction of the flames of ignorance, greed, and hatred. In *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* it is termed "*apavarga*" ("giving up"), or the absence of pain for all time. (The later *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* mainly borrowed its idea of liberation from the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*.) And finally in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* the liberated condition is referred to as "*kaivalya*," ("aloneness"), the isolated state of the self free from the fetters of matter (*prakṛti*) and from the tedious cycle of rebirths.

The second Indian philosophical view of the nature of *mokṣa* is found in the traditions of Jainism and the *Vedānta*. For these schools *mokṣa* is conceived in both a negative sense, as the release from suffering and rebirth, and in a more positive sense, as the blissful realization of the Ultimate Reality. Both also refer to this realized condition as "*mokṣa*." The Jains believe that in the state of liberation the soul realizes infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite power, and infinite bliss. The major schools of the *Vedānta*, though differing among themselves on various points, agree that *mokṣa* consists of the delightful realization of some ultimate being and consciousness.³

The major point of disagreement between the different *Vedāntic* schools centres on the relation between the self (*Ātman* or *jīva*) and the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman* or God). The two most influential views on this issue are those of Śaṅkara's *Advaita* (unqualified non-dualism) and Rāmānuja's *Viśistādvaita* (qualified non-dualism). For Śaṅkara, *mokṣa* is the immediate realization of the identity of the self (*Ātman*) and the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*). In other words, *Ātman* is no different from *Brahman*. In being the same reality, no distinction exists between them. This explains why Śaṅkara's system is known as a unqualified non-dualism. Just as there exists an inside and an outside to a house, so there exists, metaphorically speaking, an inside (*Ātman*) and an outside (*Brahman*) to the one reality (*Ātman/Brahman*). Thus *mokṣa* is not to be conceived as a state of the empirical self (*jīva*) as such, but is the true self (*Ātman*). It represents the dispelling of the false belief (ignorance) that *Ātman* and *Brahman* are different and the corresponding realization that they are completely identical.

The other major alternative is Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* or qualified non-dualism. Rāmānuja rejects Śaṅkara's view that the relation between the self and the Ultimate Reality (which Rāmānuja calls "God") is one of non-difference. It is more accurate to say it is a relation involving both identity and difference. The relation between the self (*jīva*) and God is similar to the relation between a part and a whole. The self is different in so far as it is only a part of God and not the whole; but it is identical to the extent that it does indeed constitute a part of one self-same whole (God). This state of indentity-in-difference is what makes Rāmānuja's system a "qualified non-dualism." On this scheme, the relation between the self and God is best understood as a union of part and whole rather than one of absolute non-difference.

Radhakrishnan follows the *Vedānta* tradition in embracing both the negative sense of *mokṣa* as a freedom from suffering and rebirth, and the more positive sense of *mokṣa* as a freedom towards realizing the Ultimate Reality. Where precisely he stands in relation to the various schools of the *Vedānta* is a difficult question that has been a subject of much debate. On the one hand, Radhakrishnan can be interpreted as being an *Advaitin*, provided one understands the *Advaitin* (i.e., Śaṅkara's) philosophy in the same way Radhakrishnan does. In many of his writings, Radhakrishnan castigates the standard interpretation of Śaṅkara's metaphysics where the Absolute (*Nirguṇa Brahman*) is thought to be the only reality, with God and the world being completely illusory and thus unreal. Instead, Radhakrishnan argues that Śaṅkara's system can accommodate both an impersonal Absolutism, where the Ultimate Reality is non-dual and transcendent, and a personal theism. The possibility for this arises because of Śaṅkara's, and by extension Radhakrishnan's, commitment to a "levels" theory of being and knowledge

where the One, Ultimate Reality can be viewed as expressing itself through the four poises of the Absolute, God, the World Spirit, and the world.⁴

On the other hand, Radhakrishnan seems to be attempting more of a genuine synthesis of whatever is of value in Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's systems rather than reinterpreting Śaṅkara's position in such a way as to make room for Rāmānuja's insights. This is evident in some of Radhakrishnan's criticisms of Śaṅkara's metaphysics⁵ as well as in his remark that even though Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja were "the two great thinkers of the Vedānta" "the best qualities of each were the defects of the other."⁶ He further claims "While the general spirit of Śaṅkara's philosophy is commended in my writings, on many essential points I have developed on independent lines."⁷ All this reveals Radhakrishnan's hesitation in fully embracing either position in its entirety and his creation instead, of a synthesis free from the weaknesses of both. But whether seen as reinterpreting Śaṅkara's philosophy or as bringing together the best ideas of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, Radhakrishnan's ideal of *mokṣa* as release is more influenced by Śaṅkara, while his positive conception of *mokṣa* as realization combines insights from both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.

It is certainly the case that Radhakrishnan accepts the negative sense of *mokṣa* as a release from something. But if *mokṣa* means release, the question arises "release from what?" The answer, as suggested in the *Upaniṣads* and later reiterated by Radhakrishnan, is that *mokṣa* is a release from certain types of limitations. To be bound, in short, is to be limited or constrained in some way. "The state of liberation," Radhakrishnan exclaims, "is one of freedom from the limitative conditions of individual human existence."⁸ This limitation, however, must be understood in three senses, which I term metaphysical, epistemological,

and affective. By metaphysical limitation is meant the finite world of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṁsāra*), and causality (*karma*); epistemological limitation refers to the ignorant state of dualistic or egoistic consciousness (*avidyā*); and affective limitation concerns the realm of human pain and suffering (*duḥkha*). Each of these actually represents a limitation of *Brahman's* intrinsic nature, which the *Upaniṣads* describe as *saccidānanda* — pure being (*sat*), pure consciousness, (*cit*), pure bliss (*ānanda*).⁹ Pure being is the infinite and eternal existence of *Brahman* who is one without a second; pure consciousness is an awareness which is fully illumined and beyond any subject-object distinction; and pure bliss is the indescribable joy transcending all experiences of pleasure, pain, and indifference. It is easy to see how the finite world represents a limitation of pure being, dualistic awareness a limitation of pure consciousness, and suffering a limitation of pure bliss. In this first section of the thesis I shall carefully examine each of these forms of limitation in order to come to a fuller understanding of Radhakrishnan's idea of spiritual liberation as release.

(II) THE CONCEPT OF *MĀYĀ*

Let us begin with metaphysical limitation. As mentioned above, metaphysical limitation refers to the finite world of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṁsāra*), and causality (*karma*). All three constitute what *Vedānta* philosophy calls *māyā*. It is *māyā* that is seen by Radhakrishnan and the whole *Upaniṣadic* tradition to be the source and content of our bondage in a metaphysical sense.¹⁰

Etymologically, the term "*māyā*" is derived from the root "*ma*" meaning "to measure or mete out." It suggests both the process of making as well as the result of such a process. It is, in brief, the power to produce or build forms and

also the forms themselves. The usual English translation of *māyā* is "illusion" and it is often thought that the *Upaniṣads* hold that the world is somehow unreal. Radhakrishnan fervently disagrees with such an interpretation. In his early article "The Vedānta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," Radhakrishnan addresses the question of whether the doctrine of *māyā* in the sense of illusion is an essential feature of *Vedāntic* thought or simply an accidental accretion.¹¹ On the one side stand "Mr. Gough, Dr. Deussen of Kiel, and Dr. Prabhu Dutt Shastri" who believe the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* express an interpretation of *māyā* where the world is conceived to be unreal like an illusion, while on the other side stand the scholars "Colebrooke and Dr. Thibaut" who "hold that it is a graft of a later growth."¹² After carefully examining each position, Radhakrishnan sides with the latter view over the former.

... the *Vedas*, the earlier *Upaniṣads*, and the *Vedānta Sūtras*, does not suggest, even remotely, the theory of *Māyā*... It was Śaṅkara, under the influence of the Buddhistic teaching, following the traditions of Guadapada, who imported the concept of *māyā* into the *Vedānta* system.¹³

What Radhakrishnan is saying is that the idea of the world as an illusion is not intrinsic to the *Vedāntic* system but was only incorporated into it by Śaṅkara (sometimes spelled Śaṅkara), the eighth century Hindu philosopher, who borrowed it from Buddhism.¹⁴ This is not surprising since at the time *Vedānta* was struggling to replace Buddhism as the dominant philosophy in India.

Radhakrishnan further castigates commentators like Shastri who erroneously deduce from the premise that "the sole is *Brahman*" the conclusion that "the world is an illusion." This is faulty, because *Brahman* is an inclusive rather than exclusive reality which encompasses the reality of the world.

The finite is real in so far as it is an organic unity organic with the whole life of the Absolute. We all exist in and not apart from God. The Absolute is a single all-inclusive system. The finite, we say, is an expression of the spiritual principle, although the Vedānta does not regard it as an exhaustive experience of the spirit. The finite is an aspect (although a partial aspect) of reality.¹⁵

It is thus a distortion to attribute to early *Vedānta* philosophy the view that the world is an illusion, without worth and meaning.

A great deal of Radhakrishnan's early writings centre on defending the *Vedānta* view of the world against such critics as Albert Schweitzer who charge that it repudiates the world's reality and as such fails to provide a positive basis for an ethical system.¹⁶ For instance, in his book *Indian Thought and Its Development*, Schweitzer contends that for "any believer in the Māyā doctrine, ethics can have only a quite relative importance."¹⁷ His argument, as summarized by Radhakrishnan, is that the "Hindu doctrine of māyā, which declares that life is an illusion, contains the flaw of world and life negation, and in consequence Hindu thought is non-ethical."¹⁸ In other words, if the world is illusory and completely unreal, then there would be no point in acting morally since such actions themselves would be unreal. Given this, there could be no

firm foundation for moral relations between people. The only thing one can do in such a situation is to try to escape from this illusory world and avoid its myriad problems.¹⁹

Radhakrishnan's response to Schweitzer's and to similar arguments involves reinterpreting Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* in order "to save the world and give to it a real meaning."²⁰ Here Radhakrishnan alters his view about Śaṅkara's contribution to the illusional interpretation of *māyā* and begins to defend what he thinks is Śaṅkara's true position. Not surprisingly, Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Śaṅkara's idea turns out to be almost identical to his own view of *māyā*. In fact, as S. J. Samatha has pointed out, Radhakrishnan's "interpretation is so bound up with the defence and exposition of Śaṅkara, that it is difficult to see where Śaṅkara's thought ends and Radhakrishnan's begins."²¹ In any case, Radhakrishnan asserts that Śaṅkara never believed the world to be unreal.

Samkara, who is rightly credited with the systematic formulation of the doctrine of *māyā*, tells us that the highest reality is unchangable, and therefore that changing existence such as human history has not ultimate reality (*paramārthika sutta*). He warns us, however, against the temptation to regard what is not completely real as utterly illusory. The world has empirical being (*vyāvahārika sutta*) which is quite different from illusory existence (*prātibhāsika sutta*). Human experience is neither ultimately real nor completely illusory. Simply because the world of experience is not a perfect form of reality, it does not follow that it is a delusion, without any significance.²²

What this all implies is a three-fold hierarchy of being in both Śaṅkara's and Radhakrishnan's thought. On the top level is Absolute being (*Brahman*) which exists independently of anything else for there is ultimately nothing else but *Brahman*. It is eternal and transcends all dualities.

The second level of being is what Śaṅkara calls "appearance" (*vivarta*) and Radhakrishnan "the world." This is the realm of *maya*. *Māyā*, unlike *Brahman*, is characterized by change and is wholly dependent. In this sense *māyā* is a "derived being" or a "relative reality." The world is dependent on *Brahman* but *Brahman* is not dependent on the world. *Māyā* thus indicates the one-sided dependence of the effect (the world) on the cause (*Brahman*).

The world is derived being.
It is an expression of the
Absolute and not the Absolute
itself. To mark the distinction
between Absolute Being and
dependent being, we call the
latter *māyā*.²³

The one-sided dependence of the world on *Brahman*, Radhakrishnan observes, is illustrated by Śaṅkara's examples of mistaking a rope for a snake and a shell for a piece of silver. In each case, if the former thing did not exist, neither would the latter. The one is fully dependent upon the other.

The one-sided dependence of the world on the Absolute is illustrated by the similes of the appearance of snake in rope and of silver in the shell. The purpose of these analogies is not to suggest that the world is a dream or an illusion, but that

the relationship is such that the world exists without any change in the being of the Absolute.²⁴

The difference between Śāṅkara and Radhakrishnan here is that the former places more emphasis on the first level of Absolute Being, while the latter underscores the second level of empirical existence. This reveals Radhakrishnan's indebtedness to Rabindranath Tagore who rejected the illusory interpretation of *māyā* and embraced the qualified reality of the world. Radhakrishnan states: "In regard to my views on Hindu ethics and the doctrine of *māyā*, I found great support in the writings of Radindranath Tagore."²⁵ So neither Śāṅkara nor Radhakrishnan believe the world to be an illusion as such. It has relative rather than absolute reality.²⁶

The third and lowest level is described by both Śāṅkara and Radhakrishnan as absolute non-being or unreality. This is defined as that which cannot appear as a content of experience because of its logical contradictoriness. "A son from a barren women" or a "square circle" are examples of things that in principle can have no objective referent, but only conceptual status. Absolute non-being can neither be denied nor affirmed because it simply does not exist. Given this, *māyā* or the empirical world can be seen as being intermediate between the highest level of Absolute Being and the lowest level of absolute non-being. What it constitutes, therefore, is the realm of becoming, a realm which is not illusory.

Although the Absolute is Eternal Being, the world is temporal being with limits to its existence. A time will come when it will be no more as a process. This essential temporality is indicated by the

word *māyā*. This does not make the world an illusion. To treat it as transitory is not to equate it with the nonexistent or the illusory.²⁷

In reinterpreting Śaṅkara's view in a non-illusory fashion and incorporating it into his own thought, Radhakrishnan affirms the relative and dependent reality of the world. He also demonstrates how *māyā* is really a limitation of Absolute Being or in his words "a delimitation distinct from the unmeasured and the immeasurable."²⁸ But how precisely does this world of limitation come about?

Radhakrishnan's answer, in short, is involution. *Brahman*, through its inherent power or *māyā*, manifests itself as the finite world of matter, time, and causality. To illustrate how this self-limiting manifestation occurs, Radhakrishnan posits the ultimate reality as having four poises — Absolute Being (*Brahman*), God (*Īśvara*), World Spirit (*Hiraṇyagarbha*), and the world (*Virāḥ*).²⁹ By *Brahman* Radhakrishnan means the *Nirguṇa Brahman*, the Absolute without qualities. In having no qualities, the Absolute is devoid of any physical or psychological characteristics. Ultimately speaking, it is beyond all words and dualistic thought constructs. Despite this, thinkers have believed it to be eternal, unchanging, indeterminate, impersonal, and in possession of an infinite number of possibilities. Seers have described it negatively as "*neti, neti*," or "it is not this, it is not this."³⁰ Radhakrishnan is quick to point out, however, that the *Nirguṇa Brahman* should not be construed as a blank void. He in fact criticizes Śaṅkara for overemphasizing the negative description thereby "reducing the ultimate being to bare existence which is absolute vacuity."³¹ The highest positive conception we can have of *Nirguṇa Brahman* is as *saccidānanda* — pure being, pure consciousness, pure bliss.

The second poise of the Supreme Reality is the *Saguṇa Brahman* or *Brahman* with qualities. The *Saguṇa* is also described as God or the Highest Lord *Īśvara*. It represents the active and creative side of *Brahman* in contrast to the *Nirguṇa* which is the Absolute-in-itself. *Īśvara* possesses a creative power — *māyā* — which enables it to translate one of the *Nirguṇa Brahman's* infinite possibilities into the finite world. As Radhakrishnan describes it:

There are two sides of the Supreme, Essential Transcendent Being which we call *Brahman*; free activity which we call *Īśvara*: the timeless, spaceless reality and the conscious active delight pouring out its powers and qualities, the timeless calm and peace and the timeful joy of acting freely, infinitely expressing itself without any lapse into unrest or bondage. When we refer to the free choice of this specific possibility, we deal with the *Īśvara* side of the Absolute. Pure Being without any expression or variation moves out of its primal poise so that worlds may spring into existence. Pure Being is not locked up in its own transcendence. *Īśvara* is the Absolute in action as Lord and Creator.³²

Māyā thus refers both to the power of *Īśvara* to manifest a world from one of the Absolute's possibilities and to the world itself.³³

To explain the process of limited self-manifestation, Radhakrishnan incorporates insights from various Indian philosophical and religious traditions. The traditions designate two principles at work in the world-creation process.

In the *Sāṅkhya* it is *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti*; in the *Vedānta* it is *Īśvara* and *Māyā*; in *Vaiṣṇavism* it is *Kṛiṣṇa* and *Rādhā*; and in *Shaivism* it is *Shiva* and *Shakti*.³⁴

Each of these principles refers to the duality of self and non-self, consciousness and matter, or male and female. Unlike the *Sāṅkhya* system, Radhakrishnan refuses to posit an absolute dualism between these principles. Matter is inherent in, and thus dependent on, the conscious *Īśvara*, while *Īśvara* is the creative power inseparable from primal matter.³⁵ It is Radhakrishnan's view that *Īśvara* uses primal matter (*prakṛiti*) to create the phenomenal world and in so doing actualizes one of *Brahman's* infinite possibilities. And since the primal matter "is not absolute non-being," God does not create out of nothing.³⁶ It is the interaction of the two principles, like the union of the male and the female, that produces the world.

There is an inconscient world of being out of which different worlds form themselves under the guidance of spirit. The dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* cannot be ultimate.³⁷

The process of self-manifestation or limitation, then, involves *Brahman*, through its creative power *Īśvara*, expressing itself in the two poles of consciousness (subject) and matter (object).

The third poise of the Supreme Reality is the World-Spirit or *Hiraṇyagarbha*. The World-Spirit is the Supreme Lord *Īśvara* (God) in relation to the world. It is important to note that *Īśvara* has both an immanent and a

transcendent aspect. It is immanent in the world in the form of the World-Spirit, but it is also transcendent as it relates to the *Nirguṇa Brahman*. Recall that the *Nirguṇa Brahman* is filled with an infinite number of possibilities which it expresses through its active side *Iśvara* or the *Saguṇa Brahman*. *Īśvara*, in its immanent aspect, the World-Spirit (*Hiraṇyagarbha*), controls this specific manifestation known as the phenomenal world. This is why the World-Spirit is referred to as "the first-born emanation of the supreme *Īśvara*" since it is necessary for the expression of the world-process.³⁸ In the *Vedas* the World-Spirit is likened to a golden germ (which is the literal meaning of *Hiraṇyagarbha*) from which sprouts the world of space and time. Later in the *Upaniṣads* it comes to mean *Brahmā*, the creator God.³⁹ The World-Spirit, in representing the immanent aspect of *Īśvara*, is best conceived of as the mind or soul of the phenomenal world. Just as each individual body is defined and governed by a mind, the world-body is defined and governed by a universal intellect (*buddhi*) called the *Hiraṇyagarbha*.⁴⁰ As Radhakrishnan explains it:

This *Hiraṇyagarbha* is looked upon as related to the universe in same way as the individual is related to its body... The world in which we live has its own mind, and this mind is *Hiraṇyagarbha*. This concept of world soul appears in the *Upaniṣads* under various names and forms. It is called *Karyā Brahmā*, or the effect God, the *Brahmā* of *Natura Naturata*, as distinguished from the *Kāraṇa Brahmā* or the causal God of *Īśvara*, or the *natura naturans*.⁴¹

To elucidate this idea Radhakrishnan also compares the *Hiraṇyagarbha* to the concept of *logos* in Western thought. As the *logos* in Western philosophy

is the principle of reason, the *Hiraṇyagarbha* in Hinduism is "the Divine logos which permeates the world and forms it into a cosmos."⁴² He also says "the world in which we live has its own mind, and this mind is *Hiraṇyagarbha*."⁴³ The divine thoughts of *Brahmā* or the primordial mind are made concrete and become the things of the world.⁴⁴ In being bound to the temporal realm and in being organic with the world, the *Hiraṇyagarbha* will lapse back into the Absolute when the world reaches its completion and ends.

The fourth and final poise of the Supreme Reality is *Virāj* (or *virāt*), the finite, phenomenal world. Since *Virāj* means "to rule or spread out far and wide" Radhakrishnan refers to it as the "World-Spirit in its gross form" which he describes as follows:

Virāt is the all, the hypostatization of the conception of the world as a whole. It is the totality of things, the sum of all existence... The body of *Virāt* is made of material objects in their aggregates. He is the manifested God whose senses are the directions, whose body is the five elements, and whose consciousness glows with the feeling "I am all".⁴⁵

Through *Virāj*, the *Hiraṇyagarbha* becomes visible in the gross form of matter, space, time, and cause-effect relations. Although its major characteristics are motion and change, it is governed by natural laws which reflect the divine mind of *Īśvara*.⁴⁶

Radhakrishnan's view of the origin of metaphysical limitation seemingly brings together the ideas of self-manifestation, emanation, and creation. But are

these equivalent terms or are there important differences between them? Some scholars, such as Beatrice Bruteau, draw a crucial distinction between self-manifestation and emanation.⁴⁷ In self-manifestation the principle of expression (God) and its product (the world) are basically the same. Matter, for instance, does not simply contain a spark of the Divine, as Plotinus thought; it *is* the Divine. For Plotinus, the world necessarily proceeds from the One (God) in the same way that light necessarily emanates from the sun. Just as light emanates from the sun in ever-diminishing intensity, so also the gradations of being (i.e., mind, world-soul, human soul, matter), which emanate from the One, represent a decline in degrees of perfection. The world of matter is the lowest level in the hierarchy of being because it is by analogy the most extreme limit of light. But since reality is ultimately one, matter is not equated with complete darkness; existing in conjunction with the soul (world and human) matter still retains at least a spark of the divine light.

Now, the question is whether Radhakrishnan's position conforms to this view of self-manifestation, which would place him in the camp of such thinkers as Śrī Aurobindo, or whether it embraces the more Plotinian standpoint. The answer, I believe, is the former. It is true that Radhakrishnan does at times explain the creation process in terms of emanation; but his more detailed descriptions reveal a decidedly manifestationist view. For example, in his "Introduction" to *The Principal Upaniṣads* he says "God does not create the world but becomes it. Creation is expression. It is not making of something out of nothing. It is the self-projection of the Supreme."⁴⁸ And in his "Fragments of a Confession" he opines the "Spirit has entered into the world of non-spirit to realize one of the infinite possibilities that exist potentially in Spirit."⁴⁹ For *Īśvara* to project and to realize what is already within it indicates more of a process of

self-manifestation than Plotinian emanation. And indeed Radhakrishnan states that "*Īśvara* is *Brahman* with creative power. He is *Brahman* with the principle of self-manifestation."⁵⁰ This of course connects well with Radhakrishnan's integral vision of the Supreme Reality where the world is an aspect of *Brahman*. In being a concrete actualization of one of *Brahman's* infinite possibilities, the world is definitely a part of *Brahman*; for there is nothing else but *Brahman*.

This helps to clarify Radhakrishnan's apparent inability to distinguish between creationism and emanationism. In his article, "Creationism and Emanationism: A Problem in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy," Leroy S. Rouner argues that Radhakrishnan "uses the term 'creation' and 'emanation' interchangeably" and in "so doing he confuses the issue of time and temporality, because the conception of time and sense of temporality, which results from a metaphysics of creation, is radically different from that which results from a metaphysics of emanation."⁵¹ This may be so, but the problem with Rouner's analysis is that he restricts the idea of creation to the Biblical idea of creation *ex nihilo* and then accuses Radhakrishnan of confusing this with the idea of emanation. By creation, however, Radhakrishnan means self-expression or manifestation. "Creation is expression. It is not a making of something out of nothing."⁵² And since Radhakrishnan's description of emanation sounds more like self-manifestation, it is not surprising that he would freely use the term "emanation" instead of "creation."

It is important to emphasize that Radhakrishnan believes the four poises of the Supreme Reality to be only logically and not temporally distinct. They are simply different aspects of the integrally One and are all united within it.⁵³ This idea of four simultaneous poises of reality appears initially at odds with

Radhakrishnan's description of the difference between *Brahman* (the Absolute), *Īśvara* (God), and the world, in other writings. For instance, in *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan utilizes an epistemological rather than ontological criterion to distinguish God and the world from the Absolute. He says we "call the Supreme the Absolute, when we *view* it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos."⁵⁴ This epistemological perspective is evident in at least seven other writings of Radhakrishnan,⁵⁵ while the ontological or four poises theory is found in six different texts.⁵⁶ It is not a matter of one being the earlier position since both views are scattered throughout his early and late writings. (1916 to 1967 for the epistemological view, and 1927 to 1960 for the ontological position). It is necessary to clarify this because it determines the extent to which Radhakrishnan's position conforms to Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta* (pure non-dualism) or Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* (qualified non-dualism). If Radhakrishnan believes the difference between the Absolute, God, and the world to be only an epistemological one from the human point of view then he follows Śaṅkara's philosophy. In that case the world would simply be an appearance (*vivarta*), neither real nor unreal (or both real and unreal). If, on the other hand, he believes the difference between God and the world to be ontologically grounded, then he aligns himself with Rāmānuja. The world would then be seen to be as ontologically real as God because it is a real part of God.

Now some scholars claim that Radhakrishnan falls in Śaṅkara's camp,⁵⁷ while others maintain he is true to Rāmānuja.⁵⁸ Still others believe he attempts to synthesize both schools of thought by assimilating whatever is of value in each.⁵⁹ These commentators back up their claim by citing Radhakrishnan's own remarks on the subject. In one place he clearly states that he is not a follower of any teaching, East and West, in its entirety;⁶⁰ and while acknowledging Śaṅkara

and Rāmānuja to be the "two great thinkers of the Vedānta" he nevertheless insists "the best qualities of each were the defects of the other."⁶¹ Moreover, in some passages Radhakrishnan is even critical of Śaṅkara, as in his *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* where he states:

Here and there we come across passages where Śaṅkara holds to the right view of the relation between the world and the Absolute. But these have lost their force, as passages pointing to an opposite view are met with in almost every page of Śaṅkara's writings, and as the interpreters of Śaṅkara's system have practically ignored it.⁶²

Which interpretation of Radhakrishnan's position then — the Sankarite, the Ramanujite, or the integral — is the most accurate?

The clue to an answer, I think, can be found in Radhakrishnan's autobiographical "My Search for Truth." In it he declares:

God is the Absolute Spirit, timeless and unchanging from the cosmic or human end. He is the way in which the Absolute not only *appears* to and is *known* by us, but also the way in which it *works* in the cosmic process.⁶³

The importance of this passage cannot be overestimated. Here Radhakrishnan is saying that our epistemological view *corresponds* to the actual reality. In other words, the conception of God as the active side of the Absolute reflects the ontological situation. There is no distinction, then, between our conception of the

Absolute-God-world relation and the relation itself. Epistemology and ontology, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, are thus synthesized and made compatible.⁶⁴

But there remains a difficulty in Radhakrishnan's four poise theory of reality that should not be overlooked; namely, the question of whether all the different aspects of the Supreme are *equally real* or whether there is an *ontological hierarchy* among them? It seems indisputable that Radhakrishnan believes the first two poises, the Absolute (*Brahman*) and God (*Īśvara*), to be equally real and says so in numerous passages. For example:

God and the Absolute. Professor Hartshorne and Clement Webb raise the question of the relation of God and the Absolute. These are not to be regarded as exclusive of each other. The Supreme in its non-relational aspect is the Absolute; in its active aspect it is God... The abstract possibility and the concrete realization are both contained in the one reality, which is Absolute-God.⁶⁵

And again:

The tendency to regard *Īśvara* or God as phenomenal and *Brahman* or the Absolute as real is not correct... Professor Brightman's whole criticism about my vacillation between the non-dualism of Samkara and the personal theism of Rāmānuja is based on the postulate that the Supreme must be either one or the other, which I do not admit.⁶⁶

It is uncertain whether Radhakrishnan views the World-Spirit (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) to be equally real to the Absolute-God. It appears so when he says "The Supreme has three simultaneous poises of being, the transcendent Absolute, *Brahman*, the creative freedom, *Īśvara*, and the wisdom, power and love manifest in this world, *Hiraṇyagarbha*."⁶⁷ But elsewhere he notes that "The world and the World-Spirit are equally real."⁶⁸ Does this mean the world has equal ontological status with the Absolute-God?

One commentator, Donald Braue, certainly thinks so. In his book *Māyā in Radharishnan's Thought* Braue contends that "The logical implication of the fourfold concept of reality is that the world and the other three poises are of equal ontological significance, even though poise one is logically prior to the other three."⁶⁹ This is an odd statement to make given Radhakrishnan's explicit claim that the world's "reality is radically different from the being of Absolute-God"⁷⁰ and that "The world is a different kind of existence, a degraded form when compared to the Supreme Being."⁷¹ It is true that Radhakrishnan says that the four are "simultaneous sides of the one Reality," but this is in his "Introduction" to *The Principal Upaniṣads*.⁷² Of more significance is his own "Fragments of a Confession" where he insists the four poises are only "different aspects of the Supreme," and neglects to comment on whether they are equally real or not.⁷³ Moreover, in his "Reply to Critics" he claims the Supreme has only "three simultaneous poises of being" — Absolute, God, and World-Spirit — and completely leaves out the world as such.⁷⁴ This, together with his earlier remarks about the different reality of the world, clearly demonstrates that the fourth poise is not on the same ontological footing as the other three. This is because the world is a dependent being, entirely derived from the Absolute's creative power. Unlike the Absolute-God, the world has a beginning and an end, and is only

relatively, not ultimately, real. This makes Radhakrishnan's view distinct from a purely integral position like Śrī Aurobindo's which affirms the equal reality of all aspects of the Supreme, and draws him closer to Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta*. If there is a synthesis of views, then, it is enacted more on the side of Śaṅkara than the side of Rāmānuja.

The whole process of creation constitutes a self-limitation of the divine *Brahman*. Through its inherent power, *Īśvara*, the infinite *Brahman* expresses one of its possibilities, which turns out to be the finite world of matter, (*prakṛti*), time (*saṃsāra*), and causality (*karma*). If, according to Radhakrishnan, these make-up the content of *Brahman's* self-limitation, then what precisely is their nature?

(iii) THE CONCEPT OF MATTER (*PRAKṚTI*)

For Radhakrishnan, metaphysical bondage or limitation in its material sense can be summed up in the Indian concept of *prakṛti*. Although this idea can be traced to the *Vedīc* creation myths,⁷⁵ Radhakrishnan borrows it from the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy and incorporates it into his own form of neo-*Vedānta*. In general, *prakṛti* refers to materiality in both its unmanifest and manifest states. The unmanifest sense can be observed from the word "*prakṛti*" which is composed of the Sanskrit prefix "*pra*" meaning "before or first" and the root "*kr*" meaning "to make or produce." *Prakṛti*, then, is that which existed before anything in particular was created. It is the primary source of all individual things or the first principle out of which all things emerge. In this sense *prakṛti* is an undifferentiated materiality, a force that is completely unconscious and unmanifest in contrast to *puruṣa* which is pure, eternal consciousness. There is

thus for Radhakrishnan an eternal subject or *puruṣa* and an unmanifest object or *prakṛti* which are not ultimately distinct, as in the *Sāṅkhya* system, but are part of the one Supreme Reality.

In Indian thought it is called *prakṛti*, the *avyakta*, the unmanifested, the formless substrate of things. The two, spirit and nature *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, are not two ultimate principles. They are parts of one World-Spirit, which divided into two, *dvedha apatayat*, for the sake of cosmic development. The two are opposite, yet complementary poles of all existence. They are not altogether independent of each other.⁷⁶

This unmanifest materiality or pure potentiality is neither absolute non-being nor absolute being. Though it is often called non-being, this is incorrect because that would make it non-existent, which is absurd.⁷⁷

The manifest sense of *prakṛti* refers to the actual world of material and mental phenomenon. It is an ordered whole consisting of matter, life, and mind, which are all derived from the primordial *prakṛti*. "Materiality," so Radhakrishnan exclaims, "is the first manifested form in the cosmic existence. From unmanifested being we get the material manifestation."⁷⁸ Space and time are adjuncts to *prakṛti* and relate things to one another in terms of spatial composition and temporal succession. In *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan draws on his interpretation of the Hindu idea of *saṁsāra*, the world of becoming, and the modern scientific view of matter as a series of events, to describe *prakṛti* in its manifest state. He says, "Matter is the name for the cluster of events,

possessing certain relatively persistent habits and potencies."⁷⁹ He sums up the characteristics of such a world as follows:

(1) What was regarded as a passive immutable particle is now known to be a complex system of seething energy. An atom is an organism whose members are protons and electrons. Molecules and human society are more complex organisms. (2) Physical nature is an ordered whole and operates as such, and its members are interdependent. There is thus an interactive union between every organism and its environment. (3) Every event has both caused and creative aspects. Its changes are thus transmechanical.⁸⁰

Thus *prakṛti* is both an unmanifest force that accounts for the existence of material phenomenon and the manifest form of the world itself.

It would not be difficult to conclude from the foregoing that *prakṛti* is a principle of limitation and therefore a constituent of bondage. At first, however, it appears that Radhakrishnan would disagree with such an assessment. He clearly states that, "It is not embodiment that creates the bondage"⁸¹ and affirms both the relative reality of the world and the positive role it plays in the liberation process. But his belief is equally conspicuous that matter is a constraint on the life of the soul. This is evident in his early article "The Vedānta Approach to Reality" where he says man is "Born of matter" and "entangled in it."⁸² He also believes this view to be expressed in the *Upaniṣads* where in his Introduction says "liberated individuals are freed from bondage to matter"⁸³ and in his Introduction to the *Bhagavadgītā* where he states "bondage is enslavement to

the object world."⁸⁴ In each case matter is seen to be something that binds the soul to the finite body-world and lacks the perfection of infinite being.⁸⁵ The point is that Radhakrishnan, in typical neo-*Vedāntic* fashion, does not have a totally negative view of matter or of bondage in general, though he is certainly aware of its limiting conditions.

The focal point of metaphysical limitation is the finite body which Radhakrishnan, following the *Upaniṣadic* tradition, calls the *jīvatman* or *jīva*. The *jīva* is the empirical, embodied self, in contrast to *Ātman* which is the transcendent, eternal self. The *jīva*, then, represents the limited form of *Ātman*. The bondage and imperfection of the *jīva* is most apparent in the doctrine of *guṇas* as it is originally found in the *Śvetāśvatāra* and *Maitri Upaniṣads* as well as in *Sāṅkhya* texts.⁸⁶ Although Radhakrishnan discusses the idea of *guṇas* in his "Introductions" to *The Principal Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, he says very little about it in his other writings. He does mention it, however, in his *Religion in a Changing World* where the "emancipated soul... is raised above the three qualities (*guṇas*) of *sattva* (serenity), *rāgas* (passion), and *tamas* (inertia)."⁸⁷ This suggests that Radhakrishnan does accept the *guṇas* theory and so the theory should be examined in more detail.

The doctrine of *gunas* states that *prakṛti* is made up of three constituent elements called *guṇas*. The word "*guṇa*" refers to the strands or threads making up a piece of rope. The three *guṇas* are like three strands all intertwined to form *prakṛti*. They are not really qualities but represent *prakṛti's* intrinsic nature. Unlike the Western notion of quality, which is conceived as something that inheres in a substance and has no independent existence, the *guṇas* are self-sufficient and even possess their own qualities. They are also subtle and imperceptible. All

material and mental phenomena are composed of the three *guṇas* in different proportions. And it is the various combinations of *guṇas* that produce the myriad things in the world.⁸⁸

The three *guṇas* are *sattva*, *rāgas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva* literally means real or existent, and is the power which manifests things. It is potential consciousness and is associated with light, buoyancy, and pleasure. *Rajas*, which signifies foulness or impurity, is the power of motion and the principle of activity. It moves the other two *guṇas* and so is responsible for all motion and change occurring throughout nature. *Rajas* is associated with restless activity, feverish effort, and overcoming resistance and pain. *Tamas* means darkness or blindness and is the power of inertia. In being the principle that resists activity, *tamas* restrains the other two *guṇas* by preventing *rajas* from moving and *sattva* from manifesting things in consciousness. Its resistance to motion produces confusion, passivity, and indifference.⁸⁹

These three *guṇas* operate both in nature and in human beings. Since no individual is devoid of *guṇas*, people can be classified according to what *guṇa* predominates in their psychological make-up. This preponderance of one *guṇa* over another is what is responsible for limiting a person's actions and binding them to a conditioned existence.

Each of the *guṇas* has a positive and negative side. When the negative side of a *guṇa* becomes predominate, bondage and evil result. As Radhakrishnan explains it:

Evil is caused by the bondage to

the *gunas*. It arises because the seed of life or the spirit cast into matter becomes fettered by the *gunas*. According to the preponderance of one or the other of the *gunas* the soul arises or falls. When we recognize the self as distinct from *prakṛti* with its *gunas*, we are released.⁹⁰

The *rajas guna* relates to the volitional and affective aspects of a person's nature. If the negative side is ascendant, then the individual can be caught up in ceaseless activity driven by ambition, avarice, lust, and other obsessive passions. For Radhakrishnan, "The *rajas* element prevails in our desires for power and profit, for success and adventure."⁹¹ As such, it has the effect of making a person become violently attached to things in the world.

Tamas relates to the physical aspect of our being. When the negative side of *tamas* predominates the result is an individual who is blind and ignorant, who continuously yearns to satisfy his or her own desires. The chief aim in life becomes seeking pleasure, even at the expense of everything else. As Radhakrishnan writes, "the *tamas* element predominates in our lower appetites, with their ceaseless recurrence of wants and satisfactions."⁹² The end product of all this is the obscuring of spiritual knowledge leading to frustration, depression, and moral stupor.

Finally, *sattva* relates to our psychological nature. Its negative side binds us to the pursuit of happiness and to the acquiring of knowledge and of virtue for their own sakes. "The element of *sattva*," Radhakrishnan notes, "aims at a happy balance or adjustment of self to environment and an inner harmony."⁹³ This may sound good but the problem is that we can easily attach too much

importance to these "higher desires" and lose sight of the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*).

The metaphysical limitation of *prakṛti*, in sum, involves being enmeshed in a finite body that is subject to certain *gunas* or changing states of harmony (*sattva*), activity (*rājas*), and inertia (*tamas*). And all this is part of *māyā* which represents a limitation of *Brahman's* pure being.

(iv) THE CONCEPT OF TIME (*SĀMSĀRA*)

For Radhakrishnan, a second type of metaphysical limitation is temporal existence, which can be summed up in the Indian concept of *sāmsāra*. What we are all in bondage to, or limited by, is *samsara*, a compound *Sanskrit* term derived from the root "sr" meaning "to flow, pass or move," and the prefix "sam" meaning "together." It thus indicates "to flow, pass or move together." The idea is that of passing through a series of different states or existences. These states pertain to the cycle of births and rebirths where the individual self (*jīva*), by means of the subtle body, transmigrates from one physical body to another. Thus *sāmsāra* denotes the idea of rebirth or reincarnation as found in the major Indian religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.⁹⁴ The doctrine finds early expression in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the oldest and largest text, where the rebirth process is compared to a caterpillar moving from one blade of grass to another.⁹⁵ Like the caterpillar, the subtle body passes from one existence to another in a continuous round of births, deaths, and rebirths.⁹⁶

In some later *Upaniṣads* the term *sāmsāra* refers to the changing phenomenal world. This extended denotation can be observed in the causitic

form *saṁsāyati*, meaning "to cause something to revolve or change." From this *saṁsāra* came to signify cyclic existence, expressing not only the phenomenon of transmigration but also the concept of the world being under rotation or in a state of perpetual transition. This is clear from the *Maitra Upaniṣad* when it says: "And we see that all this is perishing, as these gnats, mosquitoes and the like. The grass and the trees that grow and decay... In such a world as this, what is the good of enjoyment of desires."⁹⁷

Although Radhakrishnan embraces the first sense of *saṁsāra* as the cycle of rebirths, he also affirms its second meaning as the everchanging, phenomenal world. This is true both in his early and late writings. For instance, in "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality" (1916) he insists that "it is possible for man to escape out of this drift of the world called *saṁsāra*."⁹⁸ Compare this to his later *Recovery of Faith* (1955) where he proclaims that "The world in which we live is subject to change. It is *saṁsāra*, the stream of existence, the realm of flux and becoming."⁹⁹ In both cases Radhakrishnan is pointing to the transient nature of the world and calling it *saṁsāra*. He is in fact quite adamant about the dynamic character of empirical existence. "The universe," he declares, "is not a static one" for it is "an endless process of becoming and not a state."¹⁰⁰ Here Radhakrishnan is influenced not only by his interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* but also by such Western philosophers as Henri Bergson whom he says influenced him a great deal.¹⁰¹ And in both *An Idealist View of Life* and "Fragments of a Confession" he describes the evolutionary theories of such process philosophers as Bergson, Lloyd Morgan, Samuel Alexander, and Alfred North Whitehead.¹⁰² What Radhakrishnan appropriates from these thinkers is a view of the world as a temporal series of unfolding events which is evolving toward ever-increasing complexity. More specifically, the world is a process that is generated by an

eternal spirit or force that accounts for the creative evolution of new phenomenon as well as being the goal towards which the whole process is directed. In Radhakrishnan's words:

These various interpretations of the cosmic process, dominated by the scientific spirit, are agreed in thinking that the temporal process gives meaning to our existence. They also feel that it is not easy to account for the complex world of perpetual change on strictly scientific principles. If there is the emergence of what is genuinely new in the cosmic process, then the cosmic series is not self-explanatory. Our search for the reality of the world, for the structure of the cosmos, reveals the presence of something invisible and eternal which is working within the visible and temporal world.¹⁰³

In this way Radhakrishnan bolsters the later *Upaniṣadic* view of *saṃsāra* as the process of constant change in the world.

But at other times, Radhakrishnan collapses the two meanings of *saṃsāra*, as in the following passage from *An Idealist View of Life*:

Hindu thought is generally associated with the theory that the world is *saṃsāra*, a perpetual procession of events, an incessant flow of occurrences. Expressions like "the wheel of time", "the cycle of birth and death", "the ever-rolling stream", are employed to indicate the non-substantial or unstable character of the universe. Everything that exists suffers change. Every actuality

is a becoming, has in it the principle of unrest. Nothing empirical is eternally conserved. All life is a constant birth or becoming, and all birth entails a constant death, a dissolution of that which becomes in order that it may change into a new becoming.¹⁰⁴

What Radhakrishnan is getting at is the whole phenomenon of time; for any change, whether involving transmigration of subtle bodies or simple, everyday events, presupposes temporal succession.

For Radhakrishnan, temporal existence definitely constitutes a form of bondage or limitation. In many of his writings he discusses the limiting condition of time and the need to eventually transcend it. "The flux of time," he exclaims, "is a symptom of the disrupted, fallen state of the world. The new heaven and the new earth represent victory over time."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, "When we are all liberated, time is transcended, *saṁsāra* becomes *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*."¹⁰⁶ Similarly, "The reality of *mokṣa* or liberation inspires us with hope that we can triumph over time."¹⁰⁷ And finally, "History will move to its end and transform itself into the Kingdom of Spirit."¹⁰⁸ What confines us is the cycle of rebirths. To be liberated means in part to overcome the whole transmigratory process. "As birth and death are the symbols of time, life eternal or *mokṣa* is liberation from births and deaths."¹⁰⁹ *Saṁsāra* is the opposite to eternal being. It is the realm of becoming which veils the pure existence of *Brahman*.

(v) THE CONCEPT OF CAUSALITY (*KARMA*)

A closely related type of metaphysical limitation that is mentioned in both the *Upaniṣads* and in Radhakrishnan's writings is causality, or more specifically, moral causality. This idea is expressed in the Indian concept of *karma*, a term deriving from the root "kr" meaning to act or do something. *Karma* is basically any internal (mental) or external (physical) action an individual does. These actions or *karmas* bring about a necessary moral result. The concept is first introduced in the *Ṛg Veda* where it is limited to the magical efficacy of ritual sacrifices. Individuals would pay *brahmins* (priests) to perform elaborate rituals towards the gods in order to gain a reward such as wealth or immortality. If the reward was not immediately realized, it was thought that it would be realized sometime in the future. The ritual act (*karma*) eventually brought about the intended effect.

This cause-effect relationship took a more moral turn in *Upaniṣadic* texts. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, for instance, states:

Those whose conduct here has been good will quickly attain a good birth (literally womb), the birth of a *brahman*, the birth of a *kṣatriya* or the birth of a *Vaiśya*. But those whose conduct here has been evil, will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog or the birth of a *candala*.¹¹⁰

The point is that there is a moral law of cause and effect — the law of *karma* — which says that each and every act has a necessary moral result. In other words,

a good action will eventually produce a good effect, while a bad action will eventually produce a bad effect. Every action is the result of some past *karmas*, and will itself precipitate future *karmas*. The law of *karma*, then, is the counterpart in the moral world of the physical law of causality in the material world.¹¹¹ And just as all objects in the universe are subject to physical causal law, all human actions are bound by the moral law of *karma*. Consequently, it is the law of *karma* that is the principle governing the world of becoming (*saṁsāra*).

In general, Radhakrishnan adheres to the *Upaniṣadic* view of *karma*. He certainly agrees that *karma* is a moral law affecting human actions.

The law of *karma* says that everything that happens, happens only because of the existence of antecedent causes and itself becomes the cause of subsequent effects. As we sow, so we reap. If there is no sowing, there will be no reaping. This law holds in every sphere of life, physical as well as moral.¹¹²

Nothing happens by caprice or chance. There is a moral order which links the past with the present and the present with the future. And this order guarantees that everyone will eventually get what they deserve, for we reap what we sow.

Like other neo-*Vedāntists* (e.g., Vivekananda, Tagore), Radhakrishnan accentuates the positive aspects of the *Upaniṣadic* view of *karma*. He does this in order to counter negative criticisms that have been levelled against it. For example, Albert Schweitzer, in his book *Indian Thought and Its Development*, claims the law of *karma* undercuts moral responsibility because in being

deterministic and fatalistic it denies human freedom.¹¹³ Radhakrishnan replies that the law of *karma* is neither deterministic nor fatalistic. *Karma* has two aspects — the retrospective and the prospective.¹¹⁴ The retrospective refers to past *karma* which conditions, but does not determine, present and future actions. It lays out, so to speak, the material equipment, but we are ultimately free to use the equipment as we choose.¹¹⁵ This freedom of choice represents the prospective aspect of *karma*. It is that by which we use the past in a creative way to make ourselves. Radhakrishnan compares the situation to a game of bridge where the "cards in the game are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to past Karma but we are free to make any call as we think fit and lead any suit."¹¹⁶ Actions do not occur in a vacuum but operate in a world govern by *rita*, that is, by order and regularity. This means that we are not completely free, especially in regards to the past.¹¹⁷ But we can decide within limits our present and future course of action.¹¹⁸

Radhakrishnan often refers to *karma* as a principle of continuity or uniformity rather than as a law of causality, the latter term having such a deterministic connotation.¹¹⁹ in fact, Radhakrishnan believes *karma* to be an organic whole linking up past, present, and future actions.

The two pervasive features of all nature, connection with the past and creation of the future, are present in the human level. The connection with the past at the human stage is denoted by the word *Karma* in the Hindu systems... Human life is an organic whole where each successive phase grows out of what has gone before. We are what we are on account of our affinity with the past. Human growth is an ordered one and its

orderedness is indicated by saying that it is governed by the law of Karma.¹²⁰

Critics like Schweitzer go wrong in identifying order with determinism. Both refer to different phenomena. Order signifies a solid structure of parts arranged in a particular pattern, whereas determinism alludes to a strict causal relationship between the parts. A strict causal relationship, however, is just one type of relation that can exist between the parts comprising a structured whole. Non-deterministic relations are also possible as is evident in the actions of elementary particles (e.g., electrons, protons) at the sub-atomic level of matter. So the order inherent in the law of *karma* can leave room for human freedom and thus affirms moral responsibility.

Radhakrishnan further dismisses the idea that *karma* involves predestination. Recall that in Radhakrishnan's integral view of reality, God, in the form of the World-Spirit, governs and controls the world-process. But this should not be interpreted as meaning that God predestines us in any way no matter what we do; for then it would be pointless to act morally at all. Radhakrishnan agrees with the *Upaniṣadic* and *Vedāntic* view that *karma* manifests the will of God (*Īśvara*) and is not an autonomous principle operating independently as the *Śaṅkhya*, Buddhists, and Jains maintain. But since God's law of *karma* is organic within, or written into, human nature, moral judgement is not something arbitrarily imposed by God from outside. In other words, God does not administer justice from without, dispensing punishments and rewards according to his will. Judgement is simply a natural accompaniment to every right or wrong action, a principle "worked into the moral structure of things."¹²¹ This is what Radhakrishnan means when he says: "Karma is not so much a principle of

retribution as one of continuity. Good produces good, evil, evil.¹²² Thus *karma* is not fatalistic.

The upshot of all this is that Radhakrishnan interprets the law of *karma* in a much more positive light. For him, *karma* and freedom are made compatible because *karma* is neither a deterministic principle nor a fatalistic law dependent on God's arbitrary will.¹²³ It is a principle accounting for the order and regularity found in the world of human actions. And this order does not prevent us from freely choosing to act in such a way as to realize *mokṣa*. Indeed, the whole law of *karma* facilitates the liberation process since it allows each person to shape his or her destiny.¹²⁴ This is why Radhakrishnan believes *karma* to be a "spiritual necessity" rather than a "mechanical principle."¹²⁵

The above remarks might suggest that for Radhakrishnan *karma* is not something from which we should seek deliverance; for it offers us opportunities, not constraints. This seems to be the view of one commentator, Robert Minor, who claims: "*Saṁsāra*, the doctrine that *karma* and rebirth is a burden from which to flee, is incorrect. Instead *karma* and rebirth mean growth and education; they are positive opportunities when understood correctly."¹²⁶ It is true, as we have documented, that Radhakrishnan sees the world and its *karma* effects as positive opportunities; but the question is, "opportunities for what?" Opportunities for liberation of course. And an important element of that liberation in its final form of *sarvamukti* (universal salvation) is release from *karma* and the whole realm of *saṁsāric* existence. This is evident in the following passage:

The attainment of spiritual
freedom by all, universal salvation
or *sarvamukti* is not inconsistent

with the law of entropy. When we are all liberated, time is transcended, *saṁsāra* becomes *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*... This cosmic deliverance, which is the close of the world, cannot be accurately described as a terrestrial future for it is a supramundane present. When everyone achieves his fulfilment, the cosmic purpose is fulfilled. Pure undistorted truth of eternity burns up the world. The end of the process is in continuity with the beginning and when the two coincide, cosmic existence lapses into Absolute Being.¹²⁷

Since *karma* is the moral law governing the world, when the world is transcended in *sarvamukti* so too is *karma*. Consequently, *karma* is a limitation that must be overcome. Minor's remarks are only relevant to the majority of individuals who have not yet realized liberation in this life. They still require the opportunities *karmic* rebirth provides to work towards final release. But when the stage of *jīvanmukti*, or liberation in this life, is reached one will remain active in the world, since they will be living out their past and present *karma*, though their present actions will not produce any future effects. Hence, for Radhakrishnan, *karma* represents both the content of our bondage and the means by which we can eventually transcend it.¹²⁸

This idea becomes more comprehensible when Radhakrishnan links up the law of *karma* with the doctrine of *saṁsāra*. What keeps individuals bound to the cycle of births and rebirths is *karma*. Our past actions determine the form of our present births, while our present actions will determine our future incarnations. "The successive lives," so Radhakrishnan remarks, "are a closely connected sequence where the acts of one life determine the basis and

opportunities of the next."¹²⁹ But how exactly does *karma* and rebirth operate together? What, in short, is the mechanism of rebirth?

Radhakrishnan, in following the accounts given in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmā Sūtra*, claims the empirical self (*jīva*) consists of a "gross" body that is subject to physical mortality and a "subtle" body that transmigrates from one gross bodily existence to another.¹³⁰ The gross body is the biological aspect of human nature and consists of physio-chemical elements. It "is supported by the physical life-force which courses through the whole nervous system and which distinguishes our bodily action from that an inert mechanical being."¹³¹ This being the case, the gross body does not transmigrate; when it dies, it dies. The subtle body on the other hand is a fine and transparent material that undergoes rebirth into different gross forms. It is said to be the basis for consciousness, and it survives physical death.¹³²

Now what happens is that *karma* is first activated by selfish desire (*vāsanā*). Sometime in the past we wanted something for ourselves and acted in such a way as to procure it. This action, including the motive behind it, was either good or bad and harboured within it good or bad effects. These effects accumulated deep in the subtle body in the form of impressions (*samskāras*) or seeds (*bījas*), that will mature either in one's present life, or if not fully ripened, in a future existence. Radhakrishnan notes that the Epic philosophy of *The Mahābhārata* classifies *karmas* into three types: *samcita-karmas* or the stock of past *karmas* from all previous lives that have not yet manifested themselves; *prarābdha-karmas* or those *karmas* arising from past actions in previous births that have begun to manifest themselves in the form of dispositions influencing a person's thoughts and actions; and *āgami-karmas* which are actions done in the

present life and whose effects will manifest themselves either later in this life or in some future existence.¹³³ Radhakrishnan goes on to say that *samcita* and *āgami karmas* can be stopped by self-discipline and control, whereas *prarabdha-karmas*, which have started to ripen in this life, will have to be experienced.¹³⁴

When the gross body dies, the *jīva* is accompanied by the subtle body which contains those *karmic* impressions, or seeds, that have not yet fructified. Some of these unripened seeds will determine the form the next incarnation will take. If the accumulated *karma* is mainly good, then the next incarnation will be on a higher level in terms of bodily compositions, character, and social standing. The reverse will be the case if the accumulated *karmas* are primarily bad. Radhakrishnan disagrees, however, that an individual will be reborn on some pre-human level. Though he admits there are passages in some *Upaniṣads* that suggest rebirth in animal form,¹³⁵ he believes the "idea may have been derived from the beliefs of aboriginal tribes" who lived in India before the *Āryan* invasion.¹³⁶ He further maintains that these passages should be interpreted as "figures of speech for rebirth with animal qualities" and not be read literally.¹³⁷ In any case, it is the subtle body that carries the *karmic* seeds or impressions and eventually assumes a new physical form. And the new body in turn will become subject to the domination of one of the three *guṇas* and so act in a particular way.

It is the *jīva*, then, through its gross and subtle bodies, that is bound to the cycle of births and rebirths, and not the eternal self (*Ātman*) which remains unaffected and is only present throughout the successive rebirths as a mere spectator (*sākṣīn*).¹³⁸ The cycle of rebirths will continue until the individual realizes spiritual liberation. They will, in other words, remain bound to the wheel

of becoming, and will only be free when they are released from *māyā*, that is, from the limitations of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṁsāra*), and causality (*karma*).

CHAPTER II

RELEASE FROM IGNORANCE (*AVIDYĀ*)

(I) NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE SENSES

According to Radhakrishnan, to be spiritually liberated also means to be free from ignorance. One must find release from what may be called epistemological limitation, which is an important part of the bondage process. Following the *Vedāntic* tradition, Radhakrishnan refers to this epistemological limitation as *avidyā*. This is a compound word derived from the negative particle "a" meaning "non" and "*vidyā*" meaning "knowledge." It thus signifies "non-knowledge" or better yet "absence or lack of knowledge."¹ The word is usually translated into English as "ignorance," though some commentators prefer translating it as "unwisdom."² In either case, the word has both a negative and positive sense which can be readily apprehended in viewing briefly the history of the term in the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣhads*, and *Vedāntic* texts.

As Esther A. Solomon points out in her informative book, *Avidyā — A Problem of Truth and Reality*, the word "*avidyā*" first finds expression in the *Ṛg Veda* in the forms "*avidvan*" and "*avidvamsah*" which have the import, "not knowing the greatness of a god and the like."³ These terms clearly convey the idea of an absence or lack of knowledge. For instance, *avidvamsah* means "ignorant, who know not," while "*avidvan*" alludes to one who is ignorant of the Asvins and the mode of worshipping them."⁴ Elsewhere in the *Ṛg Veda* (X 82.7) the word "*nihara*" suggests that the minds of worshippers are clouded by a "mist of ignorance" which prevents them from truly comprehending the way things

really are.⁵ Later, in the *Atharva Veda* (XI. 81) *avidyā* is used in contrast to *vidyā* or knowledge. Solomon sums up the meaning of *avidyā*, or more precisely its associated words, as follows:

We may conclude that 'avidyā' (in whatever form the word be use) and its synonyms are used in the Vedas to convey the idea of lack of knowledge or, at a later stage, something coming in the way of right knowledge and acting as a positive hindrance, or knowledge other than the knowledge leading to spiritual elevation. It is used in a simple sense without much philosophical significance.⁶

It is in the older *Upaniṣads* that the term "*avidyā*" is first expressed and elaborated upon. In the *Chāndogya* (I.1.10), *Īśa* (9-11), *Kaṭha* (11. 1-2), and *Munḍaka* (I.2.8-9) *Upaniṣads*, *vidyā* and *avidyā* are sharply distinguished. *Vidyā* refers to a special higher knowledge of the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) which leads to liberation, while *avidyā* is the relative knowledge of the phenomenal world which is conducive to obtaining material wealth and pleasure. In other texts, such as the *Maitri Upaniṣad* (7.9), *avidyā* moves from a strictly negative to a more positive meaning where it denotes a positively false knowledge which acts as a psychical affliction preventing an individual from cognizing correctly. Finally, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.3), the meaning of *avidyā* takes an important twist when it signifies the tendency of the mind to imagine things that do not ultimately exist. There is thus a bifurcation between the world of appearance and the Ultimate Reality.⁷

Both the negative sense of *avidyā* as lack of knowledge and the positive sense of as false or mistaken knowledge are brought together in the *Advaita*

Vedānta of Śāṅkara. According to Śāṅkara, our lack of knowledge of *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality, is due to our ignorance concealing *Brahman's* essential non-duality. In other words, ignorance is like a veil which hides the oneness of the Real. Śāṅkara illustrates the veiling function of *avidyā* with reference to a storm in a village. Just as a storm brings with it clouds which obscure the sun's rays in a village, ignorance obscures the individual's perception of the non-dual *Brahman*. Another example he uses is of buried treasure. Just as treasure is buried beneath the ground, *Brahman* is buried under the effects of *avidyā*. Both examples reveal, in a metaphoric fashion, how *avidyā* acts to conceal *Brahman's* true nature.

The positive aspect of *avidyā* is expressed in Śāṅkara's concept of *adhyāsa* or superimposition. Not only does *avidyā* hide *Brahman's* non-duality, it also projects onto *Brahman* a world of multiplicity. That is to say, ignorance superimposes onto *Brahman* certain qualities (e.g., plurality) that do not belong to *Brahman*. In this way, *avidyā* is not only mere absence of knowledge but erroneous or false knowledge. In his *Adhyāsa Bhāṣya* Śāṅkara defines superimposition as "the appearance elsewhere, with a nature like to that of recollection in what was seen before."⁸ This view is echoed in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* where superimposition is the "awareness similar in nature to memory that arises on a different (foreign) basis as a result of some past experience."⁹ It consists of imposing on one thing the attributes of something else we know from experience and memory.

Śāṅkara's two most cited examples to illustrate the phenomenon of *adhyāsa* are the rope-snake and the shell-silver. While walking in the dark we might mistake a piece of rope for a snake, or strolling along the beach

misperceive a shiny shell as a fragment of silver, because we erroneously attribute the qualities of something previously experienced and remembered (i.e., snakes, silver) to something immediately present to consciousness (i.e., rope, shell). For Śaṅkara, the same sort of misapprehension and distortion occurs in respect to the self. Here we superimpose onto the real self (*Ātman*) such qualities as finitude and change that, properly speaking, only belong to the empirical self (*jīva*); and conversely, superimpose onto the empirical self such qualities as infinitude and eternity that only really belong to the real self. We basically take our ego to constitute our true identity and so mistake the finite for the infinite. As Śaṅkara puts it:

The transfer of the object which has as its province the presentation of the thou (or the not-self) and its qualities to the pure spiritual subject which has for its province the idea of the I (or the self), and conversely, the transfer of the subject and its qualities to the object, is logically false. Yet in mankind this procedure, resting on false knowledge (*mithyajnanaimitta*), of pairing together the true and the untrue (the subject and the object) is natural (*nuisargika*), so that they transfer the being and qualities of the one to the other.¹⁰

So for Śaṅkara *avidyā* is not simply a non-apprehension of *Brahman-Ātman's* essential non-dual nature, but a misapprehension of the one Ultimate Reality as actually constituting the many.

Śaṅkara frequently interchanges the terms *avidyā* and *māyā* since he believes them to be practically synonymous. *Avidyā* is a power (*māyā*) which

both conceals *Brahman's* non-duality and projects multiplicity in its place. It is thus a cosmic principle that explains the apparent limitation of *Brahman*. *Avidyā* also represents for Śaṅkara the whole realm of empirical knowledge which is relative and practical in character. *Avidyā* refers to the lower level of consciousness which fails to recognize the non-quality of *Brahman*, in contrast to *vidyā* or the higher level of consciousness which truly apprehends the oneness of the Real. In sum, the idea of *avidyā* as expressed in the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣhads*, and Śaṅkara's writings has shifted from meaning a subjective incapacity to obtain knowledge of *Brahman*, to a positive objective power which conceals and distorts the non-dual Reality.

Radhakrishnan's own conception of *avidyā* relies heavily on his interpretation of Śaṅkara. Like Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan believes *avidyā* to be neither ultimately real nor unreal, but only relatively real. "It is," he says "different from the real and the unreal. If it obtains either reality or collapses into nothingness there would be no tension, no process."¹¹ But Radhakrishnan also follows the neo-*Vedānta* view of ignorance where it is seen as a partial knowledge and not just a lack of knowledge. He is unclear, however, on the relation between *avidyā* and *māyā* in Śaṅkara's thought. In his *Indian Philosophy* Vol. II, he states that for Śaṅkara "the concept of *māyā* is intimately related with that of *avidyā*."¹² This suggests the two are very similar but not identical. Later he explicitly remarks "Avidyā in Śaṅkara is not a mere subjective force, but has an objective reality" so that "avidyā, māyā and prakṛiti are identified in Śaṅkara's thought."¹³ What is it then? Are *avidyā* and *māyā* only related terms or are they fully equivalent? Radhakrishnan seems to compound the complexity of the issue by insisting in one passage that Śaṅkara uses *avidyā* and *māyā* indiscriminately, while in another passage claims that for Śaṅkara "Avidyā and māyā represent

the subjective and the objective sides of the one fundamental fact of experience."¹⁴ One suggests the terms have equivocal meaning, the other that there is a subtle distinction. The discrepancy, I think, can be resolved by remembering that for Śaṅkara *Brahman* and *Ātman* are non-different. At the lower level of relative knowledge we can distinguish the objective (*Brahman*) from the subjective (*Ātman*) side, but in reality they are one and the same. As such, *māyā* and *avidyā* are the same objective-subjective powers relating to the universal and to the individual.

Whatever Śaṅkara's view might be, Radhakrishnan himself seems to draw more on the subtle distinction interpretation in formulating his own concept of *avidyā*. For Radhakrishnan, *avidyā* is that aspect of *māyā* relating to finite, individual consciousness. "While *māyā* covers the whole cosmic manifestation, *avidyā* relates to the ignorance of the individual."¹⁵ *Māyā* can thus be described as *avidyā* from the epistemological point of view. It is that power which deludes us into believing the divine One to be the profane many. "When the multiplicity shuts us away from the reality of God *māyā* is called *avidyā*."¹⁶ Furthermore, "The world has the tendency to delude us into thinking that it is all, that it is self-dependent, and this delusive character of the world is also designated as *māyā* in the sense of *avidyā*."¹⁷ This conception of *avidyā* as *māyā* in its epistemological aspect is further documented in the five places where Radhakrishnan distinguishes six senses of the term *māyā*.¹⁸ In the majority of these passages Radhakrishnan lists *avidyā* as one of the meanings of *māyā*, as in his "Reply to Critics" where he asserts "*Māyā* is also used for ignorance by which we do not recognize the principle of the universe. This non-knowing is *avidyā*."¹⁹ It seems evident that by *avidyā* Radhakrishnan means an individuated *māyā*, that is, *māyā* applied to individual consciousness.

(ii) CONCEALMENT AND DISTORTION

Now Radhakrishnan follows Śaṅkara and the *Vivaraṇa* school of post-Śaṅkara *Advaita* in claiming that *avidyā* possesses the two-fold power of concealing or veiling (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) the true nature of reality and distorting (*vikeṣepa-śakti*) its essential non-duality, by projecting something else (e.g., multiplicity) in its place.²⁰ *Avidyā* he declares "has the two functions of concealment of the real and projecting of the unreal."²¹ This puts him directly at odds with the *Bhāmatī* school of post-Śaṅkarite thought which believes *avidyā* only has the power of veiling or hiding the real, not of projecting onto it a myriad world.²² And like Vidyāraṇya (14th century) of the *Vivaraṇa* school, Radhakrishnan believes *māyā* to be the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) of *Īśvara*, while *avidyā* is the limiting adjunct of the individual (*jīva*) only.²³ He also suggests "Śaṅkara is of this view," an accurate interpretation if one bears in mind Śaṅkara's distinction between relative and absolute knowledge and the identity between *Brahman* and *Ātman*.²⁴ But whereas this identification leads Śaṅkara to use either term, *avidya* or *māyā*, to describe the power of concealing and distorting the true nature of *Brahman*, Radhakrishnan prefers to reserve the term *avidyā* for describing only the power of concealing and distorting the true nature of *Ātman*. However, since *Brahman* and *Ātman* are ultimately non-different, it does not matter, I suppose, which term is actually employed.

When operating on the level of individual consciousness *māyā* or *avidyā* first conceals the reality of the identity between the real self and *Brahman*. The apprehension of non-difference is blocked by the power of ignorance. It "hides reality from the vision of man."²⁵ Radhakrishnan uses various metaphors to

describe the concealing function of *avidyā*. He calls it a "cloak,"²⁶ a "veil,"²⁷ and likens it to a "scrim" which is a prop used in the theatre to hide what is going on backstage.²⁸ What this means is that the unenlightened person is ignorant of the fact that *Brahman* and *Ātman* are one and the same. They can only perceive the ultimate reality through the haze of *avidyā* which obscures the essential non-duality of *Ātman*. In hiding the real, *avidyā* can be described negatively as non-knowledge in the sense of a "spiritual blindness."²⁹ Ignorance, then, prevents us from directly comprehending the non-dual nature of *Brahman/Ātman*.

Radhakrishnan follows Śaṅkara in emphasizing the second function of *avidyā*, namely, superimposition (*adhyāsa*), believing this to be the source of delusion and suffering.³⁰ There is an intimate connection between *avidyā*'s concealing (negative) and projecting (positive) powers, since *avidyā* first hides the true nature of the non-dual reality and then superimposes onto it an appearance of a finite, changing world. "Through the force of *avidyā* (not knowing)," Radhakrishnan claims, "we impose on the reality of the one the multiplicity of the world."³¹ In so doing we delude ourselves into believing the finite world is ultimately real, not the non-dual *Brahman*.

The world has the tendency to delude us into thinking that it is all, that it is self-dependent, and this delusion characteristic of the world is also designated *māyā* in the sense of *avidyā*.³²

It is this process of attributing to the real what is essentially different from it, or the process of something appearing when it is not ultimately real, that is defined as *adhyāsa*.³³

Now some commentators, such as John Arapura, have claimed that Radhakrishnan does not regard *avidyā* as a form of error.³⁴ This is difficult to accept given the textual evidence to the contrary. In numerous passages throughout his writings Radhakrishnan states that *avidyā*, at least in its projecting aspect (*adhyāsa*), is a source of error. For example, in his "Introduction" to *The Principal Upaniṣads* he asserts: "We are subject to *avidyā* when we look upon the multiplicity of objects and egos as final and fundamental. Such a view falsifies the truth. It is the illusion of ignorance."³⁵ And in *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* he contends "This wearing of masks, this playing of roles, this marionette performance of ourselves, is *mistaken for truth*."³⁶ Is not to falsify or mistake the truth an error of sorts? On the other hand, there are some places where Radhakrishnan seems to suggest that *avidyā* should not be construed as a form of error, as when he states "This knowledge is not merely intellectual any more than ignorance is error"³⁷ and "ignorance is not intellectual error but spiritual blindness."³⁸ What are we to make of these remarks?

It seems undeniable that Radhakrishnan believes *avidyā* to be a source of error and says so on a number of occasions.³⁹ He also uses Plato's analogy of the cave to illustrate the delusory nature of ignorance.⁴⁰ For just as Plato's cave inhabitants mistake the shadows on the wall for real Being, the ignorant person mistakes the world of multiplicity (*māyā*) for the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*).

We see the changing forms and
not the Eternal Being of which
the forms are the manifestation.
We see the shifting forms as Plato's
dwellers in the cave see the

shadows on the wall. But we must see the Light from which the shadows emanate.⁴¹

To be deluded means to be mistaken about something or to harbour a false belief.⁴² Since error also signifies a mistaken or false belief it follows that *avidyā*, in being the source of delusion, must itself perpetrate some kind of error. The origin of Radhakrishnan's apparent inconsistency stems, I think, from his diligent efforts to reinterpret the idea of *māyā* as non-illusory and therefore as something positive and as something that does not encumber ethical behavior. In doing so, however, he seems at times to lose track of remarks he made elsewhere and to lapse into contradictions. He is, in other words, so preoccupied with refuting critics of Hindu thought (i.e., Schweitzer) that he neglects to construct an explicitly coherent system of beliefs. Consequently, his writings often appear fragmented and loose. The key to ironing out the discrepancies lies in his claim that "The world is not a deception but the occasion for it."⁴³ This means the world itself is not an error, only our beliefs about its ultimate nature. But these mistaken beliefs are not simply "intellectual errors" like $2 + 2 = 5$, because they affect our entire being in the world. In other words, an intellectual error such as believing the earth to be flat may have some significant repercussions on one's plans for travelling but it does not impact on everything one does in life or determine one's whole orientation in the world. This is the case, however, with superimposition. It is an all-pervasive error in regards to the identity of the self and so it influences all of one's thoughts, desires, and actions. Thus when Radhakrishnan says "knowledge is not merely intellectual any more than ignorance is error," he is pointing to the more all-encompassing aspect of this kind of knowledge/ignorance. It is, so to speak, a higher type of truth and error. But this does not imply that these beliefs about reality are true; for they

lead us to misconceive the Real. It may be better to say that they are only partially true. In any case, Radhakrishnan should have been more careful to distinguish between specific intellectual errors and the superimposition of the relatively real (e.g., multiplicity, change) onto the absolutely real (*Brahman*).

Like Śaṅkara and other *Advaitins*, Radhakrishnan believes the primary application of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is to the real self or *Ātman*. We superimpose onto the eternal *Ātman* certain finite properties, while at the same time projecting divine attributes onto the empirical self or *jīva*. Human beings consist of two levels — the lower and relative level of the empirical self (*jīva*) and the higher, absolute level of the transcendent self (*Ātman*). "Man," Radhakrishnan observes, "is a complex multidimensional being, including within him different elements of matter, life, consciousness, intelligence and the divine spark."⁴⁴ Although the *Ātman* is our true self, ignorance impels us to accept the *jīva* as ultimate. But how does this delusion actually come about and what is the precise nature of the *jīva* and its relation to *Ātman*?

In *An Idealist View of Life*, Radhakrishnan describes in some detail the nature of the *jīva* or empirical self and how it is to be distinguished from the *Ātman*. He begins by criticizing behaviorist psychology for reducing "man to the level of an animal," that is, to a jumble of "reflex action."⁴⁵ He further castigates behaviorism, and psychoanalysis as well, for treating the "body and mind as distinct."⁴⁶ Instead, Radhakrishnan supports the "Gestalt-theorie" which rejects "atomistic psychology" and views human beings as complex wholes.⁴⁷ For both *Gestalt* psychology and Radhakrishnan the "self is a unity which is more than the sum of its subordinate parts."⁴⁸

Radhakrishnan insists that the individual self (*jīva*) is not an atomic unit but "an organized whole."⁴⁹ He argues against the Platonic-Christian view of the self as a "soul-substance inherently immortal," and sides more with David Hume who believes that "such a substance is not observable and there is no evidence that it exists."⁵⁰ There is nothing concrete in the individual that is not produced and which will not pass away. Amidst this constant change what endures is not a substance but "the bodily system as an organized totality."⁵¹ This totality is not something instinctive but something teleological. The unity of the empirical self (*jīva*) is "realized in a series of stages, towards the attainment of ends."⁵² And "what we call a person at any stage is the cross-section of the growing entity."⁵³

Radhakrishnan goes on to distinguish the organized *jīva* from "the self as subject" or the *Ātman*.⁵⁴ "The former," he opines "is the problem for psychology, the latter for metaphysics."⁵⁵ This means the empirical self (*jīva*) is an object of consciousness, whereas the *Ātman* is the pure conscious subject. As he expresses it:

The true subject of the self is not an object that we can find in knowledge for it is the very condition of knowledge. It is different from all objects, the body, the senses, the empirical self itself. We cannot make the subject the property of any substance or the effect of any cause, for it is the basis of all such relations. It is not the empirical self but the reality without which there could be no such thing as an empirical self... The true subject is the simple, self-subsistent, universal spirit which cannot be directly presented as the object... The Hindu thinkers call it the *ātman* as distinguished from the empirical self or the *jīvātman*.⁵⁶

There are major differences, then, between the *jīva* and the *Ātman*. Metaphysically speaking, the *jīva* is the finite, temporal, changing self, while the *Ātman* is the infinite, eternal, immutable self. Since the *jīva*, in Radhakrishnan's view, "is shifting in the same individual," it "therefore cannot be identified with the unchanging and unchangeable essence."⁵⁷ The *Ātman* is fundamentally the ground of a *jīva* and remains unaffected by a *jīva* and its actions in the world. In terms of epistemology, the consciousness of a *jīva* is dualistic and possesses only partial knowledge of the Real, whereas *Ātman's* consciousness is pure and completely self-illuminating.

But if the *jīvas* (empirical selves) come under the realm of *māyā* or *avidyā*, and therefore have a phenomenal character, what is the relation between the phenomenal *jīvas* and the noumenal *Ātman*? In Radhakrishnan's words: "How does the unchanging *Ātman* appear as limited, how can the eternal light of intelligence be darkened by any agency whatsoever, since it is free from all relations? It is the old question How does the real become the phenomenal?"⁵⁸ He then answers "It is the relation of *Ātman* to the *upadhis* of body, senses, mind and sense objects that accounts for its phenomenal character; but this relation," he admits, "is inexplicable, *māyā* or mysterious."⁵⁹ The only way one can possibly explain this mystery is through the help of analogies, the two most common ones being *pratibimba-vāda* or the theory of reflection and *avaccheda-vāda* or theory of limitation.⁶⁰

(iii) REFLECTION AND LIMITATION

According to the theory of reflection, which is associated with the *Vivaraṇa* school of *Advaita Vedānta*, just as the moon in water is a mere reflection and is nothing substantial, or the appearance of red colour in a white crystal is a mere reflection of the red flower and is nothing else, "the elements and the individual souls are reflections of the one reality in *avidyā* and nothing real."⁶¹ Indeed, on "the abolition of *avidyā* the reflections cease to exist and only the real remains. The Absolute is the original (*biṁba*) and the world is the reflection (*pratibiṁba*)."⁶² Radhakrishnan notes that some later *advaitins* believed the *jīva* to be a reflection of the *Brahman/Ātman* in the internal organ of sense-mind and intellect. It is a shadow cast by the absolute Reality.⁶³ Moreover, just as the differences in the reflections are traced to mirrors, different individuals appear as reflections of *Brahman* in different internal organs. As a reflection of the moon varies according to the different states of the water — calm or turbulent, clear or dirty — so the reflection of *Brahman/Ātman* varies according to the states of *avidyā* upon which it is reflected.⁶⁴ This is why the same reality (*Brahman/Ātman*) appears as different individuals (*jīvas*) having various physical and intellectual capacities.

The second theory, *avaccheda-vāda* or the theory of limitation, is advocated by the *Bhāmatī* school of *Advaita Vedānta*. It maintains that the individual self (*jīva*) is not so much a reflection of universal consciousness (*Ātman*) as it is an apparent limitation of it. (It is only apparent because the *Ātman* can never be actually limited due to its transcendent nature.) More precisely, it is an apparent limitation constituted by the *upādhis* or limiting adjunct of ignorance, and owing to this, the pure, undifferentiated Absolute appears as

conditional and finite individuals. Radhakrishnan shows how Śāṅkara uses the analogy of one cosmic space and different particular parts of space to explain this theory. Just as boxes or jars limit the one cosmic space into finite spaces, so *avidyā* limits the one universal self to many finite individuals. When the limitations caused by the boxes or jars are removed the particular spaces merge into the one cosmic space. Similarly, when the limitations of space, time and causality are removed the *jīvas* disappear into the absolute self.⁶⁵

Although Radhakrishnan points out weaknesses in each analogy, he does not explicitly favour one theory over the other.⁶⁶ However, there are a number of elements in his thought that would lean him towards the limitation theory of the *Bhāṅgavāda* school. To begin with, Radhakrishnan is committed to the relative reality of individual selves, something the limitation theory gives more credence to. As Eliot Deutsch points out:

Avaccheda-vāda, the theory of limitation, gives somewhat greater empirical reality to the *jīva* than does pratibimba-vāda, the theory of reflection, in this sense that, whereas the *jīva* in the pratibimba-vāda is a mere floating image, as it were, the *jīva* in the avaccheda-vāda is a necessary, "practical" reality.⁶⁷

This does not mean that *jīva* and *Ātman* represent two realities or even different parts of the same reality; rather, the *jīva* is the *Ātman* as seen through the limiting adjuncts of ignorance, namely, the body, mind, senses and intellect.

A second reason why Radhakrishnan's view coheres more with the limitation theory of ignorance involves the notion of the *jīva*'s sheaths or layers.

Radhakrishnan adheres to the *Advaita* view that the empirical self (*jīva*) is a complex entity consisting of five limiting sheaths (*kośas*) which are divided into the gross, the subtle, and the causal bodies. In other words, the *jīva* has five limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*) in ascending order of fineness, beginning with the matter sheath (*anna*) and going upwards through the life (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi* or *vijñāna*), and bliss (*ānanda*) sheaths. "The individual," Radhakrishnan maintains, "is a complex of five elements, *anna*, *prāṇa*, *manas*, *vijñāna*, *ānanda*."⁶⁸ These adjuncts show *adhyāsa* at work because we superimpose them onto the real self (*Ātman*) which is unlimited. By mistaking these adjuncts for *Ātman*, we qualify the infinite by the finite and so apparently limit it. As mentioned earlier, these limiting adjuncts are called layers or sheaths (*kośas*) because they veil the *Ātman* in the same way as a sheath veils a sword or layers hide the core of an onion. Each term indicates that it is a mere covering containing something more vital within itself, the more vital something of course being the *Ātman*.

The first and outermost layer of the individual self (*jīva*) is the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*) consisting of what the *Taittirīya Upanisad* calls the food (matter) sheath and the life or vital breath sheath. "Life and matter," Radhakrishnan writes "are organized in the gross physical body..."⁶⁹ The gross body represents the physical or biological nature of our being. Although early *Vedāntists* believed that it consisted of seven parts (skin, flesh, fats, arteries, blood, bone, and marrow), Radhakrishnan no doubt subscribed to the more modern scientific view of the body and its functions. The food sheath derives its name from the fact that the gross body depends on food for its continued existence and that it will in turn become food for other living organisms once it dies and decomposes.

Humans are not just pockets of inanimate matter, but living, breathing, vital organisms. Indeed, all animate beings live and breathe through the second sheath of the gross body — the life sheath. Radhakrishnan, however, does not think the life sheath contains any "mysterious vital force" as the 19th century Western vitalists maintained.⁷⁰ And although *Vedānta* talks about "*mukhyaprāna*," the chief breath of life, Radhakrishnan claims, "From this it should not be inferred that the Vedānta philosophy support a theory of vitalism" because according "to the Vedānta philosophy it is not correct to speak of a sudden revelation of spirit when we come to life, for even matter is spirit, though in its lowest mode of manifestation."⁷¹ Radhakrishnan appears to accept the *Vedānta* view that the life sheath is divided into different functions like respiration and assimilation.⁷² The life sheath also controls and regulates the food sheath. This can be seen from the fact that the physical body becomes adversely affected when any of the faculties are not operating properly. Consequently, the food sheath basically represents the anatomy of the gross body, while the life or vital breath sheath corresponds to its physiology. Both, however, constitute the organic body, which according to Radhakrishnan contains "gross elements which the soul casts off at death."⁷³ This means the gross body is not subject to transmigration, though it is impermanent in nature. It lives, decays, and dies.⁷⁴ In consisting of the food and vital breath sheaths, the gross body, cosmologically speaking, corresponds to the lowest level of being, the material world (*virāḥ*).

According to Radhakrishnan, we wrongly associate the gross, physical body (food and life sheaths) with the real self (*Ātman*). This happens because we become aware of our close connection to physical nature and take this to constitute who we really are. But the "life of the human self," Radhakrishnan

insists "does not centre in the body."⁷⁵ Indeed, "The death of the physical body does not mean dissipation of the self."⁷⁶ An abstract theory like materialism only explains part of our nature and reduces the rest to a physical base. As Radhakrishnan claims, in Hegelian fashion:

It is the nature of any partial or abstract theory to transcend itself and thus manifest its inadequacy. Matter, though it accounts for a part of experience, cannot be the final explanation of the inanimate portion of reality, it does not account for the living and conscious aspects of it. If adopted in human affairs, it becomes a thoroughly inadequate and false guide. The materialist picture disregards the spiritually human elements of life. The whole of experience cannot be identified with the part of matter. Our thought rebels against treating parts as wholes.⁷⁷

It is in this superimposition of the part (i.e. gross body) onto the whole (*Ātman*) that the distorting function of *avidyā* becomes clearly evident.

The next level of the *jīva* is the subtle body, which is perceived to be a step higher than the gross body and is composed of finer, more subtle material elements. It includes the sheaths of mind (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*). As the gross body represents the biological aspect of our being, the subtle body stands for the psychological aspect. This means the subtle body is that which accounts for all of the cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects of our existence. Without the subtle body no psychological activity could take place. In traditional *Vedānta* philosophy the subtle body is a combination of the seventeen elements comprising will, sense-perception, and thought.⁷⁸ And unlike the gross body, the

subtle body is subject to transmigration; though, as Radhakrishnan notes, "This subtle body, while material, is also transparent, and so is not seen when the *jīva* migrates."⁷⁹

It is the mind sheath that is responsible for bringing consciousness to the fore in the individual *jīva*. What Radhakrishnan alternately calls "sense-mind,"⁸⁰ "mind,"⁸¹ "perceptual consciousness,"⁸² and "sense-experience"⁸³ is a layer of the *jīva* higher than life or matter and not reducible to either. Radhakrishnan bemoans any attempt to conceive of the mind as simply an epiphenomenon of matter. For him, mind "cannot be reduced to neurological happenings in the brain. It is a function of a later evolved and special integration of life."⁸⁴ Despite this elevated state, sense-mind (*manas*) represents the lowest form of consciousness. It utilizes the five sensory organs (*indriyas*) of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste, along with the five action organs of speech, hands, feet, arms, and reproduction to establish control over the external environment. It does this by assimilating the form of objects, thereby furnishing the individual self with perceptions that can be eventually transformed and acted upon by the intellect.

Sense experience helps us to know the outer characters of the external world. By means of it we obtain an acquaintance with the sensible qualities of the objects. Its data are the subject-matter of natural science which builds up a conceptual structure to describe them.⁸⁵

The sense-mind, in lacking any discriminating judgment, becomes blindly involved with the objects of sense and is devoid of any self-conscious awareness. This leads Radhakrishnan to observe that "Animals have only a

perceptual consciousness, their mental horizon being restricted to mere perceptions of the present moment. The animal lives only in the present. It is devoid of the power of synthesis and therefore of self-consciousness."⁸⁶ Consequently, sense-mind is principally centred on the objects of perception rather than on the subject doing the perceiving or on the perceptual process itself.

The intellectual sheath is the next more subtle layer of the empirical self or *jīva*. Radhakrishnan calls it "discursive reasoning,"⁸⁷ "logical intelligence,"⁸⁸ or "logical understanding."⁸⁹ Whereas sense-mind (*manas*) is the unreflective faculty that supplies us with sense-impressions only, intelligence is the reflective faculty which analyses and synthesizes the sense-data in order to give us a more comprehensive understanding of things in the world. As Radhakrishnan comments:

Logical knowledge is obtained by the processes of analysis and synthesis. The data supplied to us by perception are analysed and the results of the analysis yield a more systematic knowledge of the object perceived. This logical or conceptual knowledge is indirect and symbolic in its character. It helps us to handle and control the object and its workings. Conceptual explanations alter with the growth of experience and analysis. They are dependent on our perceptions, our interests, and our capacities.⁹⁰

What Radhakrishnan is doing here is distinguishing conceptual from perceptual consciousness, a distinction he believes is also formulated in both the *Upaniṣads* and modern Western philosophy. Kant, for instance, sets up a dichotomy

between sensibility, which furnishes the mind with sense impressions, and the categories of the understanding, which organize the sense data. According to Radhakrishnan, intellect or reason "connects sensations, compares and contrasts them with one another and derives inferences."⁹¹ In this way the sheath of intellect represents the faculty of judgment, sorting out and discriminating various perceptions supplied to it by the sense-mind. The harmonious functioning of intelligence (*buddhi*) and sense-mind (*manas*) is important for Radhakrishnan because both "sense knowledge and logical knowledge are the means by which we acquire for practical purposes a control over our environment."⁹²

The crucial point that must be noted about the intellect is its capacity for self-reflection. In other words, the intellect is the seat of self-consciousness, a fact that Radhakrishnan takes to be the distinguishing feature of human beings in contrast to other animals.

In self-conscious beings, we meet with a set of phenomena quite distinct from the physical or the vital or the merely conscious. Reflective mind is different from the unreflective mind of the infant or animal... When we pass from animal to man, we find not a gradual development but a sudden break, a leap into a new form of experience.⁹³

In being the seat of self-consciousness, the intellect is also the "basis for the individuality of the ego."⁹⁴ This is because the intellect establishes a dichotomy between the subject and the object and identifies itself exclusively with the acting, perceiving subject or ego. To be self-conscious means to be aware of

one's being in contrast to other beings whom we conceive as being different and external to one's own self.

According to Radhakrishnan, the ego consists of the physical, life, and mind sheaths, which make up the gross and subtle bodies, as they are unified in the intellect. It is this ego-consciousness that precipitates the sense of "I" or "mine." In *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* philosophy the sense of ego or I-consciousness is called the *ahaṁkāra*. The *ahaṁkāra* introduces a purely subjective, personal element into the subtle body since it appropriates all experience to itself. While commenting on Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan says that "The ego is the felt unity of the empirical consciousness, which is evolving in time."⁹⁵ The body, the senses, and the mind all belong to the ego and work in unison with it. One first perceives external objects (sense-mind), reflects upon them (intellect), and then responds to them (body) on the basis of the fact that those objects somehow belong to or are intended for one (ego). Radhakrishnan sums up the general nature of the ego as follows:

The ego is a unity of body, life, mind and intelligence. It is not a mere flux, as some early Buddhists and Hindus thought. Intelligence which is the unifying principle gives us the ego-consciousness. Memory is one factor which helps to preserve the continuity of the ego which is also influenced by a number of factors which are not present to our memory and are hardly grasped by our surface consciousness. The sub-conscious plays a great part in it. The nature of the ego depends on the principle of organization and the experience to be organized. As we have an enormous variety of experiences with which we can identify ourselves, an

infinite number of objects which we can pursue, fame, career, possessions or power, we have an infinite number of individuals marked out by their past and present experiences, their education and environment. What we are depends on what we have been.⁹⁶

There is thus a slight distinction made in Radhakrishnan's thought between the ego and the *jīva* (empirical self). He says the *jīva* consists of "a material body, the principle of breath, regulating the unconscious activities of the individual, and the principle of conscious activities (manas)," while "the basis of the individuality of the ego is *vijñāna* or intelligence."⁹⁷ On this scheme, the ego represents the self-conscious aspect of the *jīva*. By acting, in Radhakrishnan's words, as "a centre round which our experiences of sense and mind gather"⁹⁸ the ego, through the intellect, coordinates the *jīva*'s activities and thus performs on the conscious level the same role instinct plays on the lower unconscious plane. As such, it is responsible for the unitive nature of the empirical self and its activities.

Another way of expressing the matter is to say the ego corresponds to what some contemporary psychologists, such as Carl Rogers, call the self-concept.⁹⁹ The self-concept is a person's view or image of themselves built up in association with other people. Likewise, Radhakrishnan notes that "the self... is a system of responses to environmental situations."¹⁰⁰ In the process of gaining approval or disapproval from significant others in one's milieu (e.g., parents, teachers, peers), a person develops a conscious sense of who they are and this conscious sense or image consists of the perceived characteristics, moral and otherwise, of the "I" or the "me." Similarly, Radhakrishnan claims "The self is a mental construction"¹⁰¹ and elsewhere states it "is an ideal construction or an object of conceptual thinking."¹⁰² This can only mean that the ego is the concept

or image we have of ourselves, a concept on the basis of which we regulate our actions towards the world in general. Radhakrishnan also calls the ego the "personality" or that organized *gestalt* of an individual's psychological features which form a pattern of thinking and behavior.

The self is a teleological unity, which is the only thing constant in the concrete, busy, active, dynamic self... In all his transformations, certain persistent and distinguishable characteristics remain...

In a true sense, therefore, personality is a mask. It is the part we play in the drama of life, an imperfect expression of the groundswell of our nature. Each looks at the world from a characteristic point of view. The mental data can be systematized in different ways and so long as they are fused into a single whole, we have a single self.¹⁰³

The Western idea of the self-concept, therefore, is similar to the Indian idea of the *ahamkāra*. Both refer to ego-consciousness or the sense of "I" which constitutes the unity of the *jīva* (empirical self) as a whole.

Throughout his writings, Radhakrishnan views the *jīva* or the ego in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand, he is adamant about the positive role it plays in the evolutionary ascent towards divine life. He says, for instance, the "cosmic Spirit" uses the "perishable personality... as a tool with which to gather experience for the purposes of the growth of the soul."¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, he sees the ego as the centre of our epistemological bondage or ignorance, as when he states:

"The ego is the knot of our continued state of ignorance and so long as we live in the ego we do not share in the delight of the universal spirit. In order to know the truth we must cease to identify ourselves with the separate ego shut up in the walls of the body, life and mind. We must renounce the narrow horizon, the selfish interest, the real objective."¹⁰⁵

It is the superimposition of ego-consciousness onto the pure consciousness of the *Ātman* that brings about a limited and distorted view of our nature. The ego may be necessary for the evolution towards spirit but it can be dangerous if we remain at that level of consciousness.

In his analysis of human bondage Radhakrishnan briefly refers to Patañjali's idea of the five afflictions (*kleśas*) or forms of bondage. These are: ignorance (*avidyā*), egoism (*āsmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveśa*), and clinging to life (*abhiniveśa*). The primary affliction or hindrance is ignorance which we defined earlier as both an absence of knowledge concerning the true self (*Ātman*) and a false knowledge regarding the *jīva* as being our real identity. Ignorance gives rise to ego-consciousness which, together with ignorance, constitutes the state of epistemological limitation. Unlike *Ātman's* pure consciousness, which is completely contentless with no distinction between the self and non-self, ego-consciousness rests upon the separation of the subject from the object. When encountering the world, the ego distinguishes itself from other persons and objects, placing itself over and against these. This may have its adaptive value, as Radhakrishnan concedes, in controlling the natural environment, but it is also fraught with danger.¹⁰⁶ One problem is that the subject/object split leads to a condition of alienation. As Radhakrishnan writes:

"Objectification is estrangement. The objective world is the 'fallen' world, disintegrated and enslaved, in which the subject is alienated from the object of knowledge. It is the world of disruption, disunion, alienation."¹⁰⁷ Another difficulty is that dualistic ego-consciousness can result in rampant selfishness and unbridled individualism.

But self-consciousness which is the product of the intellect presupposes self-distinction. At the individual level the self conscious of itself is self exclusive of others, one among many. The self not only distinguishes itself from others but excludes others from its nature. A 'pluralistic universe' will be the last word of philosophy, but the thinking mind recognizes certain difficulties in the way of accepting this solution as final. The natural outcome of such an intellectualist pluralism will be a narrow philistine spirit of individualism, sensualism, selfishness.¹⁰⁸

In excluding other things the ego takes itself to be the whole of reality, a substantive entity completely independent and self-sufficient. It ignores the fact that it is only "an individuation of the Universal Spirit"¹⁰⁹ which is its foundation, and is thus only relatively and not ultimately real.

This falsely independent state of egoism is closely related to the fifth affliction in Patañjali's scheme, namely, the will to live (*abhiniveśa*). The ego is subject to a powerful thirst for continued existence along with an agonizing fear of death.¹¹⁰ This results from the *jīva* misidentifying its true nature with the body, mind, and senses. Since the *jīva* believes its essence consists of an embodied

consciousness, it feverishly attempts to maintain and enhance its life in the world.

The view which regards the multiplicity as ultimate is deceptive (*māyā*), for it causes the desire to live separate and independent lives. When we are under the influence of *maya*, we think we are completely separate entities, sharing little and mistaking individuality, which is one of the conditions of our life in space-time, for isolation and not wishing to lose the hard outlines of our separate existence. *Maya* keeps us busy with the world of succession and finitude. It causes a certain restlessness in our souls, fever in our blood. It tempts us to accept, as real, bubbles which will be broken, cobwebs which will be swept away. This waring of masks, this playing of roles, this marionette performance of ourselves, is mistaken for truth.¹¹¹

So the ego, as a result of ignorance, erroneously believes itself to be a separate, independent entity which denies death, and everything associated with it, for the purpose of survival.

The affliction of ego-consciousness, and ignorance in general, gives rise to the twin emotive hindrances of attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveśā*). The ego craves for things it believes will satisfy it even at the expense of other things and people. This makes sense from the ego's point of view since it perceives itself to be of ultimate worth and value. Why then should it not attempt to constantly fulfill its own desires? The innate greed of the ego leads

Radhakrishnan to conclude that "Ignorance (*avidyā*) and selfish desire (*kāma*) are two phases of one phenomenon."¹¹²

But not only does the ego desire things: it gets attached to them. To be attached means to be dependent on some object, idea, or person. For Radhakrishnan, "Our bondage consists in our dependence on something alien."¹¹³ Attachment is based on the experience of pleasure. We selfishly desire and cling to things because they produce in us delightful feelings. When we cling to the memory of previous pleasures our behavior becomes repetitious for the ego only goes after those things it believes will secure its own sensual gratification. The ego's action, in psychoanalytic jargon, is based on the pleasure principle. Recall what was said earlier, that individuals were subjected to the positive and negative aspects of the *guṇas* or the strands of matter. In the state of attachment the negative aspects of the *rāgas* and *tamas guṇas* predominate, which makes the individual selfish and in constant pursuit of satisfying their lower appetites. When taken to an extreme, the ego's selfish behavior can crystalize into a full-fledged addiction. In being addicted a person is compulsively driven to obtain that which satisfies them no matter what the cost. Their whole life revolves around the object they so desperately need. Needless to say, any excessive attachment or addiction places restrictions on one's freedom. That is why Radhakrishnan claims "bondage is enslavement to the object world, to necessity, to dependence."¹¹⁴ More specifically, one's life falls into what Erich Fromm has called the "having" as opposed to the "being" mode.¹¹⁵ In the having mode the individual is only committed to personal gain and obsessed with accumulating material possessions or property. Radhakrishnan echoes Fromm's view of the acquisitive nature of the ego when he writes:

The root of all evil is desire,
 which determines will and act.
 Desires torment the soul, bond
 it in chains, reducing it to
 servitude. They darken and
 blind the intellect.¹¹⁶

Thus ego-consciousness involves a selfish desire and attachment to things which "is the badge of subjection or bondage."¹¹⁷ For it makes a person's behavior narrowly compulsive and obstructs their awareness of the true self or *Ātman*.

The flip side of attachment is aversion or hatred. It is the dislike of, or antipathy towards, everything that threatens the ego. All aversion is grounded on the experience of pain. The immediate feeling and recollection of pain impels the ego to either hate or fear that which produces the displeasure in the first place. In other words, the ego seeks to destroy or avoid whatever threatens its happiness and physical existence. Here lies, for Radhakrishnan, the essence of evil, or more specifically, wrongdoing.

The essence of evil lies in
 invading what is regarded as
 another's sphere. While all kinds
 of actions based on the conception
 of a separate self are in essence
 evil, the term wrongdoing is
 reserved for those actions in
 which one's egoism goes so far
 as to break from its own sphere
 into that of another in order to
 deny it.¹¹⁸

Aversion and attachment are inextricably linked together. An individual hates and fears death or anything that intimates them because they cling to

ego-existence; and they cling to ego-existence because of an aversion to death or any type of harm. The search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain is what drives the ego and leads it into conflict with others. For in being acquisitive the ego competes for things that will satisfy its own appetites and ambitions, regardless of the effect it may have on people and the environment in general. The result, in Radhakrishnan's mind, "is a failure to enter into harmony and unity with the universe."¹¹⁹ This constitutes moral evil and sin.

We have moral evil and sin if the finite self assumes a false sufficiency and independence and adopts a more or less indifferent, if not hostile, attitude to the universe at large. He is a sinner who, owing to imperfect understanding, takes up a false defiant attitude to the not-self. Intellectually this act is error and morally it is evil. If a man considers his supreme good to be in the satisfaction of his appetites and the desires of the organism, he is a sinner. Selfishness is the root cause of sin. It is the opposition of the finite to the infinite. The rebellion of man against God.¹²⁰

This rebellion is not something thrust upon the ego but is a result of the ego's own free will. Radhakrishnan stresses the fact that the ego freely chooses to act immorally and is not mechanically determined to do so. For him, "evil is there because we sometimes abuse free will."¹²¹ We abuse free will in mistaking the finite for the infinite, and end up affirming the reality of only the empirical rather than transcendent self. Indeed,

Evil is the free act of the individual who uses his freedom for his own exaltation. It is

fundamentally the choice which affirms the finite, independent self, its lordship and acquisitiveness against the Universal will. Evil is a result of our alienation from the Real.¹²²

There is a close connection, therefore, between ignorance and our capacity to abuse our free will. The assumption is that if we knew the truth we would act righteously. Spiritual knowledge is virtue. This is different from the view espoused in the Semitic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam where wilful rebellion is the source of all evil.¹²³ For Indian thinkers, humans choose wrongly because they are ignorant of the true nature of reality and of the possible consequences of their actions. As such, ignorance (*avidyā*) is the most fundamental reason for our imperfect state of existence.

Taken together, the five afflictions of ignorance, egoism, will to live, attachment, and aversion are the forces responsible for our fallen condition. And since the four latter hindrances are dependent on the primary affliction of ignorance, they all compose the essence of our epistemological limitation.

In traditional *Vedānta* thought, the ego is associated with the state of waking consciousness, which represents a limitation of *Ātman's* pure (contentless) consciousness. "We are in bondage," Radhakrishnan remarks, "so long as the individual is confined to his superficial mind, ignorant of the spirit in him which is always free master of its world, its manifestation."¹²⁴ Waking consciousness is intentional and apprehends objects by means of the mind and senses. It is additionally temporal and analytic since it constantly shifts its attention from object to object and from different aspects of the same object.

Things can only be viewed in a piecemeal fashion, never all at once. This is the gist of the intellect's operations, which is also engrossed in the pursuit of pleasurable experiences. Ego-consciousness is really a waking consciousness.

Unlike the *Ātman* which is eternal and changeless, the empirical self (*jīva*), through ego or waking consciousness, is an active agent connected to the fruits of actions.¹²⁵ While ignorance leads the *jīva* to consider itself a distinct and autonomous entity, selfish desire leads it to reach out and act in the world. This activity connects the *jīva* to the law of karma and to the whole cycle of rebirths. In this way epistemological limitation invariably results in metaphysical limitation or bondage.

We can now see how Radhakrishnan embraces the theory of limitation in explaining the relation between the *jīva* and the *Ātman*. The infinite, eternal *Ātman* appears as the finite, changing *jīva* when the latter misidentifies itself with the limiting adjuncts or sheaths of the body, sense-mind, and intellect, and further considers itself to be a separate ego "sharply marked off from whatever lies outside his body in space and beyond his experience in time"¹²⁶ Expressed differently, limitation results when the true self is thought to consist of the gross and subtle bodies only and nothing more. This superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of finite characteristics onto the infinite *Brahman/Ātman* is a conceptual distortion of the Real. Epistemological bondage is really an ignorance which apparently misrepresents *Brahman's* pure consciousness and limits it to a state of individual dualistic consciousness. This is epistemologically limiting because the pure consciousness is seemingly divided into the subject and object poles, with the former pole poised ominously over and against the external world.

It can be ascertained from the above that an important element of spiritual liberation for Radhakrishnan is freedom from epistemological bondage or limitation. One must find release from ignorance, from both the veiling of the Ultimate Reality and from the error of mistaking the finite, empirical self (*jīva*) for the infinite, real self (*Brahman/Ātman*). This involves overcoming the workings of superimposition where the individual distorts the Real and falsely associates his or her true nature with one or more of the sheaths or bodies. The belief that the self-concept, the particular ego-image, reveals our real identity must be abandoned. In Radhakrishnan's words:

To live consciously in the finite alone is to live in bondage, with ignorance and egoism, suffering and death. By drawing back from an ignorant absorption in ourselves, we recover our spiritual being, unaffected by the limitations of mind, life, and body, so that the finite in which we outwardly live becomes a conscious representation of the divine being. Thus does it escape from its apparent bondage into its real freedom.¹²⁷

So in transcending ignorance, the erroneous association of the *Ātman* with the *jīva* and its bodies is cast off and the truth of the *Ātman* being our real identity becomes evident.

This picture of being released from ignorance rests on a metaphor or analogy which is widespread amongst the world's different spiritual traditions. It is what Ralph Metzner, in his book *Opening to Inner Light*, has called the image of "uncovering the veils of illusion."¹²⁸ It has often been thought that the state of ignorance resembles a veil, cloud, or mask covering our view of the ultimate

spiritual reality. And since this ignorance has the effect of obstructing our vision of the divine being, we come to believe that the finite world and self we experience is all there really is. The idea of sheaths covering the eternal self, or of *māyā* hiding the infinite *Brahman*, are variants of the veiling metaphor. Spiritual liberation, then, is likened to the process of lifting the veil, dispersing the clouds, or removing the mask. As Metzner writes: "Ignorance and lack of understanding are always symbolized by blindness, deafness, or clouded or covered thinking; insight, true perception, and spiritual awareness are experienced as unveiling, re-vealing, dis-covering, dis-illusionment."¹²⁹

These kinds of images and metaphors of ignorance and enlightenment are also present in Radhakrishnan's writings. Under the influence of ignorance "we see the eternal through the temporal, not face to face but under a veil."¹³⁰ And "Jñāna, or seeing through the veil of *māyā*, is the spiritual destiny of man."¹³¹ Likewise, "Intellectual progress helps us to clear the mental atmosphere of chimera and phantoms, of errors and illusions. When the hindrances are removed, the truth of spirit is revealed, self-supported and indubitable, filling the entire horizon."¹³² This being the case the "human individual can strip himself one after the other of the outer sheaths of consciousness, penetrate to the nerve and quick of his life until all else fades away into illimitable darkness, until he is alone in the white radiance of a central and unique ecstasy."¹³³ All these images suggest that spiritual liberation involves an experience of release from an ignorance which covers and distorts the truth of our spiritual being. The misidentification of *Ātman* with *jīva* must be corrected for *mokṣa* to be realized.

CHAPTER III

RELEASE FROM SUFFERING (*DUḤKHA*)

(i) COMPONENTS OF SUFFERING

The third kind of release characterizing Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation is a release from suffering (*dubkha*). The form of bondage resulting from suffering can best be described, I think, as affective limitation. The word "affection" refers to the emotional side of human beings, including feelings, sentiments, and moods. To be affected means to be moved or touched by some experience. On the level of Absolute Being (*Brahman*) affection takes the form of pure bliss (*ānanda*) which is the perfect state of joyous being, completely unsurpassable. It is beyond any kind of happiness we might experience during the course of our lives. In the human realm affections represent a limitation of *Brahman's* pure bliss. The indescribable delight of the Universal Spirit becomes, on the empirical level of reality, a diverse spectrum of emotions, ranging from pleasure to pain, and from love to hate. In other words, *Brahman's* non-dual joyous state apparently breaks up into a multitude of conflicting feelings. And it is this manifest change from infinite bliss to myriad emotions that constitutes affective limitation.

Although Radhakrishnan discusses the negative aspects of suffering, some commentators, such as B.L. Lal, stress how neo-*Vedānta* thinkers like Radhakrishnan assign a positive role to suffering in the evolution towards divine life.¹ It is as if the world is a "veil of soul-making" where the painful experiences

of life assist one's spiritual development. Indeed, for Radhakrishnan, "Human effort has a value, which is enhanced by suffering... For the success of this effort, pain and suffering become necessary."² But it is equally evident, I think, that Radhakrishnan views suffering as a form of bondage, which puts him more in the traditional *Advaita* camp. For instance, in *An Idealist View of Life* he exclaims, "the world is not a pleasure garden, but is full of pain and suffering."³ And elsewhere he states, "Man is in a stricken or fallen condition. He has slowly evolved from the animal level and has developed self-consciousness which is an unhappy and divided consciousness. The Buddha says life is suffering."⁴ In contrast "The free individual does not suffer from any conflicts. He does not give way to anger or depression — not even to what is called righteous indignation."⁵ Moreover, suffering, Radhakrishnan contends, represents a limitation of divine bliss since "once anchorage is secured and life disciplined and permitted by spirit, suffering is turned into bliss."⁶ Thus suffering has both a positive and negative dimension in Radhakrishnan's philosophy.

The term "*duḥkha*" (Pali: *Dukkha*) is usually translated into English as "suffering." This is not an altogether satisfactory translation since suffering does not convey the complete meaning of the Sanskrit *duḥkha*. *Duḥkha* is derived from "*du*" (difficult) and "*ka*" (to endure) suggesting "that which is difficult to endure." It connotes a life filled with unpleasantness, unsatisfactoriness, uncomfortableness, unease, and covers all experiences of pain, sorrow, misery, and distress. *Theravāda Buddhism*, which has painstakingly analysed the phenomenon of suffering, distinguishes three kinds of *dukkha*. The first is ordinary suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*) which refers to all forms of physical and mental pain or discomfort. The second is suffering-produced-by-change (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*) which is the frustration felt when things we have become

attached to and derive pleasure from change and decay. Even happiness can lead to *dukkha* since no joyful experience lasts forever. Everything is transient by nature. As a result, our enjoyment eventually turns into frustration, even anger. The third kind of suffering is the most pervasive and is called the suffering of conditioned states (*sankhāra-dukkha*). This is essentially the sad awareness of one's finite and unenlightened state of cyclical existence (*karma* and *samsāra*), and is comparable to the *Sāṅkhya* idea of *abhighata* consciousness or the knowledge of one's own limitations and inadequacies in a finite world.⁷

Radhakrishnan deals with all three aspects of *duḥkha* in his writings. He is particularly influenced by the Hindu and Buddhist view of the cause of suffering (*avidyā*) and by such existentialist thinkers as Heidegger and Kierkegaard.⁸

Radhakrishnan agrees with the traditional Indian view that epistemological limitation (*avidyā*) leads to affective limitation (*duḥkha*). So even though suffering is a part of what it means to be in bondage, it is a less fundamental and more parasitic element than either *māyā* or *avidyā*. "Our mental unhappiness, disease and delinquency," Radhakrishnan remarks, "are due to the lack of spiritual life."⁹ And this in turn results from ignorance of the true Reality (*Brahman/Ātman*). With the development of self-consciousness, which is unique to human beings, comes a split between the thinking subject and the perceived object. This consciousness represents a fallen state because it apparently fragments the Real.¹⁰ Radhakrishnan refers to the biblical idea of the fall to reinforce this view of the matter:

The symbolism of the second chapter of Genesis expresses the same truth. We have tasted from the fruit of the tree of knowledge and the fall of man is the result. This intellectual knowledge is a leap forward in man's awareness. It is said to be a fall because it produces a fissure or cleavage in man's life, a break in the natural order of things.¹¹

He also alludes to the *Upaniṣadic* idea regarding the oneness of Absolute Being and how by introducing duality into an essentially non-dual reality creates tension, conflict, and suffering.¹² "When the Upaniṣads ask us to grow from intellectual to spiritual consciousness, they ask us to effect an enlargement of our awareness by which the difficulties of insecurity, isolation and death are overcome."¹³ From this we can see how dualistic consciousness is the starting point for affective limitation.

According to Radhakrishnan, the first component of affective limitation or suffering is an overwhelming feeling of insecurity. "Man," he baldly states, "suffers from a sense of insecurity."¹⁴ In being self-conscious, individuals are aware of their finitude and the impermanent nature of things. They are cognizant of the inevitability of death and are fearful of it.¹⁵ This fear is of something dreadful impending, though one is uncertain of what exactly death entails. It is this uncertainty about the future, together with the awareness of our own mortality while striving for self-preservation, that produces feelings of radical insecurity. As Radhakrishnan observes:

It is thought that induces in
man the feeling of fear

and loneliness, that discloses to him his inadequacy, his need for growth. The dawn of intellectual consciousness marks the end of his elemental state of wholeness and innocence. Man suffers from a sense of insecurity. He is torn, distressed and asks, who shall save me from the body of this death? The uncertainty of life and the instinct for self-preservation get into conflict.¹⁶

So there is a general struggle within human beings between their natural part which is subject to change and death, and their spiritual being which transcends time.¹⁷ The resultant insecurity fits into all three kinds of suffering mentioned earlier. It definitely brings about mental anguish (*dukkha-dukkha*) due to the mutability of the body (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*) and our finite state of being (*sankhāra-dukkha*).

Radhakrishnan relies on the views expressed in Hinduism, Buddhism, and existentialism to elaborate on his conception of radical insecurity. "The Upanisads" he asserts, "speak to us of the agony of finite, creative living in time, the world of karma, the agony of feeling that we are at the mercy of time."¹⁸ The world of *samsāra*, of the cycle of births, deaths, and rebirths, is the realm of flux and becoming.¹⁹ In such a world, insecurity, and therefore unhappiness, are inevitable since we become attached to transient objects as though they were permanent in nature. Once these objects change and decay we suffer frustration and insecurity. There seems nothing stable in the world that we can latch onto for meaning and assurance in life. It is a person's desire for pleasurable experiences and aversion to pain which leads them to get attached to things and to develop a sense of insecurity over the possibility of losing them.

A similar analysis is prevalent in Buddhism. The first two noble truths of the Buddha describe the existence and cause of suffering respectively. Suffering does not only refer to physical and mental discomfort but to the facts of impermanence and finitude. These are characteristics of the world of *saṃsāra* and evoke within us precarious feelings. To overcome the insecurity, and the concomitant fear of an unstable existence, we unconsciously fabricate a belief in a permanently abiding ego which becomes the focal point of our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions. The ego becomes our secure harbour in a sea of change and uncertainty. Though this might be reassuring at first, it eventually leads to more insecurity. The egoistic craving (*taṇhā*) for sensual pleasure and self-preservation begets our attachment to objects that seemingly fulfill those desires. The truth, however, is that these objects are subject to change and disintegration. The result is a greater sense of insecurity because we desperately desire and cling to those things we will invariably be deprived of sometime in the future. As Radhakrishnan notes, it is this mistaken view of an abiding ego that the Buddha diagnoses as the chief cause of human suffering:

He (Buddha) declared that all suffering is due to ignorance of the impermanent nature of things and selfish craving. When we are the victims of ignorance, absolutize our own ego, oppose it to society and miss our moral vocation. Ignorance is not something outside of man. He lives in it, for it is that in which historical man is involved. So long as he lives his unregenerate life in time, the life of craving and aversion, suffering will be his lot.²⁰

The feeling of insecurity, in both Hindu and Buddhist thought, is a form of mental distress arising from our ignorance (*avidyā*) of what is really and ultimately the case.

Radhakrishnan further incorporates insights from modern existentialist philosophers, most notably from Martin Heidegger, to flesh out the meaning of insecurity. He says "For Heidegger all existence is infected with the character of time, of historicity. Nothing can escape the fate of history. All existence is threatened with two dreadful convictions, that of death and transitoriness and the dread of death."²¹ In his major work *Being and Time*, Heidegger reveals how our "being-in-the-world" is marked by what Sartre later termed facticity and transcendence. As the name implies, facticity refers to the most basic, unalterable facts of our earthly existence. We simply find ourselves thrown into a particular existential and historical situation, of being this particular person in this particular time and place. The inexorable facts of our situation represent the "givenness" of our existence. Transcendence, on the other hand, signifies *dasein's* (Heidegger's term for individual human being-in-the-world) possibilities. Human beings are essentially free to determine, within a given framework, their own course of life. This is what distinguishes them from other beings who live closed-ended lives. Through understanding and imagination individuals are open to different alternatives. This, however, makes one feel insecure in two ways. First, the fact of being able to choose from different possibilities reveals the inherent contingency and objective meaninglessness of existence. We are at a loss to discern an external meaning to the universe that we could appeal to in making moral decisions. Rather we create our own values and meanings which help us structure our lives. Second, the awareness of different options discloses the "possibility that ends all possibilities," namely, death. The awareness of change

and mortality shows one that they are really a "being-towards-death" since death enters into one's own existence and is inwardly appropriated. The result is a dreadful feeling of insecurity, which Radhakrishnan explains in the following manner:

In the exciting moments of fear, in the devastating experience of being thrown into the world of space and time, man finds that he stands on the obscure ground of a mysterious nothing, which is not a mathematical zero but something more positive than that. When man experiences this 'nothingness' in all its existential weight he suffers from a feeling of profound unrest and care, a 'radical insecurity of being'.²²

For Hinduism, Buddhism, and Heideggerian existentialism, insecurity is a mental and emotional state of uncertainty in the face of possible non-being. In Buddhist parlance, this is ordinary suffering produced by change and conditioned states.

A related component of human suffering that is explicated by Radhakrishnan is the experience of anxiety. An individual's insecurity regarding possible annihilation generates an anxiety that is fundamental to one's being-in-the-world. Again, this view, according to Radhakrishnan, is evident in Hindu, Buddhist, and existentialist philosophy. For the Hindu *Advaitin*, the empirical self (*jīva*) is perpetually changing while the universal self (*Ātman*) is ceaselessly unchanging.²³ Since the transitory nature of the ego implies moral freedom, an individual has the choice, within limits, of pursuing a self-centred or Reality-centred existence. But given that the ego is only relatively and not absolutely real, the individual feels anxious about his or her being and wrongly chooses to

affirm the empirical self as final and absolute. To feel at ease the *jīva* seeks those objects which it thinks will permanently satisfy its egoistic desires. But this only creates more anxiety because these objects of satisfaction are only transitory and will eventually disappear. The end result, Radhakrishnan concludes, is moral evil or sin.

Man's creative will is the source of selfish ambition as well as disinterested love. Although the true law of man's being is love, a harmonious relation among all living things, he rebels against this law when he imagines himself not a single individual in the whole but the whole itself. A defiant self-affirmation which leads to enslavement, a false freedom which destroys itself, overtakes him. There is a complete sundering of that sense of compassion which is the intuitive sense of kinship and union with life, which was found in the earlier stages of an instinctive level. The possibility of the misuse of freedom becomes an actuality. Freedom passes into wilfulness and wilfulness gives rise to evil. The fact of moral freedom produces sin, though sin is not a necessary consequence of it. The abuse of freedom results in sins.²⁴

The anxiety over an unstable condition, our freedom, brings about the misuse of free-will in affirming the empirical self over all else.

Radhakrishnan believes this view of anxiety-ridden freedom is also essential to Buddhism.²⁵ He specifically argues that the Buddhist doctrine of no-self (*anātman*) only applies to "the mutable ego, the psycho-physical individual"

and does not deny the *Upaniṣadic* idea of a universal self (*Ātman*).²⁶ This is an extremely debatable point. In his article "Radhakrishnan and Buddhism" the great Buddhist scholar T.R.V. Murti takes Radhakrishnan to task for minimizing the difference between Buddhism and the *Upaniṣadic* teachings.²⁷ Although Murti believes Radhakrishnan is correct in not interpreting the Buddha's silence towards metaphysical questions as indicating agnosticism or nihilism, he clearly thinks he is wrong in interpreting the Buddha's implied conception of a transcendent reality as being equivalent to the *Upaniṣadic Brahman/Ātman*. There are two reasons for this: first, the Buddha, though referring several times to the creator God *Brahmā*, never mentions the absolute reality, *Brahman*; and second, the Buddha, in affirming the no-self (*anātman*) doctrine, denies the existence of a permanent, eternal being-consciousness like the *Upaniṣadic Ātman*.²⁸ Radhakrishnan responds by claiming the Buddha often spoke of "a self that is the Lord of self, that is the goal of self" which "suggest the reality of the universal self, the *ātman*, that is transcendent to the empirical ego."²⁹ The problem with this whole debate resides in the failure to adequately distinguish between the early *Hīnayāna* schools of Buddhism (e.g. *Theravāda*) and the later *Mahāyāna* schools (e.g. *Yogacara*). Though one could say the notion of a universal self is absent in the former, it is perhaps evident in the latter, especially in the notion of the *dharmakāya* — the essential body or nature of the Buddha. Such a distinction should have been more clearly drawn by Radhakrishnan.

In any case, the main point to emphasize is that according to Radhakrishnan's interpretation the transitory nature of the ego in the form of the five everchanging elements (*skandhas*) of matter, perception, feelings, cognition, and consciousness reveals a non-substantial entity at the heart of human life, a void (*śūnya*) which generates feelings of acute anxiety. To cover up this void or

impermanence the individual, in relation with others, constructs and clings to an empirical ego which he or she believes will remain stable. The egoistic desire for sensual pleasures and self-preservation then engenders an attachment to objects whose possible loss or unobtainability results in tormenting anxiety. In describing the Buddhist position Radhakrishnan says:

So long as he lives his unregenerate
life in time, the life of craving
and aversion, suffering will be
his lot. A sense of bleakness
overtakes the seeking spirit,
which makes the world a waste and
life a vain show.³⁰

The transient and non-substantial nature of empirical existence thus entails a radical freedom whose initial gift to the individual is an overwhelming sense of anxiety.

It is to existentialist thinkers like Heidegger and Kierkegaard that Radhakrishnan most frequently turns to examine the meaning and significance of anxiety. For these existentialists, anxiety is different from fear. Fear is always an apprehension about something particular, whereas anxiety (*angst* in German) is a gnawing unease about life (and death) in general. It is a restless feeling indicating that all is not quite well. According to Heidegger, the mood of anxiety arises from our consciousness of "nothing," that is, of possible non-being. Normally we live in a fallen state of being which Heidegger terms "*das man*," or inauthenticity.³¹ In this state the individual is basically an unthinking conformist, taking his or her sense of identity from others — "the they." A person's actions, thoughts, and values then are not really their own since they blindly accept society's conceptions and standards. This average everydayness of conformity

and refusal to face and choose other possibilities is inauthenticity. We choose to lose ourselves in the crowd with idle talk and curiosity instead of taking responsibility for our own choices. Heidegger believes, however, that there remains a nagging feeling behind the mindless chatter of everyday life that poses a threat to inauthenticity. This nagging feeling, of course, is anxiety.

For Heidegger anxiety is the dread of nothingness, which has two meanings. First, anxiety is the dread of death. As Radhakrishnan describes it:

The consciousness of death is source of anxiety. If man loses himself in the world and its diversions, his anxiety may be a brief fleeting fear. But man is a thinking being. When he reflects on the finite and limited character of his existence, he is overcome by fear, which is, as Heidegger says "more primordial than man himself".³²

The second meaning of anxiety is the dread of one's existence (*existenz*), of the open-ended range of possibilities that people are capable of projecting for themselves. In other words, human beings become anxious over their fundamental no-thing-ness. Humans have no built-in nature as such, only possibilities that can be realized or neglected. One can either choose to freely project a set of goals and values for oneself or simply follow the agenda laid down by *das man*. It is this implicit awareness of one's fundamental freedom, the essential nothingness of one's being-in-the-world, which provokes feelings of general unease.

The substantial role freedom plays in producing anxiety is also found in Kierkegaard's writings, though in a more religious context. He in fact introduces the notion of anxiety, or what he often calls dread, in a discussion on the origin of sin.³³ In Radhakrishnan's words:

The fact of freedom, according to Kierkegaard, produces anxiety, the fear that we may abuse our freedom. He says "Anxiety is the psychological condition which precedes sin. It is so near, so fearfully near to sin, and yet it is not the explanation for sin." Anxiety is the precondition of sin, the fear that we may sin. It is a basic constituent of human freedom. Sin is not a psychological problem, but dread or anxiety-neurosis is.³⁴

Human beings are faced with the paradoxical situation of having to become what they are. The development from a totally unconscious state of innocence to one of conscious individuality is not instinctive but a product of free choice. And this choice of moving towards conscious individuality brings about a sense of anxiety, a "sickness unto death," because there is the possibility of committing sin and falling into disharmony with our source of being, God. As a result, the individual often chooses to abdicate his or her responsibilities and flee from his or her self-in-the-making. One then becomes inauthentic, encapsulating oneself in a protective shell of suffocating pride.

Thus for Radhakrishnan it is the fact of impermanency, freedom, or nothingness, as delineated in Hindu, Buddhist and existentialist thought, that explains the origin of our anxious state of being.

The painful feelings of insecurity and anxiety lead to a state of "inward discord."³⁵ For Radhakrishnan, "the knowledge of death and the knowledge of isolation breeds inner division. Man falls into fragmentation. He becomes a divided, riven being, tormented by doubt, fear, and suffering."³⁶ Self-consciousness has made humans aware of their finitude and nothingness. There is a conflict between being and non-being. To suppress the dread of non-being the individual clings to his or her sense of ego with its seliish desires. The result is a dizzying fluctuation between pride or self-inflation on the one hand, and abasement or self-deflation on the other. When the ego is successful in gratifying its impulses and securing a degree of substantial worth and value it experiences elation and self-conceit. One almost feels like an all-powerful deity. However, when the ego fails to procure such satisfaction and positive feedback, it plunges into depression and self-denigration. It then has a deflated sense of itself and feels like a helpless infant. The ego becomes locked into a neurotic syndrome, swinging back and forth between mania and melancholy. The two in fact are simply flip sides of the same neurotic coin of selfish egoism. As the religious philosopher Donald Evans explains it:

Indeed, self-deflation and self-inflation belong together. The closed person tends to alternate between the two extremes — god or infant, all-powerful or powerless, self-sufficient or totally dependent, on a throne or in a gutter. The two fantasies tend to play on each other. If some failure moves me to

crawl shamefully into a corner, this is because my perfectionist pride has been hurt. Or alternatively I may take flight from feeling small and vulnerable and seek a castle of lofty self-sufficiency.³⁷

Needless to say, the two extremes of self-inflation and self-deflation characterize a divided existence, a life torn between one and the other discordant poles. For Radhakrishnan, it is the symbolism of the fall that best captures this condition of inner fragmentation. "The fall" he muses, "symbolizes the disintegration of the harmony, the lapse from the primeval condition into division, from a unitive life into a separate self-centred one."³⁸

Radhakrishnan's description of the three components of suffering — insecurity, anxiety, and inward discord — presents us with a harrowing picture of our imperfect state of being, one which the following passage more than illustrates:

Man suffers intellectually from a sense of insecurity, ethically from a sense of anxiety. In moments of self-analysis, he examines his past and feels distressed in spirit, unsure of himself, pulled this way and that. He becomes embittered, sick unto death. He is haunted with a sense of mystery, has the feeling of being weak, incompetent, frail, ignorant, evil, unholy. This unhappy being, whose heart is torn by secret sufferings, is terribly alone, struggling not with external forces but with himself. This divided, riven being, tormented by fear, at odds with himself, is weighed down by despair. There is no unhappiness greater than derision.³⁹

From the above description it would appear that affective limitation covers the whole spectrum of negative feelings, everything from guilt to despair. It is indeed a state of what Hegel termed "unhappy consciousness." But despite this fallen state, Radhakrishnan argues, along with Hindus, Buddhists, and religious existentialists, that suffering is only a necessary stage in the possible realization of one's true self. It should be looked upon, therefore, as a temporary condition subject to radical transformation.

In summing up this part we can say that for Radhakrishnan, bondage, as the affective limitation of divine bliss, takes the form of suffering (*duḥkha*) which involves, among other things, the overwhelming discomfort of insecurity, anxiety and inner discord brought about by the awareness of impermanence and finitude.

(II) THE BONDAGE PROCESS

We are now in a position to bring together and summarize Radhakrishnan's ideas about the nature and origins of human bondage and how spiritual liberation is a release from this limiting condition. For Radhakrishnan, bondage is the imperfect state of metaphysical, epistemological, and affective limitation. It is living in *māyā*, *avidyā*, and *duḥkha*. This represents a defective condition because it is an apparent limitation of *Brahman's* pure being, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. Although the limitation is only apparent, at least from the Absolute's standpoint, it should not be construed as an illusion. Bondage is real but only in a relative, not ultimate, sense. This means that the whole painful cycle of births and rebirths, of *saṃsāra*, can eventually come to an end by means of individual and collective transformation. Radhakrishnan,

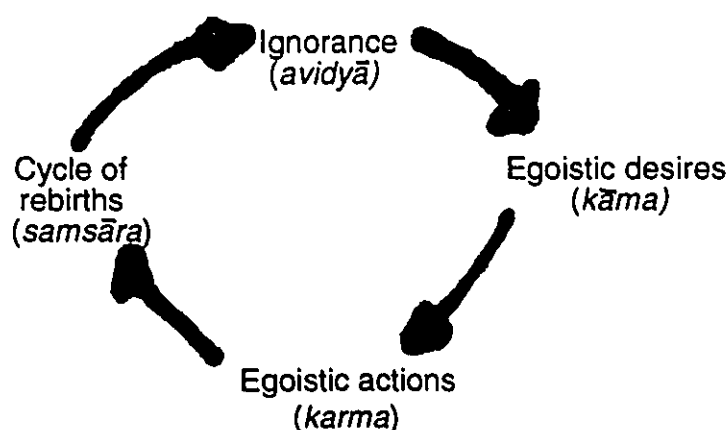
therefore, along with other neo-*Vedāntic* thinkers (e.g., Aurobindo Ghose), views bondage in a more positive light. We have to start from limitation to achieve spiritual liberation. But this more optimistic vision does not detract from the negative aspects of living in a world characterized objectively by matter, time, and causality, and subjectively by dualistic consciousness and psychological suffering. "To live consciously in the finite alone" Radhakrishnan mourns "is to live in bondage, with ignorance and egoism, suffering and death."⁴⁰ Bondage is thus fundamentally ambiguous. It presents us with both dangers and opportunities.

In attempting to pinpoint the origins of bondage Radhakrishnan relies on traditional Indian (i.e., Hindu and Buddhist) and Judeo-Christian thought. On the one hand, he embraces the Indian explanation which grounds bondage in ignorance (*avidyā*), while on the other hand, emphasizes the biblical view of the role of free-will in accounting for evil and sin. Radhakrishnan would most likely insist that his concept of free-will and sin are derived principally from *Vedic* and other Indian sources. This may be so but there is no denying his frequent references to the Judeo-Christian theory of the fall from paradise to illustrate how free-will causes evil.⁴¹ In any case, since free-will is connected to the empirical ego and its actions, and since the ego and its desires are a result of a primordial ignorance, Radhakrishnan would posit ignorance as being the most fundamental reason for our suffering condition. In other words, it is ignorance that ultimately explains why we are in a fallen, imperfect state of being. It is the chief obstacle in the way of spiritual growth and represents the essential defect that human beings must overcome if they are to ever realize spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*).

The interrelationship between metaphysical (*māyā*), epistemological (*avidyā*), and affective (*duḥkha*) limitation, and the overall dynamics of the bondage process itself, is summarized by Radhakrishnan as follows:

Samsāra is historical becoming. It is the temporal procession of changes from one state into the next. What keeps the world going is action or karma. If the world is nothing but ebb and flow, continual becoming, it is due to action. At the human level action is caused by desire or attachment, *kāma*. The root cause of desire is *avidyā* or ignorance of the nature of things. The roots of desire lie in the ignorant belief in the individual's self-sufficiency, in the attribution of reality and permanence to it. So long as ignorance persists, it is not possible to escape from the vicious cycle of becoming. We cannot cure desires by fresh desires; we cannot cure action by more action. The eternal cannot be gained by that which is temporal. Whether we are bound by good desires or bad desires, it is still a question of bondage. It makes little difference whether the chains which bind us are made of gold or of iron. To escape from bondage we must get rid of ignorance, which is the parent of ignorant desires and so of ignorant actions.⁴²

So although ignorance has no origin in time it is the logical starting point of the bondage process, which is cyclical in nature. The whole movement can be represented thus:



We logically begin with ignorance, which is the mistaken belief that the *jīva* is the real self (*Ātman*). Our whole identity becomes erroneously associated with the sense of "I." The ego arises out of a dualistic self-consciousness where there is a split between the subject and the object. The empirical subject (*jīva*) then forms, by means of the intellect, a self-concept or ego-image which becomes the centre of individual experience. The ego is posited out of a hidden fear that the subject is really no-thing, lacking substantiality, worth, and permanence. To counteract this fear the ego, in an act of free-will, excludes everything in its view and takes itself to be the whole. This assumption of self-sufficiency produces egoistic desires (*kāma*) centering around attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣā*). The ego craves for and becomes dependent upon those things that affirm its ultimacy and bring it pleasure, while simultaneously avoiding other things which threaten its colossal conceit and bring it pain. The result of selfish desires is psychological suffering in the form of insecurity, anxiety, and inner discord. This suffering can be conceived of as the experiential starting point of the bondage process. The ego is forever apprehensive about obtaining those things that will satisfy its cravings or about losing them. The fatal combination of ignorance, selfish desire, pride, suffering and the abuse of free-will cause the ego to act in evil ways. In acting to secure only its own good,

regardless of the effects this might have on others, the ego accumulates bad karma which will determine the individual's next rebirth. Selfish, sinful actions keep the individual bound to the wheel of becoming (*samsāra*), to the irksome cycle of births, deaths, and rebirths.

Another way of expressing Radhakrishnan's view of human bondage, one consistent with the views of some contemporary Western thinkers such as Donald Evans, is to say that the problem is one of fundamental narcissism.⁴³ By narcissism here is meant both a condition of megalomaniacal pride as well as lumpy self-abasement. One thinks oneself a totally autonomous being separate from all else, or a completely heteronomous being dependent on external things. Either one is the self-absorbed Narcissus of Greek mythology or the conformist Echo. These two extremes play off against one another, since the satisfaction of egoistic desires often results in overweening pride, while the frustration of such desires often leads to agonizing humiliation. Both experiences, however, define the narcissistic condition. Narcissism is essentially a way of being in the world which involves inordinate "self-centredness, self-preoccupation, self-separation, self-enclosure or egocentricity."⁴⁴ It designates, as Evans suggests, a "closed" rather than an "open self."⁴⁵ Radhakrishnan believes most of the world's religions take narcissism, as so described, to be the principal defect of human existence and the hallmark of imperfection. Sin or radical evil implies narcissism, which arises from our ignorance of the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman/Ātman*. Spiritual liberation, then, constitutes a release from fundamental narcissism, from the closed to the open self. It is, in sum, the deliverance from metaphysical (*māyā*), epistemological (*avidyā*), and affective (*duḥkha*) limitation.

SECTION II

SPIRITUAL LIBERATION AS REALIZATION

CHAPTER IV

REALIZATION OF PURE CONSCIOUSNESS (CIT-ĀTMAN)

(I) THE CONCEPT OF JĪVANMUKTI

Radhakrishnan's concept of spiritual liberation does not simply mean a release from limitations; it also exhorts the more positive view of fully realizing our true self or *Ātman*. Liberation consists both of a "positive" freedom towards self-realization as well as a "negative" freedom from finitude, ignorance, and suffering. In Radhakrishnan words: "Negatively, release is freedom from hampering egoism; positively it is realization of one's spiritual destiny."¹ Indeed, it is in fully realizing our divine nature that we transcend our limited state of being. This implies that the supreme goal of human life is to become aware that our innermost self, *Ātman*, is our true identity, and that the *Ātman* is no different from the ultimate reality, *Brahman*. In other words, spiritual liberation is self-realization or the direct awareness of ourselves as divine. "The realization of the Supreme is the goal of human existence."² Radhakrishnan thus follows the *Advaita* philosophical tradition in thinking that the *Upaniṣadic* phrase "*Tat tvam asi*" ("Thou art that") really signifies "I am *Brahman*." And the immediate apprehension of this paramount fact constitutes *mokṣa*.

The *Advaita* notion of self-realization is discernable in many of Radhakrishnan's writings. For instance, in a *Recovery of Faith* he says "There is a perfect correspondence between the inner nature of man and the truth of external reality (*Brahman*)."³ And in his "Reply to Critics" he opines that "The end of human existence is perfection, which is not ascent to a heaven above but is

ascent to the spirit within."⁴ More generally he states that "The fundamental truths of a spiritual religion are that our real self is the supreme being, which is our business to discover and consciously become, and this being is one in all."⁵ This being the case, it follows that "the denial of the divine in man has resulted in a sickness of the soul."⁶ To remedy the situation we must recognize that our true self is not our finite body and mind. Or in Radhakrishnan's words:

The awakened man draws back from
his mind, life and body and all
else that is not his true being
and knows himself to be one with
the eternal spirit which is the
soul of all phenomenon.⁷

These quoted passages are sufficient, I think, to demonstrate how Radhakrishnan is indeed committed to the more positive *Advaita* idea of *mokṣa* as self-realization.

Radhakrishnan's positive view of freedom, like his negative conception, harbours what I have termed, epistemological, affective, and metaphysical aspects. Epistemological realization consists of the non-dual awareness of *Ātman* or pure consciousness (*cit*); affective realization is the expression of pure bliss (*ānanda*); and metaphysical realization involves the transfiguration of time into pure being (*sat*). Unlike ignorance (*avidyā*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and finitude (*māyā*), these realizations do not represent a limitation of *Brahman's* intrinsic nature, but rather a reaffirmation of it. Just as bondage signifies an apparent restriction of *saccidānanda*, liberation connotes a (re)fulfillment of pure being, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. There is thus a parallel between our bounded state, which is an apparent limitation of *Brahman*, and the condition of

mokṣa which illuminates the wholeness of Spirit. The best way, I think, to comprehend Radhakrishnan's positive notion of spiritual freedom is to see how it directly expresses itself in the twin ideals of *jīvanmukti* (individual liberation) and *sarvamukti* (universal liberation). The former represents the penultimate goal of the liberation process and is connected to realizing pure consciousness (*cit*) and pure bliss (*ānanda*), while the latter is the final end of cosmic evolution and is related to realizing pure being (*sat*). It will be necessary, therefore, to carefully examine these two ideals, and their associated realizations, to better understand Radhakrishnan's idea of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) as (self) realization. This chapter will focus on the notion of *jīvanmukti*, while the next chapter will describe the *sarvamukti* ideal.

For Radhakrishnan the process of liberation occurs in two stages, the first culminating in the *jīvanmukti* ideal, the second in *sarvamukti*. Although individual liberation is not the ultimate purpose of the cosmic process, it is an essential precondition of the supreme goal of universal salvation. Radhakrishnan writes: "Two conditions are essential for final salvation, (i) inward perfection attained by intuition of self, (ii) outer perfection possible only with the liberation of all."⁸ Radhakrishnan follows the *Advaita Vedānta* tradition in affirming the possibility of *jīvanmukti*, of being spiritually liberated while still embodied. In fact it is the *jīvanmukta* who represents the spiritually liberated person for both Radhakrishnan and Sankara. The *jīvanmuktas* are individuals who have directly realized their true self to be *Ātman*, not *jīva*, and so are no longer bound by ignorance and psychological turmoil. As a result, pure consciousness and bliss are focused within them. The *jīvanmukta* is the model of the ideal, perfect human being. Their very existence constitutes an image of spiritual perfection. "Mokṣa, nirvāṇa, eternal life are not an escape from life but the realization of life's fullest

possibilities, the perfection of personality."⁹ In this way, the *Advaitin jīvanmukta* joins the ranks of other models of the human ideal as depicted in the world's different spiritual traditions, such as the *arahant* in Theravada Buddhism, the *bodhisattva* in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *siddha* in Jainism, the saint in Christianity, the *shayk* in Islamic Sufism, the *zaddik* in Jewish Kabbalah, the sage in Taoism, and the *chun-tzu* in Confucianism. All these figures are spiritual heroes (Joseph Campbell's "hero with a thousand faces") who have surmounted numerous obstacles and reached the summit of personal growth. They are to be looked upon as positive models for one to follow and emulate. By their guidance and example we can all progress along the spiritual path towards our true destiny, which is self-realization.¹⁰

The Sanskrit term "*jīvanmuktī*" is derived from "*jīva*" meaning "living being" and "*muktī*" the feminine noun for "liberation." It thus literally means "liberation as a living being." The point is that one can be spiritually free while still surviving in the world in an embodied state. Such a person, as previously noted, is called a "*jīvanmukta*." The important implication of all this is that *jīvanmuktas* have existed amongst us in the past and present, and will no doubt be around in the future. We then have the opportunity to listen and learn from them. They are like beacons of light signalling us towards our true home, *Brahman/Ātman*.

Although the term "*jīvanmuktī*" is absent in the *Upaniṣads*, the idea is certainly present. It is particularly evident in the *Bṛhadaranyaka* and *Kaṭha Upaniṣads* in what is termed "knowers of Brahman." In the *Bṛhadaranyaka*, which is the earliest *Upaniṣad*, liberation in life is affirmed when the heart is free from selfish desires. "When all the desires that dwell in the heart are cast away, then does the mortal become immortal, then he attains Brahman here (in the

body).¹¹ Such individuals are referred to as "knowers of Brahman,"¹² which in hindsight is essentially an equivalent term for *jīvanmukta*. Both realize the oneness of *Brahman* and become detached from worldly ambitions.

The word "*jīvanmukti*" or "*jīvanmukta*" first appears in the *Yoga-vāsistha* around the eighth century CE. This text, which was regarded as being more popular than classical, provides a graphic picture of the *jīvanmukti* ideal. Interestingly, it is a picture that resembles the description of the *sthitaprajña* (or person of serene intelligence) in the *Bhagavadgītā*.¹³ This image is further elaborated upon in the fourteenth century CE by Viyaranya in his *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. It is a book that relies heavily on the *Yoga-vasistha* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. To what extent the Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of the *bodhisattva* influenced these works is difficult to assess. But it should also be noted that the idea of being liberated while still embodied was accepted by both the *Sāṅkhya* and *Tantric* systems. The idea then has a long history and is not unique to Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta*.

It is undoubtedly true that Radhakrishnan, like Śaṅkara, held to the *jīvanmukti* ideal. "Spiritual freedom" he maintains, "is not inconsistent with physical life."¹⁴ And "Life eternal is not a life merely future or endless but a new mode of being, a transfigured life here and now."¹⁵ Moreover, Radhakrishnan not only explains the concept in his Introductions to *The Principal Upaniṣads*,¹⁶ *Brahma Sūtra*,¹⁷ and *Bhagavadgītā*,¹⁸ but expounds the notion in his own texts, though usually under different names. In his *Recovery of Faith*, for instance, the *jīvanmuktas* are called "God-Men."

God-men are the precursors of the truly human. What is possible for a Gautama or a Jesus is possible for every human being. The nature of man receives its fulfillment in them. They are our elder brothers. They show us what humanity is capable of.¹⁹

Similar thoughts reverberate in *Religion in a Changing World* where he remarks: "These god-men pour fresh energy into the world and shape the whole course of mankind."²⁰ Elsewhere he talks about "sacred individuals,"²¹ "free spirits,"²² and "integrated individuals." Concerning the latter he says:

The integrated individuals are rare privileged beings who are in advance of their time. They are the forerunners of the future race, who set to us the path we have to take, to rise from fallen to transfigured nature.²³

All these terms, given their descriptions, definitely refer to the ideal of the *jīvanmukta*.

Before proceeding to adumbrate the characteristics of the *jīvanmukta* in Radhakrishnan's thought, it will be interesting to discover how the *jīvanmukti* ideal is even possible given Radhakrishnan's (and Śaṅkara's) depiction of spiritual liberation as a release from *māyā*. In other words, if a crucial aspect of *mokṣa* involves freedom from the ontological limitations of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṁsāra*), and (moral) causality (*karma*), then how can a person realize *mokṣa* while remaining alive in a body? For the body, in being tied to selfish actions and

the cycle of rebirths, represents a bounded state of being. It is difficult to fathom how anyone remaining embodied can be said to be truly free.²⁴

The answer to this supposed dilemma is twofold. The first has to do with the different types of *karma*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, three kinds of *karma* are distinguished in the *Advaita* tradition. First is *sañcita-karma* or those stock of actions from previous lives that have not yet fruitified. Second is *agāmi-karma* or those actions performed in the present life and whose effects will be felt in some future existence. And the third is *prārabdha-karma* or those actions arising from past deeds in previous births that are now manifesting themselves in the present life.

Now according to Śaṅkara, as soon as the embodied individual directly realizes the true self or *Ātman* as being no-different from the Ultimate Reality or *Brahman* ignorance is eradicated and along with it both *sañcita* and *agāmi karmas*. All *karmas* that will not manifest themselves in this life are burnt up by the saving knowledge (*jñāna*). The only *karma* left is *prārabdha-karma* or those actions which will bear fruit in the individual's present existence. They will keep expressing themselves until none remain. Śaṅkara offers two analogies to clarify this phenomenon. In the first analogy the *jīvanmukta's* life is compared to a potter's wheel which continues to spin even after the potter has removed his or her hand from it. Just as the wheel will only stop after the momentum has dissipated, the *jīvanmukta's* body will be discarded only after all the remaining *karma* have been exhausted. As Radhakrishnan describes it:

The preservation of the body until death does not deceive. As the potter's wheel continues for a time

to revolve even after the vessel has been completed, so also life continues after liberation, since it contains no cause to check the impetus already gained.²⁵

Śaṅkara's second analogy involves, in Radhakrishnan's words, a "man who sees the moon double, on account of some defect in the eye, and cannot prevent himself from so doing even though he knows that there is really one moon."²⁶ Although spiritual knowledge lifts the distorting veil of ignorance and the *jīvanmukta* perceives the oneness of *Brahman*, he or she is still aware of the world-appearance. The difference of course is that the *jīvanmukta* knows it is simply an appearance, only relatively real, and so remains unaffected by it.

The second part of the answer to the *jīvanmukti* dilemma is Śaṅkara's view that *mokṣa* is eternal, representing a change of consciousness rather than an annihilation of the world. From the perspective of *Brahman/Ātman* there is no bondage or freedom; for this would imply a distinction, whereas the ultimate reality is completely non-dual. This means our true self is already free, though we are unaware of it because of the veiling and distorting functions of ignorance (*avidyā*). *Mokṣa* is not strictly speaking an attainment or a production of something new; it is simply the dispelling of ignorance and the direct realization of a fact that has existed for eternity. The realization does not dissolve the world but only eliminates a false outlook. Consequently, it is not difficult to accept the idea of *jīvanmukti* or liberation while still embodied, because it primarily indicates an epistemological rather than an ontological transformation. Moreover, since *mokṣa* is essentially the realization of the absolute difference between *Ātman* and *Brahman*, and *Brahman* is devoid of distinctions, so too is *mokṣa*. Factors such as matter, space-time, and causality are irrelevant to individual liberation.

They do not contain it. This being the case, it is nonsense to speak of liberation occurring only after the final death of the body (*videhamukti*) because *mokṣa* can be realized any time. It is eternal.

Radhakrishnan certainly shares the view of the eternity of *mokṣa* and that it consists, at least on the individual level, of a change from a false to a true outlook. For him, "The hidden treasure of the self is life in eternity which knows no bondage, decay or sorrow."²⁷ *Mokṣa* is not something to be conceived as being far off in another time or place. "It is" he stipulates, "a change of consciousness, an inner development, a radical transformation."²⁸ Moreover, "spiritual life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced. It is new birth into enlightenment."²⁹ Consequently, "Here and now we can attain life eternal."³⁰ The *jīvanmukti* ideal is thus possible because of the different types of *karma* and the eternity of *mokṣa* itself.

(II) STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Even if it is possible to be liberated while living, the question remains what such a person would be like. In other words, what major characteristics would a *jīvanmukta* possess and manifest? Radhakrishnan comments on a number of features present in "free spirits" which can be grouped under the two principal categories of pure consciousness and pure bliss. These will help us clarify Radhakrishnan's positive concept of *mokṣa* as (self)-realization.

A *jīvanmukta* or "integrated individual" can first be characterized as a person with pure consciousness. By pure consciousness is meant a consciousness which is free from the veiling and distorting functions of ignorance

and is therefore untainted by dualistic thought-constructions. Although the liberated individual remains aware of the appearance of plurality in the world, the appearance no longer deceives him or her into thinking appearances to be ultimately real. They immediately apprehend the oneness of *Brahman* while living in the body and know this oneness to be the highest truth. As Radhakrishnan writes:

The awakened man draws back from his mind, life and body and all else that is not true being and knows himself to be one with the eternal spirit which is the soul of all phenomenon. Spirit is essentially and purely inward to be known only from within, and yet when it is known it leaves nothing outside. In the language of religion spirit is God, the ultimate reality which is one and all-comprehensive. The spiritualized man is a new genre of man exhibiting a new quality of life. His self becomes as wide as the world itself, as he feels that the one spirit is present in all minds, lives and bodies. The supermen, the masters of life, enter into conscious possession of this truth and act from it. They represent the eternal norms of humanity. They are the saved souls.³¹

So freedom from ignorance or dualistic ego-consciousness generates a freedom of integral awareness. This can be better understood by examining the different states of consciousness first distinguished in the *Muṇḍakya Upaniṣad* and later developed by Śaṅkara.

Ignorance, or the misidentification of *Ātman* with *jīva*, apparently divides consciousness into four different states which are associated with different bodies and ontological levels. These states stand for the kinds of awareness we have of ourselves when subject to *avidyā*. The first kind is waking consciousness (*jāgarita-sthāna*) where the mind and sense organs are actively perceiving things in the external world. Waking consciousness is thus intentional, directed towards objects, and it rests upon the distinction between an "I" (or subject) and an "it" (or object). It only perceives parts, never the whole, both spatially and temporally. In waking consciousness the *Ātman* gets erroneously associated with the physical, gross body. One mistakenly thinks one's true self to be the body and so work frantically to satisfy its natural desires. The subject is taken to be an object, its divine status being completely forgotten. It follows that reality for waking consciousness is *virāt* — the physical universe. The oneness of *Brahman* is lost sight of and in its place appears the world of many objects.

The second state of awareness is called dream consciousness (*svapna-sthāna*), which unlike the waking mode, only involves the operation of the mind and never the sense organs. It simply uses in a creative way the sense-impressions carried over from the waking state. Radhakrishnan explains the difference between the waking and dreaming states in the following passage:

The difference between the waking and the dream states consists in this, that in the waking condition the mind depends on the outward impressions, while in dreaming it creates its impressions and enjoys them. It may, of course, use the materials of the waking hours.³²

Dream consciousness is associated with the *jīva*'s subtle body, and more generally with the *Hiraṇygarbha* or World-Spirit. The objects in dreams are finer and less gross than those in the waking state and are called subtle elements (*tanmātras*). They are quite elusive and beyond the control of the *jīva*. The *jīva* ends up misidentifying itself with the subtle body, or more specifically, with the three sheaths (*kośās*) of life, mind, and intellect.

The next state of consciousness is deep sleep (*suṣupti*) which is initially posited as being similar to the highest state since it too is devoid of content. Radhakrishnan observes that:

Suṣupti, or deep sleep, is also a normal occurrence of man's life. In it the mind and the senses are both said to be inactive. There is a cessation of the empirical consciousness with its distinction of object and subject. It is said that in this state we have an objectless consciousness when the self attains to a temporary union with the absolute.³³

The crucial difference between deep sleep and the higher level of consciousness is that in deep sleep distinctions still exist in a kind of pure potentiality and have not been completely abolished. In more positive terms, deep sleep is associated with the causal body and the cosmic plane of *Īśvara* or God. Although the *Upaniṣads* state that deep sleep is characterized by bliss (*ānanda*), due to the absence of cognition, Radhakrishnan insists that "it is open to question whether the self in the condition of sleep experiences positive bliss."³⁴ In any case, the experience of objectless consciousness in deep sleep is only temporary and not permanent as in *mokṣa*.

The last and highest state of consciousness is identified by *Advaita* thinkers as *turiya* ("the fourth") or transcendental consciousness. According to Radhakrishnan, "Turiya is the consciousness of unity ... the mystic realization of the oneness of all, which is the crown of spiritual life."³⁵ *Turiya* is fundamentally different from the other three states and represents the end point in the evolution of human consciousness. It is associated with the *Ātman* and not mistakenly identified with other bodies. And the corresponding ontological level is *Brahman* itself. *Turiya*, in short, constitutes self-realization, *mokṣa*. It is the type of consciousness which characterizes the *jīvanmukta*.

In his own writings, Radhakrishnan often refers to transcendental consciousness (*turiya*) as intuition or integral insight.³⁶ His descriptions of this often match the characteristics of *turiya* as outlined in traditional *Advaitin* thought. And since transcendental consciousness involves self-realization, these features also apply to *Ātman* itself.

The first characteristic of transcendental consciousness is self-luminosity (*sanyam-prikasa*), meaning it is a purely undifferentiated awareness untarnished by any type of distinctions. There is no duality of subject and object since *turiya* is a pure subject which can never be an object. In being self-luminous it reveals everything without being itself revealed by anything else. It is only aware of the oneness of Being and realizes itself as non-different from *Brahman*. Radhakrishnan pinpoints the luminous, non-dual aspect of transcendental consciousness when he states:

It is a type of experience which is

not clearly differentiated into a subject-object state, an integral, undivided consciousness in which not merely this or that side of man's nature but his whole being seems to find itself. It is a condition of consciousness in which feelings are fused, ideas melt into one another, boundaries broken and ordinary distinctions transcended.³⁷

The fact of spiritual experience represents an "Unmediated apprehension of the primordial Spirit" or "an integral insight where we are put in touch with actual being."³⁸ Self-luminous consciousness is immediate consciousness devoid of dualistic obstructions.

The non-dual, self-luminous nature of transcendental consciousness has been widely recognized and affirmed in various mystical traditions. In fact, it is the characteristic most often associated with the enlightened mind. On the level of ordinary empirical experience there seems to be a separation between the individual and the divine reality. But transcendental consciousness, or in R.M. Bucke's terminology "cosmic consciousness," shows this to be seriously inaccurate for it illuminates an astounding oneness.³⁹ As such, the mystical experience actually involves a "recovery of immediacy," where all mediating structures (e.g., dualistic thought constructions) are deactivated.⁴⁰ In the words of the transpersonal theorist, Ken Wilbur:

Whether Reality is called Brahman, God, Tao, Darmakaya, Void, or whatever, is of no great concern, for all alike point to that state of non-dual Mind wherein the universe is not split into seer and seen. But that level of consciousness is not a difficult one to discover, nor is it

buried deep within your psyche. Rather it is very close, very near, and ever-present.⁴¹

Here the ultimate reality does not know itself as an object but is immediately intuited because of its pure self-luminosity.

In transcending all distinctions, transcendental consciousness is also eternal and spaceless. The categories of space and time only apply to empirical consciousness (waking and dream states) and the phenomenal world. Objects are related to one another both spatially and temporally. But *turiya*, and by extension *Ātman*, is not an object and so remains unchanging, immutable, permanent. *Ātman* stands as an unceasing witness to all change without itself being modified or affected in any way. Radhakrishnan notes that within this consciousness "Past and present fade away in a sense of timeless being."⁴² In realizing the *Ātman* the *jīvanmukta* realizes the eternal.

It follows that transcendental consciousness is also uncaused since reality is ultimately one, with no real relations. In being unaffected by space and time categories nothing else is prior to transcendental consciousness and nothing follows from it. Creation is only applicable to the level of empirical existence and does not ultimately exist from the standpoint of *cit-Ātman*. That is why *mokṣa* is a realization of something already present rather than an actual attainment produced by some act.

The fourth characteristic of transcendental consciousness is its unqualified certainty. In other words, self-realization is a self-validating experience requiring no external proof. When persons realize their true selves,

they know without a doubt that they are one with the ultimate Reality. "There would be nothing," Radhakrishnan says of this knowledge, "with which our experience will have to cohere or to correspond. There would not arise any need or desire to test its value."⁴³ The need for objective evidence only originates from a subject-object distinction. There is the object to be proved and the subject carrying out the verification. But as mentioned earlier, transcendental consciousness is essentially non-dual. It is the foundational experience upon which all other determinate knowledge rests and so acts as a basis for the very process of proofing. The self-certifying nature of the *jīvanmukta's* consciousness is described by Radhakrishnan thusly:

He claims for his knowledge of reality an immediate and intuitive certainty, transcending any which mere reason can reach. No further experience or rational criticism can disturb his sense of certainty. Doubt and disbelief are no more possible. He speaks without hesitation and with the calm accent of finality.⁴⁴

The *jīvanmukta* truly and unquestionably knows that he or she is eternally free.

(iii) THE MEANS TO MOKṢA

The question arises how we move from dualistic, ego-consciousness to pure, transcendental consciousness, from ignorance to self-realization. As Radhakrishnan indicates in his Introductions to both *The Principal Upaniṣads* and *The Brahma-Sūtra*, the chief means to enlightenment is self-effort. To transcend the ego and realize eternal freedom takes enormous work. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says the path to liberation is as difficult as trying to climb over the edge of a razor.⁴⁵ Despite the arduous task, both Radhakrishnan and some Indian philosophical systems (e.g., *Sāṅkhya*) believe it is possible through the diligent practice of *yoga*. *Yoga* is a systematic bodily and mental discipline which aims at transforming the entire person by making them whole. Its goal is to integrate and bring under control the different aspects of our emotional, volitional, and cognitive being. "Man's quest for perfection consists in organizing the things of the body, mind and soul into a whole."⁴⁶ In practicing *yoga* we increasingly open up to the free and creative workings of the spirit within us. The spirit, rather than the ego, takes charge of our whole being and directs our actions in the world.

There are three essential types of *yoga* corresponding to the three aspects of our nature: *karma-yoga* or the path of moral action; *bhakti-yoga* or the path of love and devotion; and *jñāna-yoga* or the path of spiritual knowledge. Radhakrishnan believes none of these paths should be excluded for they are internally related and in fact "interpenetrate" one another.⁴⁷ Like Śaṅkara, however, Radhakrishnan gives more importance to *jñāna-yoga*, with *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* being preparatory for spiritual insight.

Karma-yoga is absolutely necessary for spiritual knowledge since it involves purging one's being of all moral evil. This is achieved through ethical diligence and self-control. We must both abstain from all moral wrong-doing such as lying and killing as well as cultivate positive moral virtues like honesty and kindness. Our actions must cease to be motivated by selfish desires and become bereft of any trace of egoism. In this way *karma-yoga* works on the volitional aspect of our nature. To help us achieve moral purity is the program of duties laid down in the Indian *Dharma-Śāstras* or *Law Codes*. These prescribe the duties and rituals one must perform in order to lead a moral life. The most famous code is the *Law of Manu*. This text stresses the duties associated with the fourfold caste system (priests, warriors, merchants, and labourers) and the four stages in individual development (student, householder, forest-dweller, ascetic). It also outlines the four values of wealth, pleasure, righteousness, and spiritual freedom.

Bhakti-yoga is the path of love and devotion to a personal deity who represents the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*). It pertains to the emotional side of our nature. *Bhakti* includes both faith and love-devotion. Radhakrishnan claims that one must cultivate a religious disposition, for God is only revealed to those who believe in God's existence. Faith, as trust in the universe and in its reliability, order, and decency, is the starting point of spiritual knowledge.

Love and devotion are intimately connected in *Bhakti-yoga*. The word "*bhakti*" itself is derived from the verbal root "*bhaj*" meaning both "to share in" or "belong to" (love) as well as "to worship" the deity. In *bhakti-yoga* one attempts to surrender one's egoistic will to the divine, the latter taking the form of Viṣṇu and his incarnations (e.g., Rāma, Krishna), of Śiva, or of Śakti, the female

cosmic force. Each of these deities represent *Īśvara*, the highest Lord, and so have equal status. There are many ways one can express devotion to these deities, either by worshipping an image of them by laying down food and flowers, or by praying, chanting, and dancing in a temple.

Radhakrishnan recognizes the need for *bhakti-yoga* to help individuals purify their emotions and submit their egoistic wills to the Divine Will. Most people require something concrete to relate to and *bhakti-yoga* offers specific images of the divine to worship. And since God is the Absolute seen from the human end, love of, and devotion to, a personal deity is a way individuals can overcome their egos and get in touch with the Ultimate Reality.

Although *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* play a crucial role in realizing *mokṣa*, Radhakrishnan puts more emphasis on *jñāna-yoga*, the path of spiritual knowledge. This follows from his ideas on the origins of human bondage. If bondage is *saṃsāric* suffering brought about by ignorance, then liberation is the transcendence of suffering through knowledge. What Radhakrishnan means by knowledge here is not perceptual or conceptual knowledge but what he calls "intuitive knowledge" or "integral experience."⁴⁸ This is *jñāna* or knowledge of the Divine. It is only this kind of knowledge that can deliver us from the bonds of ignorance, though reason and the intellect play an indispensable role in the whole affair.

In *An Idealist View of Life*, "Fragments of a Confession," and "Reply to Critics," Radhakrishnan distinguishes between perceptual, conceptual, and intuitive knowledge, and shows how each relates to the other.⁴⁹ These are conceived as grades of consciousness, starting from the lowest, the perceptual,

and progressing to the highest, the intuitive. By perceptual knowledge Radhakrishnan means sense experience, where we directly apprehend the external and sensible qualities of objects. The five sense organs enable us to grasp the outer characteristics and form of the external world. Conceptual knowledge is that obtained by the intellect and discursive reasoning. It analyses and synthesizes the data supplied to it by sense experience. In analysing, the intellect abstracts the qualities of an object and discovers their relationships, while in synthesizing it attempts to bring together that which it has measured off and divided. Conceptual knowledge always presupposes the duality of the knower (subject) and the known (object). The knowledge resulting from the intellect is indirect, meaning it is mediated by language and other symbols.

Both perceptual and conceptual knowledge, Radhakrishnan claims, fail to give us full knowledge of the Real. In sense experience only the external features of objects are known, not the whole thing. Furthermore, the senses are not always reliable and can conflict. The intellect fares no better since conceptual knowledge is indirect, dualistic, and abstract. Only intuitive knowledge sees reality as it truly is, in its integral and unique wholeness. One can call this a knowledge by identity whereby the knower and the known are totally fused together. And in being immediate, intuition carries its own guarantee of certainty. It is, in short, self-luminous and self-evident.

Radhakrishnan actually distinguishes four kinds of intuition — scientific, artistic, ethical, and religious.⁵⁰ Of these, religious intuition is the highest type for it is all-comprehending, covering the whole of life and including the other kinds of intuition. While science strives to comprehend the law that sustains the cosmos, while art yearns to reveal the beauty that is expressed in the world, and while

morality struggles to realize the goodness in the universe, each somehow is incomplete. It is only in religious intuition that truth, beauty, and goodness come together and are simultaneously realized. Religious intuition should not be confused with religious intellectualism. It is rather the apex of direct knowledge about Ultimate Reality, a mystical experience beyond words and concepts.

One should not interpret this to mean that sense experience and reason are irrelevant to realizing *mokṣa*. In fact, in his "Reply to Critics" Radhakrishnan claims "that reason and sense are outgrowths or determinations of intuition."⁵¹ Intuition is at work in sense experience in the form of an immediate apprehension of an object. And the intellect, by studying and reflecting upon the religious texts (i.e., *Vedas*), both lays the groundwork for intuition to directly grasp the eternal truths and helps to clarify what they mean.

Just as we have both continuity and discontinuity between matter or life and mind, so also we have both continuity and discontinuity between intuitive wisdom and intellectual knowledge. Those who believe that wisdom negates knowledge are as one-sided as those who believe that wisdom is nothing more than knowledge. As life appropriates and uses matter, as mind appropriates and uses life, so does spiritual wisdom appropriate and transform intellectual knowledge. Intellect is therefore an indispensable aid to support and clarify spiritual experience. The experience may be vitiated by error or impaired by emotions. There may be mistakes in the analysis and interpretation of the primary data of experience. Intellect itself is an instrument of spirit and therefore should receive and accept direction from spirit.⁵²

This harks back to the notion of intellect in the Indian philosophical tradition, where it refers to the analytic and constructive aspects of cognition. As mentioned in Chapter II, the intellect (*buddhi*) represents the faculty of judgment which sorts out and brings together various perceptions supplied to it by the sense-mind (*manas*). It is that which enables us to reflect upon things. Radhakrishnan is reiterating Sankara's idea of the three stages of *jñāna-yoga*. First there is the "hearing" stage where the student is encouraged to listen to his teacher (*guru*) and study the *Vedāntic* texts. Second comes the "thinking" stage where the student is expected to seriously reflect upon what he has read and what he has been taught by his teacher. And the third stage is "meditation" which involves a much deeper reflection on the teachings until a direct realization or knowledge of the spiritual Reality (*Brahman*) is attained. At that point one's consciousness becomes purified of all dualistic thought-constructions and reflects the pure consciousness of *Ātman*, one's innermost, spiritual self.

When sense experience, the intellect, and intuition are all operating together they form a unitive force which Radhakrishnan designates "integral" or "religious experience."⁵³ The integral experience is what Radhakrishnan discerns at the centre of all religions and is the backbone of his idea of a "Religion of the Spirit" — that eternal religion (*Sanātana Dharma*) or perennial philosophy expressing the universal set of truths about the Ultimate Reality and our relation to it. The integral experience is a direct and unimpeded awareness of the oneness of the individual self (*Ātman*) and the universal soul (*Brahman*). The realization of integral non-difference bursts the bonds of ignorance, allowing individuals to identify with their real self (*Ātman*) and not with their limited egos.

With the attainment of *jñāna*, or spiritual insight, our spiritual consciousness manifests itself and takes control of our entire being. It is this kind of integral experience or pure consciousness that the *jīvanmukta* realizes through the discipline of *yoga*.

Radhakrishnan's emphasis on self-effort, and especially *jñāna-yoga*, as a way of attaining spiritual liberation, puts him in agreement with Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta*. But he also looks at it from the more religious perspective of Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and suggests that from our empirical standpoint divine grace is also required to be emancipated. Indeed, "Salvation comes from the grace of God through *Bhakti*, or trust in God, and surrender to him."⁵⁴ He thus disagrees with the view of the *Ājvārs* who believe self-effort or merit is unnecessary for salvation, since all one requires is the spontaneous grace of God. But from the empirical point of view he is at variance with some *Advaitins* who believe self-effort to be the only means to realize the saving knowledge. Like other *Vedāntists* (Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Bāladeva), Radhakrishnan holds to a integral position where "God-vision is the fruit of strenuous effort and Divine grace."⁵⁵

Grace, as involving divine intervention to assist the human liberation process, follows from Radhakrishnan's view of God as being the active side of the Absolute. By manifesting and being immanent in the world God is the ground and guide of the whole cosmic process. This finds expression in the Hindu trinity of Brahmā the creator of the world, Vishnu the preserver, and Śiva the destroyer. In the form of *avatārs* or divine-human incarnations, Vishnu shows us the path to spiritual liberation and is continuously engaged in opposing those obstacles

(e.g., evil and error) which prevent us from realizing our true, divine self. This descent into limited form to help humanity is done out of God's mercy and love.

In the great souls we call incarnations, God who is responsible for the being and dignity of man has more wonderfully renewed it. The penetration of successiveness by the Eternal which is present in every event of the cosmic is manifested in a deeper sense in the incarnations. When once God has granted us free will, He does not stand aside leaving us to make or unmake ourselves. Whenever by the abuse of freedom unrighteousness increases and the world gets stuck in a rut, He creates Himself to lift the world from out of its rut and set it on new tracks. Out of His love He is born again and again to renew the work of creation on a higher plane.⁵⁶

Another way God aids our quest for liberation is through the law of *karma*. This law, which is the expression of God's will, gives human beings the chance to correct their deficient behavior and overcome their egoistic desires. It does this by allowing humans to be reborn into a better situation in life where they may have greater opportunities to achieve liberation. "Saṁsāra is only a succession of spiritual opportunities. Life is a stage in spiritual perfection, a step in the passage to the infinite. It is the time for preparing the soul for eternity."⁵⁷ There is no incompatibility between divine grace and self-effort. We are free to play the hand that has been dealt to us and God will reward us for our efforts accordingly.

This view may lead one to suspect that Radhakrishnan is ultimately opting for *bhakti-yoga* as the chief means to liberation. But we must recall Radhakrishnan's integral view of *yoga* whereby each *yogic* path interpenetrates

and reinforces the other. Spiritual liberation is the result of both prolonged effort and divine intervention. Moreover, the grace of God not only assists the individual in becoming a *jīvanmukta*; it is also still operative in the world through the *jīvanmukta*'s actions of helping others realize *mokṣa*. And God's grace will be at work in the universe until the universe is totally transfigured and taken up into the pure being of the Absolute.

(iv) SELF-REALIZATION AS PERFECTIONISM

It is now possible to show how Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) as self(*Ātman*)-realization conforms to, or is an example of, an ethics of perfectionism. Throughout the history of Western and Eastern philosophy, attempts have been made to determine what is the highest good (*summum bonum*) or supreme end of human life. As mentioned briefly in the Introduction, the two candidates that have been proposed are perfection and welfare. Each of these is conceived as being the only intrinsic value, the only thing good for its own sake or in and of itself. Both are also teleological in nature, judging actions morally right only if they bring about a greater balance of good over bad. Their conception of what is good, however, is what sets them apart. For perfectionism, the good lies in realizing certain essential aspects of our nature (e.g., rationality), whereas for welfarism it resides in maximizing happiness (e.g., pleasure). Unlike welfarism, the essence of perfectionism is its commitment to an ethics of self-realization.

In general, the ethical theory of self-realization holds that the ultimate aim and value in life is, or should be, the complete fulfillment of selfhood. The good life involves actualizing our capacities and immense potential to the utmost. The

self to be fully actualized, however, is usually construed as being our ideal or essential self as opposed to our ordinary personality. And it is this emphasis on the total development of the essential self that makes self-realization a perfectionist value. Further evidence for this can be deduced from examining the linguistic origins of the word "perfection," a term derived from the Latin "*per facere*" meaning to be thoroughly or completely made and the Greek "*teleios*" which adds to the concept the idea of attaining an end (*telos*). The ideal of self-realization is thus an example of perfectionism since it consists of the goal of *completely* realizing one's essential self.⁵⁸

From what has been described in this chapter, I think it is indisputable that Radhakrishnan's concept of spiritual liberation as *Ātman*-realization falls under the category of perfectionism in the history of ethical thought.⁵⁹ His more positive idea of *mokṣa* as involving the complete realization of our true self (*Ātman*), which in essence is pure consciousness, is perfectionist to the core. He entreats us to realize that our essential self is a consciousness free from the concealing and distorting functions of ignorance (*avidyā*) and one with the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*. In realizing *Ātman* one is also experiencing one's true self to be *Brahman*.

All views agree that eternal life is an absolute fulfilment of what we are, the final affirmation of our progressive self-finding. The Self shines forth in its purity... The knowledge of God which is equivalent to the direct realization of Ultimate Reality is the highest human good (*parama-puruṣārtha*).⁶⁰

Thus for Radhakrishnan, spiritual liberation in its positive sense is nothing but *Brahman/Ātman* realization or the immediate apprehension that one's true self is essentially divine.

There are several ways in which Radhakrishnan's theory of self-realization differs from those in the Western philosophical tradition. The main difference revolves around the notion of the essential self to be fully realized. For many Western theories this self is conceived of either in terms of its unique rationality (e.g., Aristotle), will (e.g., Nietzsche), or sociality (e.g., Marx). To better grasp Radhakrishnan's notion of self-realization, it might be useful to compare it to the views of Aristotle.

For Aristotle, the highest good lies in the full realization of what is unique to human beings.⁶¹ Human nature is such that each person consists of an irrational part and a rational part. It is not the irrational part that defines human uniqueness because it consists of certain "vegetative" functions (e.g., digestion, growth) that we share with plants and "appetitive" functions (e.g., sensing, desiring) that we share with animals. Our uniqueness thus resides in possessing a rational self whose prime function, absent in plants and animals, is the ability to think and reason. Aristotle goes on to distinguish two kinds of reason — practical and theoretical. Practical reason determines what is the right end and the means of attaining it, whereas theoretical reason is involved in contemplating scientific (mathematical) and philosophical truths. There has been much debate on whether Aristotle holds to an exclusivist position where the highest good is the realization of theoretical reason only, or to an inclusivist view where both theoretical and practical reason are fully developed.⁶² In any case, it is certain

that Aristotle believed the highest good involves the full realization of the rational part of the self.

Though the faculty of reason is important to develop, its complete realization, according to Radhakrishnan, does not constitute the *summum bonum* of human life. Reason is only an integral part of conscious experience of the empirical self (*jīva*) and is not part of pure consciousness of the true self (*Ātman*). More specifically, reason constitutes a sheath (*kośa*) of the *jīva* (the intellect or *buddhi*). Unlike the pure consciousness of *Ātman*, rational consciousness is dualistic in nature, drawing a distinction between subject and object, and is vulnerable to change. In being spiritually liberated one has not simply developed one's ability to think and morally deliberate to the fullest, but has directly experienced the oneness of *Brahman/Ātman*. Aristotle has made the mistake of superimposing (*adhyasa*) onto the real self a characteristic (i.e., rationality) only properly belonging to the empirical self. As observed earlier, reason does have an important role to play in the liberation process, though it is not to be seen as the defining characteristic of the essential self. The self to be realized is not the rational self, which is really part of the *jīva*, but *Ātman*, the eternal, non-dualistic consciousness which is undifferentiated from the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*.

CHAPTER V

REALIZATION OF PURE BLISS (*ĀNANDA*)

(i) NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE SENSES

Another important characteristic of the *jīvanmukta*, and of spiritual liberation, that can be extrapolated from Radhakrishnan's writings is the experience of pure bliss (*ānanda*). This is closely related to pure consciousness since the latter is said to be blissful as well. *Turiya*, *Ātman*, *mokṣa*, radiate an eternal joy that is unconditional, beyond all positive and negative feelings. The empirical experience of pleasure, pain, and indifference represent a limitation of the Divine bliss. And just as pure consciousness is the positive outcome of surmounting ignorance (*avidyā*), pure bliss is the positive result of overcoming suffering (*duḥkha*). While in the embodied state the *jīvanmukta* is aware of pain and misery but does not let it emotionally obsess him or her. They remain detached and steady. Such liberated individuals have an integral knowledge of both the relative reality of such limited affective experiences as well as the ultimate reality of *ānanda*. This is made clear by Radhakrishnan:

But in the heart of asceticism there is a flame of spiritual joy which is of the very essence of religion. Withdrawal is not the whole of the religious tradition; there is also participation, enjoyment. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* asks us to enjoy by renouncing. It is a deep and disinterested acceptance of the world and a joyful recognition that no part of it may be refused.¹

So freedom as self-realization consists of a non-dualistic consciousness integrally aware of the pure joy (*ānanda*) emanating from one's divine self (*Ātman*).

This positive conception of *mokṣa* as pure bliss is at odds with both the *Sāṅkhya* and *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* positions. For each of these philosophies *mokṣa* is only a negative state signifying the absence of suffering or freedom from pain. According to *Sāṅkhya*, the salvific state is called *kaivalya* which means "aloneness." Here the spirit (*puruṣa*), in realizing its separateness from matter (*prakṛti*), ceases to identify with the latter and any of its products including pleasure. Similarly for the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* joy is always mixed-up with misery so that liberation only involves a release from suffering. Liberation in this system is termed *apavarga* or emancipation from pain. The *Vedānta* schools differ in affirming both a positive and negative conception of *mokṣa*. The liberated state is one not only characterized by a cessation of pain and sorrow but also one beaming with supreme felicity. It is positive bliss.

If *mokṣa* can be described in positive terms as pure bliss (*ānanda*), then a more thorough investigation of this important concept is in order. A good place to start is the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* where the different sheaths covering the innermost self (*Ātman*) are mentioned. It was described in the first chapter how ignorance has led us to misidentify our true self with the gross body (food and life sheaths) and/or the subtle body (mind and intellect sheaths). The divine self is associated with what is called the sheath of bliss. "For truly on getting the essence" claims the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, "one becomes blissful."²

In commenting on the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* Śaṅkara interprets the meaning of bliss (*ānanda*) in negative and positive ways. Negatively, he regards bliss as an absence of all suffering and misery for it is untainted by any painful experiences. But on the positive side he thinks bliss is infinite delight, its purity deriving from its unlimited plentitude of joy. All empirical pleasures are simply limited manifestations of the one bliss, *Brahman/Ātman*, which permeates them all. Furthermore, Śaṅkara recognizes that the ultimate bliss "becomes transmuted into impermanent world bliss, resulting from knowledge (of the self's oneness) being covered up by Ignorance."³ The positively pure nature of bliss is closely connected to the fact that neither it nor pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*) can be differentiated. *Brahman* is *saccidānanda*. In being pure, consciousness transcends all dualities and thus all discords and tensions. It is a state of absolute fullness and peace. Pure bliss is not limited to the pleasure that is opposed to pain in the realm of empirical existence. It is an infinite joy reaching beyond the limitations of pleasure, pain, and indifference. There is a difference in kind and not just degree between relative and absolute delight. While the joys arising from worldly experiences are unstable and fragmentary, the bliss resulting from realizing our true self is eternal and complete. This is why it is called pure.

In realizing their divine self, the *jīvanmukta* also experiences an unalloyed bliss since this is constitutive of *Ātman*. The liberated individual, though embodied, remains unaffected by the ruffles of daily life. Pain and sorrow result from ignorance, from taking our surface personality to be the real self. Consequently, we become preoccupied with gratifying the various wants and desires of the ego and grow obsessively attached to things in the world. Occasionally these things yield temporary pleasures but overall there remains a

nagging sense of anguish and unfulfillment. Egoistic cravings only fuel more yearnings for enjoyment, creating a vicious circle of unending frustration. Only by directly realizing the spiritual side of our nature can we surmount ignorance and suffering. Knowledge alone burns the roots of selfish desire, rendering impotent its ability to expand and entrap us in a constant pursuit of worldly objects. The release of non-attachment produces an indescribable joy which worldly pleasures can only hint at, never replicate.

Now Radhakrishnan's conception of pure bliss (*ānanda*) resembles in some respects Śaṅkara's position outlined above. Like Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan subscribes to both a negative and positive view of supreme felicity though he definitely places more emphasis on the latter than the former. This is in keeping with his attempt to undermine the "escapist" interpretation of *mokṣa* voiced by some critics (i.e., Schweitzer) while at the same time highlighting its affirmative elements. Nonetheless, for Radhakrishnan the *jīvanmukta*, in realizing the identity of *Brahman* and *Ātman*, becomes disentangled from egoistic impulses and so is emancipated from misery and frustration.

To live consciously in the finite alone is to live in bondage, with ignorance and egoism, suffering and death. By drawing back from the ignorant absorption in ourselves, we recover our spiritual being, unaffected by the limitations of mind, life and body, so that the finite in which we outwardly live becomes a conscious representation of the divine being. Thus does it escape from its apparent bondage into real freedom.⁴

This implies that the bliss experienced by the *jīvanmukta* involves an absence of suffering. They are unperturbed by the trials and tribulations of ordinary existence.

But how can this be? In remaining embodied the realized person is still living amidst the agony and sorrow of the world. Surely they must at times experience physical and psychological pain or discomfort. Radhakrishnan recognizes that the *jīvanmuktas* "live and suffer and rejoice and die as other mortals do, but they have no doubt in their minds, no fear in their hearts."⁵ It is likely that liberated individuals feel physical pain but do not let it interrupt their peace of mind or allow it to modify their unselfish responses to situations in daily life. In other words, they do not dwell on negative bodily feelings, preferring to remain centred on divine blissful reality. *Jīvanmuktas* are definitely free of psychological turmoil because they are not driven by egoistic ambitions nor obsessed with things in the world. The phenomenon of mental suffering assumes the existence of a person focused on their own preoccupations and whose desires arise from a sense of ego. This of course is not the case with the *jīvanmukta* who has no sense of a private self and so no egoistic interests to fulfill. Their actions are not initiated by a rapacious will but by the supreme universal Spirit which is their true self.

Initially it appears Radhakrishnan's view differs somewhat from Śaṅkara's position. For example, in his "Fragments of a Confession" he states, "An individual is free when he attains universality of spirit" which sounds like Sankara; but then he goes on to claim that "his liberated self retains its individuality as a centre of action."⁶ This apparent discrepancy can only be fully dissolved when we discuss Radhakrishnan's notion of universal liberation

(*sarvamukti*). Suffice it to say here that by individuality Radhakrishnan does not mean an individual person whose actions arise from egoistic motives but one who possesses an integral awareness of both the temporal world and the eternal Reality, and through which the Supreme Spirit makes itself evident in the cosmic process.⁷ The *jīvanmukta* constantly apprehends the non-dual nature of the world amidst the objective manifold and as a result becomes a vessel for the Universal Spirit.

When human beings are most clearly aware, most awake, they feel, that in some sense which cannot be clearly articulated, they are instruments for the expression of Spirit, "vessels" of the Spirit ... We become the instruments of the Transcendent Self and lead lives of harmony, nobility and charity.⁸

The freed individual acts as a conduit for the Supreme Spirit (*Brahman*) and remains unaffected by life's overwhelming tragedies.

For Radhakrishnan, pure bliss not only represents the absence of psychological suffering but more importantly it constitutes a positive experience which radiates through the *jīvanmukta's* thoughts, feelings, and actions. The positive experience can be summed up in two characteristics — inner peace and outward love. The two together result in an indescribable joy that has no bounds. The experience is possible due to the realization of one's true self. Radhakrishnan mentions this positive joy in a number of passages. "Integrated lives" he writes in his autobiographical "My Search for Truth," "are the saved ones. They possess the joy unspeakable, the peace that passeth understanding."⁹ And in *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* he places it in

the context of "*samādhī*" which he describes as a "supreme awareness" which "brings with it a rapture beyond joy, a knowledge beyond reason, a sensation more intense than that of life itself, infinite in peace and harmony."¹⁰ In this sense liberation as (self)-realization consists of a non-dual consciousness marked by supreme tranquility and abiding joy.

The conception of *mokṣa* as positive bliss can be examined more closely by analysing Radhakrishnan's various descriptions of the *jīvanmukta's* life in his writings. It is essential when addressing this issue to remember that Radhakrishnan has the tendency to use an amazing array of terms to designate persons who are liberated while still embodied. These include "free spirits,"¹¹ "the liberated,"¹² "the freed man,"¹³ "released person,"¹⁴ "enlightened soul,"¹⁵ "heralds of the infinite,"¹⁶ "lords of mankind,"¹⁷ "religious geniuses,"¹⁸ "the spiritualized man,"¹⁹ "Supermen,"²⁰ "Saved souls,"²¹ "God-men,"²² "liberated soul,"²³ "liberated spirit,"²⁴ "unitive life,"²⁵ "liberated individual,"²⁶ "man of wisdom,"²⁷ "integrated individuals,"²⁸ "the seer,"²⁹ and "the religious soul."³⁰ What all these terms refer to is a being who embodies spiritual perfection or saintliness. Indeed, the concept of sainthood, though traditionally associated with Christianity, has become increasingly used to designate the spiritually perfect person in other religious traditions.³¹ All the major religions of the world appear to erect ideal spiritual-moral models to be emulated, such as Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, or Confucius. Radhakrishnan himself sometimes uses the term saint when describing what amounts to the *jīvanmukta*, and believes each major religion produces such liberated individuals.

Sanctity is evidence of authentic religious spirit. It is found in every age and in every religion. The holy

men are indifferent to considerations of worldly prestige that normally weigh with ordinary people. They belong to a different kind of world. In spite of their diversity of temperament and calling, a Francis of Assisi, a Rāmakṛṣṇa, a Gandhi, have striking family resemblance. They are characterized by a profound insight into human nature, penetration of shams, and consuming love of God and man.³²

It is in the characteristics and actions of saints, of spiritually and morally esteemed individuals, that we find the expression of divine bliss.

All this follows from Radhakrishnan's penchant to place the liberated state in a more religious framework. In some of his writings Radhakrishnan draws on religious ideas to explain the life of the *jīvanmukta*. From the empirical standpoint the liberated individual is conceived to experience a union with God (*Saguṇa Brahman*) who Radhakrishnan defines as "supreme Wisdom, Love and Goodness."³³ God, in being immanent or organically bound up with the cosmic process, is the creator and governor of the world. From this perspective, *mokṣa* involves the individual self (*jīva*) realizing that its existence is grounded in God and thus giving up its egoistic will so that God can take control. "We seek union with God, a union of will and fellowship. God is a real living one who inspires trust and love, reverence and self-surrender."³⁴ Likewise, "the state of spiritual freedom consists in the transformation of our whole nature into the immortal law and power of the Divine."³⁵ In being in harmony with God's will, the *jīvanmukta* expresses God's infinite wisdom, love, and goodness. Or put another way, the Universal Spirit manifests its bliss through the *jīvanmukta's* life in the form of inner peace and outward love.³⁶

In his attempt to describe the essential positive features of the *jīvanmukta* Radhakrishnan draws on a number of religious traditions, specifically those within India (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), China (e.g., Confucianism, Taoism), and the Near East (e.g., Christianity, Islam). Together these traditions sketch a picture of the spiritually free individual as consisting of the two principal characteristics mentioned earlier — inner peace and outward love. In other words, the saint is a person who exhibits in exemplary fashion the traits of tranquil contemplation and active benevolence. As Radhakrishnan puts it:

The life of the liberated has two characteristics: It is free from the egoistic self and its tyrannous desires. It is convinced of the unity with all and so has love for others. The freed man works for the good of others.³⁷

Another way to say this is that the saint has perfected those things traditionally associated with the mind (e.g., understanding) and the heart (e.g., will and emotions). The perfection of mind involves a direct realization of the ultimate reality together with serene contemplation, while the perfection of the heart generates loving action. The problem of the proper relation between the two, or what may be called theory and practice, has touched every major religion. And the saint is the individual who has successfully integrated them into his or her life.

This image of the saint as one who has perfected both mind and heart is very common to the different religions of the world. Robert Neville has summed up the models of spiritual perfection by referring to them as soldier, sage, and

saint.³⁸ The soldier is one who is dedicated to purifying their will, resulting in supreme self-mastery and discipline. Soldiers are in full control of their behavior and directs the different components of their experience towards noble ends. They are, in short, persons of "good will."³⁹ Next is the sage who possesses spiritual insight and wisdom. In becoming aware of the eternal truth of the Ultimate Reality the sage has overcome ignorance and enjoys the life of an enlightened being. They are persons of profound understanding.⁴⁰ And lastly is the saint who has purified his or her lowly desires and acts from completely unselfish motives. Their lives are marked by simplicity, humility and deeds of loving kindness. They can be said to be persons of pure heart.⁴¹ These characteristics of a good will, profound understanding, and a pure heart are not to be viewed separately. They are integral to the lives of the liberated and essential to one another. To purify heart and will requires insight into ultimate reality, while insight itself is impossible without discipline (*yoga*) and selfless devotion. All must interrelate to ensure spiritual perfection.

Radhakrishnan's writings also touch on the traits of being a spiritual soldier, sage, and saint. He believes all three are crucial in describing what it means to be radically free. "Holy calm, supreme self-mastery and righteous action" he argues, "characterizes the lives of saints."⁴² Similarly, those "individuals who have realized their true being are the integrated ones who have attained personal integrity. Their reason is turned into light, their heart into love, and their will into service."⁴³ For purposes of understanding it might prove advantageous to combine the traits of a good will and a pure heart under the category of perfection of the body and the associated quality of outer love, while the feature of profound understanding can be subsumed under the perfection of the mind and the associated quality of inner peace. In this way we will be in a

better position to show how they relate to what Radhakrishnan believes to be the two essential characteristics of the liberated life mentioned earlier, namely, freedom from an "egoistic self" (inner peace) and "love for others" (outward love).

(II) INNER PEACE

In claiming that the liberated person "is free from the egoistic self and its tyrannous desires" Radhakrishnan is alluding to the quality of inner peace. The *jīvanmukta's* mind is without disturbance, completely calm, and "their lives are lit by a steady spiritual flame imparting a new coherence, tranquility and freedom. They are filled with peace though it is not a peace of the desert."⁴⁴ Elsewhere Radhakrishnan notes that the "change from self-centeredness to God-centeredness brings with it a peace and radiance of living."⁴⁵ Although this quality of inner peace is never fully elaborated upon in Radhakrishnan's writings, what he does say seems influenced by the Buddhist notion of equanimity and the *Bhagavadgītā's* description of non-attachment.

The concept of equanimity has been exhaustively examined by the *Theravāda* school of Buddhism, particularly in Buddhaghosa's *Viśuddhimagga* or *Path of Purification*.⁴⁶ According to this text, the *arahant* or person who has attained *nibbāna*, is in a state of perfect psychological balance and evenmindedness. The *arahant's* mind remains unperturbed when faced with either pleasant or unpleasant situations. Nothing favourable or unfavourable affects their equilibrium. Amidst the vicissitudes of praise and blame, fame and infamy, pleasure and pain, or gain and loss, the *arahant* stands unmoved like a solid rock, exercising perfect composure. In being immune to the longings for

worldly riches as well as to the aversions to unwanted frustrations, the *arahant* basks in the glow of supreme serenity. He or she is the calm eye at the centre of the hurricane. Everything is observed and experienced in a manner of complete impartiality. No hasty judgments are made, fueled by the demands of narrow, egoistic interests. The perspective is one of objectivity; for there is no "subject" as such from which to view the world from. Radhakrishnan alludes to these aspects of equanimity when he says: "Nirvāṇa is liberation from resentment, covetousness, lust. It is not annihilation. It is a state of bliss, ageless, stable, lasting. The Buddha emphasizes the sense of freedom and spontaneity, clarity of vision and tranquil joy."⁴⁷

A similar view of equanimity is evident in Śaṅkara's thought. In his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śaṅkara insists that equanimity (*sama-cittata*) is an essential element of the liberation process. "That person," he suggests, "to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is a man of wisdom who remains unaffected by these in virtue of his vision of the eternal Ātman (i.e., the spiritual insight) is made fit for eternal life."⁴⁸ Equanimity severs the ties that bind one to worldly endeavours. By acting with evenness of mind the individual is said to "cast off both good and evil."⁴⁹ Involved in this is contemplation, which helps to purify the heart and mind. As Radhakrishnan notes, contemplation for Śaṅkara means "rest, suspension of mental activity, withdrawal into the interior solitude in which the soul is absorbed in the fruitful silence of God."⁵⁰ This is the holy calm that characterizes saintliness.

Radhakrishnan appears to define the equanimous state as one involving an absence of discord resulting in tranquil joy. In being so preoccupied with gratifying their egoistic desires, individuals experience almost constant stress

and anxiety. We all, to some degree, feel insecure, fearful and unfulfilled. This obviously militates against any peace of mind. Radhakrishnan believes we attempt to escape this anguished condition by reverting to a non-rational way of life. This takes three forms. The first is "relapse into the womb of the unconscious."⁵¹ In other words, we try to shed our rational, self-conscious awareness in order to fall into some purely instinctive animal state.

Sometimes we are tempted to go back, become unthinking and unreflective, sink into the simplicity of biological existence, submerge in the elemental animal.⁵²

This solution, according to Radhakrishnan, is impossible since "We cannot shake off our rationality. We cannot get away from the strains of our self-conscious."⁵³

A second solution to our discordant lives is to lose ourselves in drugs and other intoxicants. These may soothe the mind and body, producing a tranquil joy, but the effects are only temporary. Radhakrishnan observes that if "we take opium we may find a few moments beautiful and calm in contrast to the jarring world outside; but they will not last."⁵⁴ This view bears resemblance to Erich Fromm's analysis of the human situation in *The Art of Loving*.⁵⁵ For Fromm, self-conscious rationality has separated human beings from an animal-type union with nature. The experience of separateness becomes the source for all anxiety. As a result, the most fundamental need of human beings is to overcome this radical gulf between them and nature. The question confronting all peoples in all cultures, past and present, is "how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one's own individual life and find at-onement."⁵⁶ The

answer to this will allow humans to surmount their primordial anxiety and find lasting peace of mind. One possible answer in our society "lies in all kinds of orgiastic states."⁵⁷ These include drugs, alcohol and sexual excesses. Like Radhakrishnan, Fromm believes these offer only temporary relief from the stress and strain of daily living and in the end only increases one's anguished condition.⁵⁸

The third non-rational solution to our divided existence supposedly lies in the dogmas of religion or politics. Religious superstition and political ideologies may shield us from doubts and loneliness but do so with great damage to our personal integrity. In Radhakrishnan's words:

If the lonely individual clings to something outside of him, he may gain security, but he does so at the expense of his integrity as an individual. We may renounce freedom of inquiry and bind our eyes from further seeking with the bandage of a final creed. We may thus be saved from making decisions or assuming responsibility for the future. But we will be disturbed and dissatisfied at the root, for the emergence of the individual cannot be stifled. Happiness is in freedom, and freedom is in greatness of spirit.⁵⁹

A similar view is again found in Erich Fromm's analysis of what he calls an "escape from freedom."⁶⁰ Because of our capacity for rational thought and relative emancipation from instinctual drives, we human beings are faced with making a multitude of free, responsible decisions. We often find this difficult and so choose to escape our burdening freedom by adhering to some group's

customs, practices, and beliefs. In other words, we surrender our decision-making powers to some authority who then shoulders the responsibility for us. The result is group conformity which, according to Fromm, is a type of union apparently overcoming our original separation from nature. But like the highly pleasurable experiences arising from alcohol, drugs, and sex, this solution also fails; not because it provides only temporary relief, but because it is routine and stifles individual creativity. For Fromm, "union by conformity is not intense and violent; it is calm, dictated by routine, and for this very reason often is insufficient to pacify the anxiety of separation."⁶¹ Collective dogmas, then, whether religious or political in origin, simply imprison the individual mind and in no way authentically resolves the problem of human alienation.

Radhakrishnan's idea of inner peace resembles to some extent the Epicurean notion of "*ataraxia*." For Epicurus, the aim in life is to maximize pleasure by minimizing pain. Unlike Aristippus, Epicurus believes pleasure to be simply the absence of pain rather than a positive thing as such. Consequently, we should spend our time trying to decrease any degree of unpleasant disturbance in our lives instead of constantly pursuing active enjoyments. Happiness is not the sum of intense, momentary pleasures; it is "*ataraxia*" or "*ataraxy*," meaning the serenity of mind and body arising from minimizing painful experiences. For Radhakrishnan, the absence of pain may be a necessary element of the equanimous mind but it is insufficient to fully define inner peace.

The tension of normal life disappears, giving rise to inward peace, power and joy. The Greeks called it *ataraxy*, but the word sounds more negative than the Hindu term "*Sānti*" or peace, which is a positive feeling of calm and

confidence, joy and strength in the midst of outward pain and defeat, loss and frustration. The experience is felt as profoundly satisfying, where darkness is turned into light, sadness into joy, despair into assurance.⁶²

This sense of positive confidence and assurance is a result of a freedom from fear (*abhaya*). When one no longer fears or feels anxious about the travails of earthly existence an incomprehensible peace envelops their entire being "expressing itself in harmony, balance, perfect agreement between body and soul, between the hands and the brain, and ahimsa or love."⁶³ Such is one aspect of the life of the *jīvanmukta*.

The idea of equanimity is closely connected to that of non-attachment. Without sufficient emotional distance from the things of the world, inner peace would prove impossible. There remains, however, an acceptance of the natural order, that is, an appreciation of the world-process moving in the direction of realizing Spirit. As with equanimity, one must distinguish between non-attachment as a means to spiritual liberation and non-attachment as a vital component of the liberated state itself. Vidyāranya, in his *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (*Path to Liberation in Life*) divides renunciation into two types. The first he calls the renunciation of the seeker.⁶⁴ Here an individual has taken up the life of a *saṁnyāsin* or spiritual mendicant in order to eventually realize *mokṣa* while still embodied. As such, the *saṁnyāsin* has not yet become a *jīvanmukta* but is certainly on the right path to supreme bliss. The second type Vidyāranya calls the renunciation of the knower.⁶⁵ This refers to the lifestyle of the *jīvanmukta* who possesses immediate knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*. It is this latter type of renunciation or non-attachment that will be our chief concern here.

The saint or *jīvanmukta* manifests a tranquil state of mind because he or she is completely detached from those things that cause inner torment. As described in the previous chapter, suffering (*duḥkha*) is the result of a series of phenomenon that form a circular pattern. In particular, suffering results from obsessive attachment to worldly things which in turn arises from selfish desires originating from the mistaken belief that our true self is the empirical ego. We then become bound to our sense of limited identity and the whole chain of attachments are set in motion again. Only when the chain is broken and cast off can continual inner peace be realized.

Rādhākrishnan's view of non-attachment also appears influenced by the *Bhagavadgītā*. Although the *Bhagavadgītā* does not use the word "*jīvanmukta*," it has synonyms for it such as "*sthitaprajñā*," which means the state of steady mind or settled intelligence. The non-attached attitude and behavior of one who possesses *sthitaprajñā* becomes clear in the passage where Krishna answers Arjuna's question regarding the characteristics of the spiritually liberated person.

When a man puts away all the desires of his mind, O Partha (Arjuna), and when his spirit is content in itself, then he is called stable in intelligence ... He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desires amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear, and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence ... He who is without affection every side, who does not rejoice or lowthe as he obtains good or evil, his intelligence is firmly set (in wisdom) ... he whose senses are all withdrawn from their objects, his

intelligence is firmly set ... He who abandons all desires and acts free from longing, without any sense of mineness or egotism, he attains to peace.⁶⁶

The above description shows the *jīvanmukta's* behavior to be free from selfish desire and obsessive emotional attachments. Radhakrishnan concurs with this view in exhorting that an "integral life" will involve "pure disinterestedness" and be "impersonality incarnate."⁶⁷ This does not mean the *jīvanmukta* will be a completely desireless creature who is emotionally deactivated. He or she will simply be acting in a way involving the absence of private, egoistic interests. Free persons experience desires but not selfish desires. And they act in the world but without being motivated by an individualistic will. There is no concern with the results of action; for that assumes attachment to an ego which initiates projects. But in realizing the eternal *Ātman*, the *jīvanmukta* sheds his or her ego-sense and transcends all distinctions including that of agent and action. With no sense of ego there are no selfish cravings; and with no selfish cravings there is no longing and attachment to sense objects. Such non-attachment neutralizes the possibility of experiencing anxiety and frustration because the individual is no longer bound to worldly things. What is left is pure peace and contentment. Radhakrishnan explains the whole process as follows:

Hindu thought points out that what binds is not action but the spirit in which it is done. It is the desire for or aversion from the results that bind the individual soul. But so long as the action is performed in a selfless spirit, without desire for fruit, it is one with the creative activity of God. Without action the world would cease

to exist. We hear of many cases of liberated individuals who are engaged in the work of the world. They live as universal men with no private attachments or personal feelings. When the realized soul returns to the plane of conduct, his action will neither add to nor detract from the value of his realization. Action itself will be of a different kind. It has no selfish motives behind it but is a manifestation of spiritual peace.⁶⁸

And that in a nutshell reveals the close relationship between non-attachment and peace of mind in the life of the *jīvanmukta*.

Another aspect of non-attachment has to do with what Radhakrishnan calls "integral life." In numerous passages he refers to liberated individuals as embodying integrality. Specifically, he states that when "harmony is established, self is said to be born; that is, the immortal spirit which had formerly been hidden manifests itself. It is the integration of personality."⁶⁹ And similarly, "those individuals who have realized their true being are the integrated ones who have attained personal integrity."⁷⁰ By an integral life Radhakrishnan means one in which all aspects of our being (e.g., mind, body, will) are harmonized by being put under the control of the Universal Spirit within us (*Ātman*) rather than being directed by the separate, selfish ego. "When we rise to our true being" he says, "the selfish ego falls away from us and the true integral self takes possession of us."⁷¹ Integrality, in short, signifies self-mastery. It is a basic assumption in Radhakrishnan's thought that the Ultimate Reality is a whole with no discordant parts. That is why it can be characterized as pure bliss. However, Radhakrishnan is adamant that self-mastery does not entail a severe repression

of the other elements of our being. Rather these elements are raised up, purified, and integrated to form a whole.

There cannot be any conflict between body, mind and soul. The mystic does not recognize any antithesis between the secular and the sacred. Nothing is to be rejected; everything is to be raised ... The spiritual is not an essence apart, to be cloistered and protected from the rest of life, but something that pervades and refines the whole life of man. It cleanses all parts of our inward being and brings about a rebirth of the soul, a redemption of our loyalties and a remaking of our personalities.⁷²

There is thus a close relation between non-attachment, self-mastery, and a tranquil mind.

The *jīvanmukta's* life is detached from the things of the world because the ego is no longer governing the mind, body, and senses. Instead, there is a realization that the true self is the Universal Spirit and not the *jīva* with its selfish desires and ambitions. The spirit is now in control and pervades the *jīvanmukta's* entire being. The result is a state of inner tranquility, beyond all discord and strife.

What the Indian thinkers aim at is action without attachment. It is action of an individual who is no more a victim of selfishness, who has identified himself with the divine centre which is in him and in all things. Since he is not emotionally involved in the "fruits of action," he is

able to act effectively. True religion has elements in it of withdrawal from the world and of return to it. Its aim is the control of life by the power of spirit.⁷³

To further enhance our understanding of Radhakrishnan's notion of inner peace it might prove illuminating to compare it with the ancient Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. The school of Stoicism was founded by the Greek philosopher Zeno (336-264 BCE) and was transported to Rome where it flourished for several centuries alongside Christianity. Its prime Roman spokesman was Epictetus (50-130 CE). According to early Stoicism, the primary cause of human unhappiness is the passions, which represent the irrational forces of human nature, namely, desires and fears. The passions disturb the mind and body by producing frustration and mental panic. Desires can never be fully satisfied. Any pleasure derived from limited gratification lasts only temporarily and then disappears, ending in frustration and bitterness. Fear and mental anguish inevitably follow, due to the uncertainty of finding permanent enjoyment. Since the goal of perfect happiness is a chimera, early Stoicism counsels us to renounce the passions (i.e., desires and fears) completely and sever any emotional involvement with the world. This early Stoic analysis of the human condition is graphically described in the following passage by John Hospers:

In this dark world there is no satisfaction to be found of our deepest desires; the satisfaction we may find one day our brought crumbling into ruin the next. Since our desire cannot find lasting satisfaction in this world, and since the Stoics believed there is no other, our only recourse is not to have desires — to suppress them until they no longer exist. If we

expect nothing of this world, we shall not be disappointed; if we expect a great deal we shall face only bitterness and defeat. Our degree of happiness is sometimes said to be what we have divided by what we want. Most people want far more than they have, and the more they have the more they want. The solution is not to want anything, then we shall never be distressed at not having it ...

Nature has instilled in us a large number of powerful and insistent desires; for food and drink, for sexual conquest, for fame, for power, for possessions of the world's goods. All these desires will bring us to ruin if we let nature take its course and pursue them. Salvation is to be found only in systematically, rigorously, and uncomprisingly rooting them out ...⁷⁴

The end result of eliminating the passions is what the Stoics called "*apatheia*." This literally conveys a lack of feeling or emotional entanglement, of steadfast calm in the face of life's calamities. Once *apatheia* is attained nothing more can disturb the mind and body. Even though one may find oneself in tragic circumstances, he or she will not let it affect his or her serene composure. Since the Stoic is not emotionally attached to things, nothing can faze him or her. Come what may, he or she shall possess an inner reserve of fortitude and calm.

Such a goal of attaining inner tranquility by extinguishing all desire is not shared by Radhakrishnan. The aim should not be to eradicate each and every want, which short of death would be impossible anyway, but to regulate them in accordance with the divine element within us. This, Radhakrishnan insists, is the view of the *Vedānta* philosophy.

It is wrong to think that the Vedānta demands the total abolition of the senses. In the opinion of the present writer, the Vedānta asks us to beware of them. The senses are not bad in themselves; they are bad when uncontrolled and indulged under unlawful conditions. The senses are to be disciplined and not crushed.⁷⁵

So the early Stoic conception of *apatheia* as a total lack of passion resulting in tranquil calm does not entirely equate with Radhakrishnan's conception of the inner peace characterizing the *jīvanmukta*.

To sum up this section, Radhakrishnan believes an important quality of the liberated individual, the saint, is inner peace of mind. This state of supreme serenity involves both a perfect balance of mind amidst all life's turmoils as well as a condition of non-attachment towards all worldly things. This is only possible because the equanimous mind is an egoless one. No trace of selfish cravings, of mineness or possessiveness, remains. The ego-sense is transcended and in its place reigns the eternal self, *Ātman*. This is part of what it means to be spiritually liberated. For in Radhakrishnan's words, "we are free when our personal subject (*ātman*) becomes the ruling centre."⁷⁶

(iii) OUTWARD LOVE

Inner peace is only one of two qualities possessed by liberated beings; the other is outward love. Not only is the saint or *jīvanmukta* imbued with a holy calm but expresses warm regard for all living things. Whether this be called kindness, generosity, or benevolence, it all amounts to the same phenomenon

— selfless love for all. Indeed, for Radhakrishnan "Saintliness is marked by true humility and love."⁷⁷ It is the "free spirits" who "reach out their hands towards the warmth in all things."⁷⁸ It is they who "have that rarest quality in the world, simple goodness, beside which all intellectual gifts seem a little trivial."⁷⁹ The important point here is that the life of the saint includes much more than serene composure; tireless service to humanity is also crucial. This is clear when Radhakrishnan says, "The saint's life is not complete in the contemplative life. Service to brethren, the active life is also there."⁸⁰ Radhakrishnan corrects critics like Schweitzer who claim Hindu ethics emphasize the development of inner individual peace at the expense of "the active enthusiastic love of one's neighbour."⁸¹ In fact, the ethics of the Hindu *Gītā* extolls active service to others and believes "Inner perfection and outer conduct are two sides of one life."⁸² This selfless devotion to human well-being is evident in the lives of such religious leaders as Buddha, Jesus, and Gandhi. Buddha, for example, spent forty five years after his enlightenment teaching others the path to perfect freedom (*nirvāṇa*). Radhakrishnan believes love to be the supreme law of spiritual life, a view at least theoretically embraced by all major religions.

All religions ask us to practice brotherly love. Love is inseparable from knowledge... the spirit of dedication marks the religious life... All the religions of the world, at their best, require us to understand one another in a spirit of humility and friendliness.⁸³

The question, then, is: "What is love?"

In describing the quality of love that the saint possesses, Radhakrishnan often refers to the Indian concept of *ahimsa*, and elucidates its meaning by comparing it to the Christian idea of *agape*, and the Buddhist notion of *mettā-karuṇa*. Although not entirely equivalent in meaning, each of these terms highlights an important aspect of the love Radhakrishnan thinks is expressed by the spiritually liberated individual. *Ahimsā* principally focuses on not harming others, *agape* on positively helping others, and *mettā-karuṇa* on showing compassion towards others. But before proceeding to examine these significant ideals, it may be necessary to ask why the saint or *jīvanmukta* is able to love so selflessly at all? The answer lies in the change of consciousness experienced by the liberated person. Before being freed, the individual erroneously believed that he or she was a separate entity whose goal was to satisfy all egoistic desires. Not surprisingly, this put the person in direct competition with others who were also trying to fulfill the same self objectives. In such a situation, conflict developed and along with it an attitude of contempt, envy and fear of one's fellow beings. At this juncture, selfless love was an impossibility. But in realizing that one's true self is not the separate ego but the universal spirit (*Atman*), selfish interests dropped away and a sense of unity filled one's entire being. There was now the awareness that the Ultimate Reality is One, with each individual soul being a part of it. This perception of wholeness is what enables the *jīvanmukta* to reach out and love all sentient creatures. For our essential natures are all the same — abiding Spirit. And since this spirit is pure bliss, it expresses itself through the saint's life in the form of inner peace and outward love.

It is a basic tenet of Indian thought that the liberated person practices *ahimsā*. This is a Sanskrit term consisting of the negative prefix "a" or "non" together with "himsa" or "injury." It thus literally means non-injury or non-

violence. Historically, there are two sources of the concept *ahimsā* in Indian philosophy — the *Vedic* (Hindu) and the ascetic (Jain and Buddhist). The first place the word *ahimsā* occurs in *Vedic* literature is the *Taittirīya Samhitā* where it refers to protecting the *brahmin* sacrificer and his offspring from being harmed.⁸⁴ A broader conception of it was first introduced in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in the 7th century BCE where it is listed as one of the five ethical virtues (the others being austerity, almsgiving, uprightness, and truthfulness).⁸⁵ In both these and other Hindu texts (e.g., *Law of Manu*), the idea of *ahimsā*, as signifying non-injury to living things, escapes universal application. As Unto Tahtinen notes in his informative book *Ahimsā: Non-Violence in Indian Tradition*:

The Vedic concept of *ahimsā* is universal in the sense of extending *ahimsa* to non-violent beings; it is not applicable to enemies in war, to criminals, wicked people, offending beasts, and animals to be sacrificed or killed for one's livelihood. Even where the phrase 'all living beings' occurs, this exclusion is implied.⁸⁶

The so-called ascetic conception of *ahimsā*, as primarily formulated in Jainism and Buddhism, differs from the *Vedic* view in being even more morally restraining and definitely applying to all living things. The orthodox Jains are the most extreme in upholding this ideal. No form of violence to any living creature is justified, either in thought, word, or deed. (This explains why they put cloth over their mouths and sweep the ground in front of them to avoid killing even the tiniest of creatures). The orthodox Jains criticize the *Vedic* exceptions to this rule (e.g., animal sacrifices) by arguing that if these acts bring benefit then why does one always feel uneasy when performing them.⁸⁷ The two traditions of *ahimsā* reflect two different value schemes in Indian thought. The earlier *Vedic* scheme

aims at promoting the social good and so emphasizes the values associated with the householder state, namely, moral duties (*dharma*), economic prosperity (*artha*) and worldly pleasure (*kāma*). The later ascetic, or Jain and Buddhist, system promotes individual spiritual growth and so focuses instead on the values connected to the state of monkhood, principally liberation (e.g., *nirvāṇa*).⁸⁸ Some later Hindu texts, such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, attempt "to integrate the society-directedness of the Vedic orthodoxy with the moksa-orientedness of the ascetic movements."⁸⁹ They accomplish this by referring to the law of *karma* which states that one's behavior in this life will influence one's state in subsequent lives. This means that good deeds like *ahimsā* guarantee advancement more than bad acts which are destructive of life and the sacred order. Since it is a higher status that brings one closer to the goal of transcending the transmigratory process, the values of social harmony and spiritual liberation are brought together and mutually affirmed.

The great modern interpreter and practitioner of *ahimsā*, Mohandas Gandhi, was definitely influenced by the *Bhagavadgītā*, which he even translated.⁹⁰ Nehru said that Gandhi's belief in *ahimsā* was fundamentally grounded in the *Gītā*, a claim that is highly debatable.⁹¹ But whether true or not, it is undeniable that Gandhi believed the basic lesson of the *Gītā* to be *ahimsā*, through non-attachment, something he consciously tried to incorporate into his own life:

... I have felt that in trying to enforce in one's life the central teaching of the *Gītā*, one is bound to follow truth and *ahimsā*. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or

hiṃsā. Take an instance of untruth and violence will be found that at its back is the desire to attain the cherished end.⁹²

Radhakrishnan himself was influenced by Gandhi's life and thought, claiming he presented "the perfect, the most elevating and the most inspiring ideal known to man."⁹³ In one article Radhakrishnan talks about Gandhi's idea of *ahimsā* and stresses that for Gandhi non-violence does not involve an "acquiescent or negative attitude. It is positive and dynamic."⁹⁴ In other words, the individual practicing *ahimsā* is not only abstaining from harmful thoughts, words and deeds, but positively expressing love for all. Both the negative and positive senses of *ahimsā* are present in Radhakrishnan's moral philosophy.

The negative meaning of *ahimsā* originates from the prefix "a" or "non." It implies that one ought not to do something, specifically to avoid harming other living beings. It is an injunction against injuring and killing. Life should not be damaged or destroyed for it is sacred. Most religions teach this and elevate it to a formal rule of conduct. The Jewish *Torah* and Christian *Old Testament* instruct "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13), the Muslim *Quran* "slay not the life that God has made sacred" (6:152), the Buddhist *Dhammapada* "A man should... not do any harm with his body" (20:28), the Hindu *Bhagavadgītā* "to hurt others is sin," and the Jain *Sūtrakṛtanja* "If someone kills living things... his sin increases." (11:1). Radhakrishnan decidedly affirms these moral precepts⁹⁵ and believes different religions exhort their adherents to live according to the negative command "do no harm."

The teacher, the prophet, the
Hindu sannyasin, the Buddhist monk,

the Christian priest, should express unreservedly the truth as they see it. They should abstain from the use of force in any circumstances. They should not kill, for it is their duty to reconcile enemies and expel hate. For them non-violence is the law of life, even in the physical sense of abstaining from the use of force.⁹⁶

The liberated individual has completely renounced the will, even the wish, to afflict any harm on others. His or her moral restraint is effortless. Radhakrishnan observes the "activity of the liberated is free and spontaneous and not obligatory."⁹⁷ The negative injunction not to harm others springs from respecting the dignity of each person and in tolerating differences. Radhakrishnan insists these are the actions of the spiritually free: "Naturally, the seers are free from dogmatism and breathe the spirit of large tolerance. They welcome all who worship God revealed, not once, but everywhere, and always accept the variety of the world with understanding and sympathy."⁹⁸

Despite his affirmation of the negative sense of *ahimsā*, Radhakrishnan, like Gandhi, attaches more importance to its positive meaning. Not only does the principle inhibit us from causing harm, it more significantly urges us to promote the general welfare. Letting things be, or not interfering with others, is insufficient for a complete morality. One must also take the initiative and actually work for the good of all. Gandhi ascribes to this when he says *ahimsā* "is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer."⁹⁹ This positive sense of *ahimsa* stands out in the life of the saint or *jīvanmukta*. Such persons, Radhakrishnan claims, "are filled with love and friendliness to all humanity. *Ahimsā* or love becomes the central virtue... The saints love because they cannot help it."¹⁰⁰ Although for most of us

selfless love is just an article of belief, "with the saints it is part of their being."¹⁰¹ Indeed, "ahimsā or fellow feeling for all living things, enfolding in its merciful arms even the lowest forms of animal life, is the natural fruit of abhaya or spiritual life."¹⁰²

In describing the positive meaning of *ahimsa*, Radhakrishnan also refers to the idea of love (*agape*) in Christianity and the notion of compassion (*karuṇa*) in Buddhism. According to the Christian view, *agape* is to be distinguished from two other kinds of love, namely, *eros*, both in its broad sense as the desire for wisdom and in its narrow sense as sensual love, and *philia* or friendly love. In the narrow sense, *eros* consists of the desire to possess things that are physically attractive or beautiful, and as such is inextricably linked to sex. *Eros* is a love that is highly acquisitive, focusing as it does on satisfying one's sensual desires, as well as being conditional and exclusive. Only that which we find physically appealing or sexually arousing warrants our attention. In this way *eros* is often seen as being an essential ingredient of romantic love. *Philia*, or love between friends, is less conditional and exclusive than *eros* since it is independent of our sexual drives. But it is still selective; for not everyone we meet becomes our friend. The selection is often based on acquisitive motives, on what we find satisfying, such as common interests and compatible goals. To some degree, then, both *eros* and *philia* are kinds of love which are exclusive, conditional, and acquisitive.

This is definitely not the case with *agape*. It is conceived to be a love that is universally inclusive, absolutely unconditional, and purely benevolent. These three features derive from the supposed fact in Christianity that *agape* reflects God's love for his creation. We are thus obliged to model our imperfect love and

relation with other people on that of God's love for humanity as a whole. And the saint, of course, is the individual who does this much more consistently and more successfully than others. This explains why, in Radhakrishnan's words, the "saint is ever ready to bring a cup of water to his sick brethren."¹⁰³

The love of *agape* applies to all people and not just to a select few. Every person's well-being is as important and as valuable as another's. This ideal of equal regard is accented in the word itself which literally means "love-feast." Everyone is invited to the banquet to consume the nutrients of loving-kindness. The saint or *jīvanmukta* attempts to help all in dire straits. For Radhakrishnan, "True love regards the whole world as one country and all of mankind as one's countrymen."¹⁰⁴ Their love is very broad, and like a net, is cast over the whole turbulent sea of humanity. This is why Radhakrishnan remarks, "On the plane of spirit, there is an indivisible solidarity of the human race. The free spirits are persons without frontiers."¹⁰⁵

The second characteristic of *agape* is its unconditional nature. Unlike *eros* and *philia*, *agape* imposes no conditions on those to be loved. Love is given to an individual regardless of who they are or what they have done. It transcends all barriers. A person is valued for their own sake and not because of anything that might distinguish them from others. It does not matter whether they are a man or a woman, adult or child, black or white, Hindu or Muslim, rich or poor, strong or weak, beautiful or ugly, talented or inept, heterosexual or homosexual, saint or sinner. All are to be treated with respect and dignity. The "free spirits" Radhakrishnan proclaims, "do not have any barriers of sex, class, race or nation between themselves and the rest of humanity. They are at home with men and women of all religions and no religion."¹⁰⁶ Love then extends to anyone despite

their physical and psychological make-up and what they individually possess or have acquired in life. An individual does not have to be a particular kind of person or to have achieved something meritorious to receive love and aid from a liberated being. And such love is all-abiding and unalterable. It will never be withdrawn if the person disappoints in some way. In Radhakrishnan's words:

One should always love and not
mercilessly oppress even those who
have caused us suffering. When we love,
we have no right to despise, however
low the loved one may have fallen.
If we love, what the loved one does
will remain just as lovable.¹⁰⁷

The unconditionality of *agape* extends even to one's enemies. Jesus's famous "Sermon on the Mount" includes the edict: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."(Lk.6:27). Radhakrishnan echoes the same sentiments: "Even our enemies are not objects of contempt and aversion as they are moral personalities. We are called upon to love our enemies... To those dwelling in the spirit of God it is the natural law of their being."¹⁰⁸ This is possible because of the saint's equanimous poise and equal regard for all beings. They do not judge individuals, measuring whether they live up to some standard, but rather seek to understand their hearts and minds. ("Judge not, and you shall not be judged"). This forms the basis for the saint's ability to forgive even the most horrendous human actions. Radhakrishnan writes:

The genuine men are patient with
the worst of us, respect us enough
to forgive us everything, invent
endless excuses for us and care for
us not as a duty but out of natural

love. Without remembering our meanness and misdeeds, they give us freely of their love and do not expect any return or require any repayment.¹⁰⁹

But the unconditional nature of *agape* and *ahimsā* does not require the passive acceptance of all kinds of violence and injustices. An attitude of equal regard does not entail treating everyone in an identical manner. One must be cognizant of each person's situation and of what would be most helpful to spur their moral and spiritual development. This may at times involve non-cooperation and actively resisting a person's evil ways. The resistance, however, would invariably take a non-violent form. Here Radhakrishnan is influenced by Gandhi's theory and application of what is called *satyagraha*. For Gandhi, *satyagraha* means "truth-force." The realization of the Ultimate Reality, which Gandhi refers to as Truth or God, gives one the inner strength and courage to resist evil by non-violent means. As Radhakrishnan notes:

Satyagraha, or non-violence, is not for Gandhi an acquiescent or negative attitude. It is positive and dynamic. It is not non-resistance or submission to evil. It is resistance to it through love. Satyagraha is belief in the power of spirit, the power of truth, the power of love by which we can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice.¹¹⁰

Various non-violent techniques were employed by Gandhi and the *satyagraha* movement to oppose injustices and struggle for Indian independence from Britain. One was non-cooperation, the refusal to go along with those responsible for perpetrating oppression. This took the form of strikes, walk-outs, boycotts, closure of shops and businesses, and resignation of offices and titles. (The

famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who Radhakrishnan admired greatly, voluntarily surrendered his knighthood to protest the oppressive Rowlatt Bills which gave the Government absolute powers to control crime and sedition.) The second major non-violent technique used was civil disobedience. This involved a direct and deliberate violation of specific laws which were considered unquestionably unjust. What distinguishes civil disobedience from other forms of law-breaking is that it is motivated by strictly moral, rather than selfish, concerns. Its purpose is to register a moral protest against those laws that transgress one's developed conscience. This might include non-payment of taxes or massive occupation of government offices ("sit-ins"). The year-long protest against the Salt Act (1930-31) in colonial India is a striking example of civil disobedience in action. The Salt Act gave the British colonial government a monopoly on salt which it used to impose a whopping salt tax, which especially hurt the rural poor. To protest this, Gandhi led a long march of people to the sea where they, in contravention to the government's salt monopoly laws, extracted salt from the water. More illegal manufacturing of salt followed throughout the country. Eventually the colonial administration agreed to permit local residents in villages to make their own salt. Throughout this long campaign the *satyagrahis* showed considerable constraint and generally succeeded in practicing non-violence.¹¹¹

Of course it could be argued that this non-violent method worked because it was utilized against a country (Britain) with a certain sense of civility despite its own imperial history. It might have proven less successful against a totally ruthless dictator. In any case, the point to be stressed is that *satyagraha* represents a way of resisting evil through love. There is the attempt to change the evil perpetrator without resorting to violent force. It is strictly a matter of "hating the sin, but loving the sinner." This would undoubtedly be the approach

chosen by the saint or *jīvanmukta* in dealing with conflict and oppressive situations.

The third feature of *agape*, or the positive sense of *ahimsā*, is its completely selfless nature. Unlike *eros* and *philia*, there is no trace of acquisitive motives in expressing love. According to Radhakrishnan, *agape* is purely benevolent and non-egoistic. No individual benefit is anticipated from loving another person. As Radhakrishnan remarks, "It is the love that does not expect any reward, return or recompense. It is its own excuse for being."¹¹² One loves other people to assist them in their own moral and spiritual development. This involves both comforting them in time of need as well as challenging their egoistic lifestyles. Radhakrishnan writes:

These free spirits reach out their hands towards the warmth of all things... Because of their eager selfless love they have the power to soothe the troubled heart. To those in pain their presence is like the cool soft hand of some one they love, when their head is hot with fever... Their attitude is not one of lofty condescension or patronizing pity to lift a debased creature out of mire.¹¹³

Some degree of self-sacrifice or suffering is an essential ingredient of *agape*. One works for the welfare of others even at the risk of hurting oneself. A saint is more concerned about the needs of others than his or her own requirements. In Christianity the model for this kind of extraordinary beneficence is God's sacrifice of his only begotten son so that humanity could be saved.

Radhakrishnan also points to the self-suffering involved in selflessly loving others:

Wherever love rules life, life becomes a continuous act of giving without any desire for return. Its existence is inseparable from giving, though judged from without the latter may involve enjoyment or suffering.¹¹⁴

It is giving rather than receiving love that is the prime objective of the liberated individual.

The early Buddhist view of the so-called sublime virtues (*Brahmā-Vihara*) also illuminates the positive aspect of *ahimsa*. Indeed, the first three virtues together — loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) — resemble the Christian notion of *agape*. By loving-kindness Buddhism means an attitude of friendliness or more specifically a devotion to the well-being of others without thought of benefitting oneself. As one famous Burmese monk has explained it: "The Pāli word *Mettā* means literally... friendliness... also love without a desire to possess but with a desire to help, to sacrifice self-interest for the welfare and well-being of humanity... It is a dynamic suffusing of every living being... with dynamic, creative thoughts of loving-kindness."¹¹⁵ Interestingly, Radhakrishnan believes the same type of loving-kindness is proclaimed in *Vedānta* philosophy as well:

The Vedānta says, let not your selfish satisfaction be your motive. Anything you do, do because it is a necessary means of promoting the general welfare.

Let not self-love be the motive,
 but let it be the love of soul
 to soul, love of the whole race
 of mankind. Only that love abideth.
 The highest form of self-realization
 consists in living for others.¹¹⁶

The second sublime Buddhist virtue is compassion (*karuṇa*). It is said that the Buddha had overwhelming compassion for even the lowliest of creatures. Compassion has the characteristics of devotion to removing the misery and suffering of others. In being compassionate one is unable to neglect or tolerate suffering and is thus moved to help extinguish it. In Radhakrishnan's words: "Love is that imaginative consciousness which one has to develop in the loneliness of the soul, a consciousness which suffers and finds intolerable the suffering of others."¹¹⁷ This does not involve identifying with the pain of those suffering to the point of being emotionally overwhelmed by misery ourselves. According to Buddhism, this in no way assists others to overcome their pain. The compassion of the Buddhist is like a physician who thoroughly understands the condition of suffering but who, in a cool-headed and objective manner, diagnoses the ailment and prescribes a cure. Their compassion is clear and knowledgable, undisturbed by emotional, egoistic attachments. In Buddhism this compassion is to be extended to all sentient beings, no matter how wretched their condition. According to Radhakrishnan, "The free spirits bend to the very level of the enslaved to emancipate their minds and hearts. They inspire, revive and strengthen the life of their generation."¹¹⁸ Compassion for the downtrodden is illustrated in a Buddhist story that Radhakrishnan relates in one of his books. It is about a young, beautiful woman of wealth and leisure who had made unsuccessful advances to one of Buddha's disciples, Upagupta. Because of her self-indulgent lifestyle, the woman's condition eventually deteriorated to the point where she even had her limbs cut-off for a crime she had committed. It was in

this time of woeful pain and hopelessness, when everyone had abandoned her, that Upagupta consoled her and she became one of his disciples. "It needs a great soul" Radhakrishnan concludes, "to respond to a soul in torment."¹¹⁹

The third Buddhist virtue which can be compared to *agape* and *ahimsā* is sympathetic joy (*muditā*). This refers to the delight one feels for the happiness of others and the wish for their good fortune to continue. Radhakrishnan states that for " a complete human being, we require the cultivation of the grace and joy of souls overflowing in love and devotion and free service of a regenerated humanity."¹²⁰ This joy, however, is not one of unbridled, egoistic emotionalism for it is absent of envy and petty regards. For Radhakrishnan, "The Vedānta law of morality does not ask us to act without motives, but asks us to serve humanity, without any selfish desires or petty interests, without envy or jealousy, regardless of party or personality."¹²¹ Sympathetic joy is simply the calm acknowledgment of another's successful achievements and subsequent state of well-being.

The three sublime Buddhist virtues of loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy, along with the Christian ideal of *agape*, assist in fleshing out the positive sense of *ahimsā* as expressed in Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Hindu thought. Another way of comprehending both the negative and positive senses of *ahimsā* is to see it as an embodiment of the ubiquitous "golden rule." In other words, the practice of non-violence and love is conveyed in the universal moral precept "treat others as you would like them to treat you." The negative sense of the golden rule is summed up in the principle of nonmaleficence which simply states "harm no one." One ought to refrain from afflicting harm on sentient beings. By harm is meant any physical or mental injury as well as

treating someone unjustly. So the principle of nonmaleficence states that one's total well-being should not be violated nor should one be treated unfairly. The positive sense of the golden rule is expressed in the principle of beneficence. This principle requires us to take positive action to benefit others. It does not simply ask us to avoid harming other people but to initiate measures to promote their general welfare. It specifically obliges us to perform any actions that bring positive results to individuals and advances their moral and spiritual growth.

The spiritually liberated person puts into practice both the principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence, and does so constantly, without effort. These principles have become an ingrained and integral part of one's relations with other sentient beings. That is why it is said the liberated individual is "beyond good and evil." The *jīvanmukta* no longer feels an obligation to abide by conventional moral injunctions because they do not require them, nor their sanctions, to act virtuously. In directly realizing the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) the individual becomes a "moral hero" who "see at once what is good and hold to that and for its sake humble themselves even unto death."¹²² One's actions are guided by integral experience, making formal rules unnecessary. Duty or external constraints only exist for the unliberated who do not possess certain knowledge of what is right and wrong. But the *jīvanmukta* freely and spontaneously chooses what is right and good without pressure from outside forces, an idea conveyed by Radhakrishnan in the following passage:

When one attains the spiritual level, he rises above the ethical, not that he repudiates it but he transcends it... When we undergo ethical discipline there is a change in the inward man which makes us practice good in an

effortless, spontaneous way.
Freedom from obligation is only
for those who have cast off their
self-sense.¹²³

This supra-ethical concept is rooted in the belief that the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) is beyond all distinctions, including good and evil, and that the *jīvanmukta*, in realizing their true self (*Ātman*) is non-different from *Brahman*, is beyond moral distinctions as well.

The importance of the golden rule, and thus of non-violence and love, is recognized by Radhakrishnan who observes it operating in all the world's major religions. According to him, the essence of the teaching is to love others as you would love yourself. "When we see the Universal Spirit of Truth in each individual, we will love the meanest of creation as oneself. This is the golden rule taught by all religions."¹²⁴ He notes its expression, among other places, in the Hindu *Mahābhārata*: "In joy and sorrow, in pleasure and pain, one should act toward others as one would have them act toward oneself;"¹²⁵ in the Confucian *Analects*: "Is there a maxim which one may observe as a role of conduct for life? ... to love others with which one loves oneself;"¹²⁶ and in the Jewish *Torah*: "Love thy neighbour as thyself;"¹²⁷ To love others as oneself does not entail egoism. It is a love that repudiates incessant vanity and narcissism. The self in self-loving is the essential soul, spirit, or *Ātman* which is beyond the ego, radiating in pure bliss. When we love others as ourselves we are loving the Universal Spirit (*Ātman*) within them. And in loving others we end up loving ourselves since we are all in essence part of the same Supreme Spirit. It is the saint or *jīvanmukta* who fully realizes this fact and for that reason spontaneously acts according to the golden rule, promoting non-violence, love, *ahimsā*.

The ancient concepts of the Hindu *avatār* and Buddhist *bodhisattva* also demonstrate the practice of perfect love and compassion. In Hindu thought an *avatar* is an incarnation of a divine being into human or animal form. It is the infinite spirit manifesting itself on the finite plane, or in Radhakrishnan's words, the "descent of the Divine into the human frame."¹²⁸ The divine spirit becomes incarnate for a particular purpose, mainly during times of crisis when moral and spiritual guidance are of utmost necessity.

The redemptive function of God is an incessant activity, though it becomes emphasized when the moral order is sharply disturbed. God manifests Himself in striking forms whenever new adjustments have to be brought about. These special revelations are called in Hindu mythology avatars or descents of God.¹²⁹

According to the *Vaishnavite* sect of Hinduism, the god Vishnu has had ten major incarnations, one of the most important being in the form of Krishna, the god-hero of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In this famous story, Vishnu, in the form of the teacher Krishna, helps his pupil Arjuna to realize the true self, *Ātman*. The climax arrives when Arjuna envisions the "universal form of God" and beholds "the whole universe, with its manifold divisions gathered together in one, in the body of the God of gods."¹³⁰ Radhakrishnan interprets this as revealing "the potential divinity of all earthly life."¹³¹ For him the important message of the *Bhagavadgītā* is the constant presence of the Universal Spirit in each human being.¹³² The Divine Spirit reveals its love and compassion by assuming finite form and guiding us towards self-realization.

In the great souls we call incarnations, God who is responsible for the being and dignity of man has more wonderfully renewed it. The penetration of successiveness by the Eternal which is present in every event of the cosmic is manifested in a deeper sense in the incarnation. When once God has granted us free will, He does not stand aside leaving us to make or unmake ourselves. Whenever by the abuse of freedom unrighteousness increases and the world gets stuck in a rut, He creates Himself to lift the world from out of its rut and set it on new tracks. Out of his love He is born again and again to renew the work of creation on a higher plane.¹³³

This exemplary love is manifest in the actions of the *jīvanmukta* who represents "an ascent of man into God."¹³⁴ The *avatār* and the *jīvanmukta* reflect the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Divine which are not regarded as being incompatible.¹³⁵

The *Mahāyāna* Buddhist idea of the *bodhisattva* or "being of enlightened wisdom" is similar to the Hindu *avatar* in being a model of supreme love and compassion. The *bodhisattva* is an individual who has postponed their own entry into *nirvāṇa* in order to assist others along the path. It is a being who, having come to the edge of attaining the ultimate goal of radical freedom, deliberately forgoes it and continues to live in the world to show others the way to realize it. The *bodhisattvas*, in short, put the deliverance of all beings first before their own final redemption. They emulate the compassion of the Buddha by nurturing the seeds of enlightenment that are present in all beings. This idea of self-sacrifice is embodied in the vow every *bodhisattva* takes — "As long as there is one

unhappy, suffering person in the world, my happiness is not complete." The life of Gautama the Buddha is the example *par excellence* of the *bodhisattva* ideal. Having achieved enlightenment, he refused to completely free himself from earthly life and instead wandered about northern India for the next forty five years teaching others the noble truths (*dharma*).

Radhakrishnan displays great respect for the Buddha, and for Buddhism in general, in some of his writings. In a lecture given on the teachings of the Buddha in Colombo, Ceylon in 1933 he admits:

Though a Hindu by religion, I have the highest respect for the great Gautama and the attractiveness of his message. This attitude of reverence for the majesty and winsomeness of Buddha's personality is the normal one for the intellectuals of India... His influence on India's thought and religion has been profound and latterly very much on the increase.¹³⁶

In addition, as the great Buddhist scholar T.R.V. Murti has pointed out, half of Radhakrishnan's first volume of *Indian Philosophy* is devoted to Buddhism.¹³⁷ Radhakrishnan believes the Buddha identified the ultimate reality with "eternal righteousness."¹³⁸ That is why he says, "The universal compassion of the Buddha enfolds even the lowest forms of life in its merciful arms."¹³⁹

The *bodhisattva* nature of Gautama is clearly recognized by Radhakrishnan when he states, "Mahāyāna Buddhism declares that Buddha standing on the threshold of nirvāṇa took the vow never to make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single undelivered being on earth."¹⁴⁰ He even

connects, to some extent, the Hindu *avatar* concept with both Buddhism and Christianity:

The whole movement directed towards the realization of potentialities is a continuous incarnation of God. It is, however, true that the manifestation of spiritual values may be viewed either as the revelation of God, or the realization of the capacities of man. The two, God's revelation and man's realization, though indistinguishable, are inseparable from one another. Lives like those of Buddha and Jesus by revealing to us the great fact of God and the nature of the world as a temple of God point out how we can overcome sin and selfishness. They achieve for human life what human life has done for nature below. The great story of life on earth is in a sense the "martyrdom of god".¹⁴¹

So both the *avatār* and the *bodhisattva* manifest a divine love that the liberated individual puts into practice in a consistent and spontaneous manner.

A few things can now be drawn together to sum up Radhakrishnan's view of the *jīvanmukta*. For Radhakrishnan, spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*), while still embodied, represents a real possibility and is an ideal that is particularly affirmed in Hindu texts (i.e., *Upaniṣads*, *Brahman-Sūtra*, *Bhagavadgītā*) as well as in other religious traditions such as Christianity (e.g., the saint) and Buddhism (e.g., the *arahant* or the *bodhisattva*). When taken together, all these religions believe the liberated individual manifests the twin characteristics of inner peace and outward love. By inner peace is meant a calm, equanimous mind that is free of

all selfish desires and is completely unattached to worldly things. One's whole being remains centred on the Universal Spirit within (*Ātman*), amidst the maelstrom of finite existence. By outward love is meant a universal, unconditional, and selfless regard for all sentient creatures. Without effort or external compulsion, the *jīvanmukta* abides by the principle of non-violence and seeks to promote, by word and deed, the general good. It is this experience of selfless love, along with inner quietude, that reveals the pure bliss of the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*. For in such an experience discord and suffering have no dominion.

The unique quality of the *jīvanmukta* can be placed in a wider perspective to aid our understanding of the *jīvanmukti* ideal. Many thinkers, both religious and secular, have drawn a distinction between two very different, though fundamental, modes of human being-in-the-world. One mode is seen as being riddled with imperfections, while the other approaches perfection itself. Different thinkers, past and present, have given a variety of names to these two modes of existence, some examples being: sin vs. faith (Augustine), bondage vs. liberation (Śaṅkara), ignorance vs. enlightenment (Buddha), conflict vs. harmony (Lao-Tzu), alienation vs. freedom (Hegel and Marx), inauthenticity vs. authenticity (Heidegger), I-It vs. I-Thou (Buber), ego vs. self (Jung), narcissism vs. love (Vanier), personal vs. transpersonal (Wilbur), non-participating consciousness vs. participating consciousness (Berman), egocentricity vs. coenocentricity (Stark), and closed self vs. open self (Evans). Although each of these modes represent a distinct option for human beings, most individuals presently live in the imperfect mode and never taste the nectar of pure bliss.

Such is not the case with the saints or *jīvanmuktas*. By means of knowledge and discipline they have transported their lives from the rough shore of bondage to the sandy shore of spiritual freedom. They have become a beacon of hope for us all.

Those who have attained life eternal live and wander about in the world, to all appearances, like ordinary mortals. They wear no special signs. Only their activities are centered in the highest being and are completely under their control, which is not so for those who live in the world of samsara. They are tolerated, sympathetic, and respectful to the unliberated who are struggling with unsatisfied minds to diminish the evil and imperfection in the world... They live and suffer and rejoice and die as other mortals do, but they have no doubts in their hearts... They become a light, a power of the Truth to which they have struggled and attained, and help the development of others.¹⁴²

This, in sum, is the *jīvanmukti* ideal, the state of embodied spiritual liberation or self (*Ātman*)-realization. It is the condition of pure consciousness and pure bliss while still living in the world. But there is even a further type of liberation which is actually the final goal of the whole cosmic process — *sarvamukti* or the liberation of all beings.

CHAPTER VI

REALIZATION OF PURE BEING (*SAT-BRAHMAN*)

(I) THE NOTION OF *SAT-BRAHMAN* AND *BRAHMĀLOKA*

Universal liberation, or *sarvamukti*, is associated with, though certainly not identical to, *Brahman's* pure being (*sat*). By pure being is meant several related things. First, that the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) is completely one or non-dual. This of course is what the word *Advaita* literally signifies — unqualified non-dualism. *Brahman* is undifferentiated, meaning it transcends all dualism and is entirely distinctionless. Second, there is nothing else ultimately existing except *Brahman*. All other phenomena exist only in a relative, non-absolute state which we realize at the moment of integral insight where the distortions of ignorance are overcome. The Real cannot be sublated, discarded, or contradicted by any other experience. It has absolute status. Third, pure being is infinite and spaceless. Nothing contains *Brahman* for there is nothing else present in the ultimate sense. In being infinite *Brahman* is self-existent, depending on no other reality for its being. It is therefore complete-in-itself, limitless. And finally, pure being is eternal. It is beyond time and so is not subject to creation, change, or decay. All this being said, it still must be remembered that *Brahman* is ultimately indescribable, beyond all language and thought. Radhakrishnan says, "Pure Being which is the Absolute can only be indicated. It can be alluded to but not described."¹

According to Radhakrishnan, two conditions are necessary for the realization of *sarvamukti*: "(i) inward perfection attained by intuition of self, (ii)

outer perfection possible only with the liberation of all."² The first condition refers to the *jīvanmukti* ideal. By directly apprehending the non-dual nature of the Ultimate Reality, the individual overcomes ignorance and no longer identifies with the separate ego but with the supreme self. Such an experience fundamentally transforms one's consciousness and character, which leads to the second condition. In abolishing egoism, the *jīvanmukta* opens up to others, helping them along the path to spiritual freedom. The eventual result will be a world redeemed, a community of saved souls (*brahmāloka*).

It is necessary to emphasize again that the *jīvanmukti* state, seen from the human angle, is only the first phase of the total liberation process and so is in a sense incomplete. Full liberation only occurs when everyone is spiritually free. Radhakrishnan makes clear that it is *sarvamukti*, and not *jīvanmukti* or *videhamukti*, that is the final goal on earth, the supreme destiny of human beings. It is insufficient that only a few individuals in history realize *mokṣa*. All human beings are to be saved.

All individuals are destined to gain life eternal... When the condition is attained, we have a divine community (*brahmāloka*) where the individual is transformed by contemplation on the being of God into the likeness of that which he beholds.³

Only with the advent of the *brahmāloka* are individuals truly and completely free. "There is no such thing," he insists, "as individual salvation, for it presupposes the salvation of others, universal salvation, the transfiguration of the world."⁴ Liberation is essentially social in character, embracing all of humankind.⁵

This distinguishes Radhakrishnan's position from some others in the Hindu tradition. For example, Patañjali's *yoga* philosophy affirms the view that universal liberation is impossible to realize because that would then deviate from the traditional belief that *saṁsāra* is endless. Similarly, the *Dvaita* (dualist) *Vedānta* of Madhva asserts, in Calvinistic-like fashion, that only some souls will be saved, the rest continuing on the wheel of becoming (*saṁsāra*) forever. Radhakrishnan's position also differs from some *Advaitin* views. One of the major debates in later *Advaita* thought revolves around the question of whether all individuals are liberated simultaneously (*sarva-mukti-vāda*) or whether each is liberated separately (*pratyeka-mukti-vāda*). Those holding the former theory believe that since *Ātman* is one the liberation of one individual will automatically liberate all beings. And this liberation is complete because it involves the direct realization of *Nirguṇa Brahman*, the *Brahman-in-repose*. Radhakrishnan definitely rejects this position when viewed from the empirical standpoint and sides more with the alternative theory which states *Ātman* is indeed one though it operates through many individual centres of consciousness.⁶ Consequently, the emancipation of one individual does not instantly bring about the liberation of all. In fact no individual can completely realize the pure being of *Nirguṇa Brahman* until all are individually saved. The result is that the *jīvanmukti*, from our limited perspective, represents more of a realization of the *Saguṇa Brahman* (God) than a full experience of the Absolute-in-itself. This makes sense because the Absolute is viewed as God from the finite, human end. So as long as even one individual remains unliberated, subject to ignorance (*avidyā*), God must continue to exist and guide the cosmic process. Only when all individuals throw off the concealing and distorting functions of ignorance can God, individual selves, and the world lapse back into the stillness of the Absolute.

The question is: "How does Radhakrishnan actually conceive of the final goal of universal liberation — the *brahmāloka* state — in his writings?" The answer is that he conceives of it as having both negative and positive senses. Negatively speaking, the *brahmāloka* is not to be associated with a heavenly place, an earthly paradise, personal immortality, or with liberation after death (*videhamukti*). In a more positive sense, it is variously described as being the end-point of the whole cosmic process, the furthest manifestation of the World Spirit, eternal life, a revolutionary change in consciousness, and a spiritual community or commonwealth. I shall examine each of the negative and positive senses separately in order to better understand Radhakrishnan's conception of *sarvamukti*.

(ii) NEGATIVE SENSE OF *BRAHMĀLOKA*

Although Radhakrishnan insists that the *brahmāloka* is not to be conceived of as a heavenly abode, this is exactly how it was thought to be in some *Upaniṣadic* and *Purāṇic* texts. According to these, the universe is divided into seven realms (*lokas*) — three upper, three lower, and one intermediate. Their grades are not determined by a spatial hierarchy but in terms of the subtleness or grossness of their matter. In other words, the grosser the matter, the lower the realms are. The three lower realms, in ascending order, are *bhurloka* (earth), *bhurvaloka* (sun), and *svarloka* (celestial bodies). Together these regions are called "*kṛtika*," meaning they are made and thus transitory. The three higher realms, in ascending order, are *janaloka* (heaven where causal or astral bodies reside), *tapaloka* (heaven inhabited by certain gods), and finally *brahmāloka* (heaven of Brahma, the creator god).⁷ Sometimes all the upper

realms are referred to as the *brahmāloka* for they are all incredibly fine and heavenly. Collectively these realms are known as "*akrtika*," meaning they are relatively permanent, lasting as long as the creator god, *Brahmā*. (In between the lower and higher spheres is the realm of *maharloka* which bears resemblance to both). In the *Upaniṣads* and *Purāṇas*, then, the *brahmāloka* is thought to be the highest realm of the universe, the most subtle of all regions.

A major difference between the above view of the *brahmāloka* and Radhakrishnan's is that for Radhakrishnan the *brahmāloka* is not a place transcending earth. In *Purāṇic* cosmology the *brahmāloka* is quite separate from the lower spheres, particularly the earth, because it hardly has any traces of matter. In being the highest of the heavenly realms it is beyond the grosser material regions. Radhakrishnan's view appears similar at first glance. There are numerous places where he appears to hint at the transcendent nature of the *brahmāloka*. For example:

The meaning of history is beyond the confines of history... What is beyond history cannot be related to history in simply historical terms... Though we cannot dispense altogether with time in speaking of its end, the end cannot be a part of time. It belongs to another order of existence, where there is an end of time itself, however difficult it may be for us to think of something absolutely last. The flux of time is a symptom of the disrupted, fallen state of the world. The new heaven and the new earth represent victory over time.⁸

The idea of transcending time certainly suggests the *brahmāloka* to be a place far beyond, and radically separate from, the material world. It thus sounds more like the *Purāṇic* view where it is the highest heavenly abode. But there are other passages in Radhakrishnan's writings where he talks about the *brahmāloka* as resulting from more of a radical transformation or transfiguration of the world than a complete transcendence of it. "The meaning of history," he opines, "is the transfiguration of life by those filled with holiness and humility... History will move to its end and transform itself into the Kingdom of spirit."⁹ The state of universal liberation — the *brahmāloka* — is one where the material universe, including the lower nature of each individual, is redeemed, not by means of destruction or suppression, but by being transmuted into spirit. Indeed, "Brahmāloka is not another world than saṁsāra, it is the world of saṁsāra redeemed."¹⁰

The notion of transmutation is readily comprehensible once Radhakrishnan's integral view of reality is brought into play. The Absolute, in panentheistic fashion, both includes everything in the universe, from the lowest form of matter to the highest grades of mind, and yet goes beyond its manifested form. Nothing is lost for all is taken up into *Brahman*.

The Absolute therefore is the whole, the only individual and the sum of perfection. The differences are reconciled in it and not obliterated. The dead mechanism of stones, the unconscious life of plants, the conscious life of animals and the self-conscious life of men are all parts of the Absolute and its expression at different stages... The Absolute thus is an organized whole, with interrelated parts.¹¹

Reality transforms rather than abolishes its various finite expressions.

The integral view of the cosmic process resembles in some respects Hegel's notion of *aufheben* (sublation or better yet, ablation), a term meaning both to abolish and to preserve. In the dialectical movement of the Absolute, Hegel believes the first movement of initial identity (e.g., Logic) is cancelled out by its second movement of difference (e.g., Nature) and then both are lifted up and retained in an inclusive unity (e.g., Spirit) where they cease to exist as separate entities or opposite abstractions. Consequently, nothing gets obliterated for each step in the dialectical process incorporates what went before it and in turn gets incorporated into the steps proceeding it.

Radhakrishnan often refers to this kind of synthetic movement as a "transfiguration." "The Kingdom of God" he says, "is the fulfilled transfigured life of this world."¹² And "Temporal life, is treated as contingent, transient, perishable, non-eternal, as its end is to be transfigured."¹³ Like *aufheben*, there are two senses to the term transfiguration. The first is to alter the shape of something, to change its appearance. In this transformation the original appearance is no longer dominant and a new form is visible. A similar process occurs in the establishment of the *brahmāloka* where matter, life, and mind get transmuted into something else. What they are changed into represents the second meaning of transfiguration, which is to elevate, glorify, idealize, or spiritualize. With the emergence of the *brahmāloka* the lower forms are cleansed, so to speak, and raised up to the level of spirit. That is why Radhakrishnan says "The truth about the earth is the Brahmaloka, the transfiguration of the cosmos... an assimilation to God."¹⁴

Despite the similarity to Hegel's view, Radhakrishnan advances two main criticisms against the Hegelian (and Marxian) dialectic. First the notion of dialectic assumes the existence of contradictions which propel the process forward. For Radhakrishnan, "Historical evolution does not invariably proceed through a series of contradictions."¹⁵ Hegel's problem is that he confuses opposites with distinctions. Opposites, like light and darkness, definitely cancel each other out, the result being no real synthesis of the two. But distinctions, such as truth and beauty or philosophy and art, do not exclude each other.¹⁶ He suggests something similar in regards to the existence of pain and suffering in the world. "The world is not inconsistent with the presence of evil, ugliness and error."¹⁷ This may be true, but Radhakrishnan undoubtedly believes the *brahmāloka* to be a unitive state devoid of all oppositions. He says, "It is the attainment of wholeness, the overcoming of disruption, the surmounting of all false antimonies, the transcending of time in eternity, which we objectify as *Brahmāloka*."¹⁸ If overcoming disruptions and contradictions is not the engine of history it certainly is the end-result of the entire historical process.

Second, Radhakrishnan disagrees with the historical determinism he sees dominating Hegel's thought. For Hegel, the dialectical movement is possible because the synthesis or new "moment" exists implicitly in the lower moments of what Fichte termed thesis and antithesis. In other words, a lower category such as Pure Being or Nothing contains within itself the potential to transform into the higher category of Becoming. In fact, the entire cosmic process contains an implicit pattern or principle which inexorably propels it towards its full realization as Absolute Idea or Spirit (*Geist*). But "the process of the world," according to Radhakrishnan, "is not a mere unfolding of what is contained in the beginning. It

is not a question of mere preformation."¹⁹ Similarly, "history does not proceed according to any strict law..."²⁰ We cannot be sure whether human progress is inevitable since "no one knows either the beginning or the end."²¹

These criticisms of Hegel seem rather dubious. To begin with, it is highly debatable that Hegel is committed to the position that the world-process is necessarily unfolding according to some preexisting blueprint of Spirit.²² In fact, for Hegel the idea of causal necessity, where the effects preexist in the cause, and logical necessity, involving a strict deduction of nature and finite spirit from the Logical Idea, are a product of understanding which can only think of necessity and freedom as mutually opposing terms. On the level of reason, spirit can be viewed as an open-ended process of self-articulation which does not exclude true innovation and originality, and is more of a self-organizing result than a prefabricated whole. As Hegel states it:

The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself.²³

This coincides with Radhakrishnan's own position, though he accounts for the indeterminate nature of the historical process in reference to human free-will.

It is also astonishing that Radhakrishnan would criticize Hegel (and Marx) for envisioning the end of history and believing in the inevitability of human progress given that his own descriptions of universal liberation and the

establishment of the *brahmāloka* suggest an equal commitment to necessary human advancement. "All individuals" he declares, "are destined to gain life eternal... There must come a time when all individuals will become sons of God and be received into the glory of immortality."²⁴ But it is important to note that for Radhakrishnan this final goal is not pre-arranged in any mechanical way because human beings are free, active agents who can either choose to realize God's purpose and work towards its fulfillment or turn away from the Divine and live according to their own selfish interests. Radhakrishnan's point, therefore, of everyone eventually attaining spiritual freedom represents more of a faith in individual prudence than a affirmation of historical determinism.

So far we have examined how, in Radhakrishnan's opinion, the *brahmāloka* should not be conceived of as a heavenly place transcending the material world. He further warns us against equating it with a perfect terrestrial future or earthly paradise. "The world-redemption (*sarva-mukti*) is not to be confused with cosmic millennia or earthly paradises. It is not a gradual accumulation of the material comforts through the ages."²⁵ The reason for this is that "Life remains unfulfilled until there is a vision of the Supreme."²⁶ No matter how much wealth, power, and status individuals achieve in this society, true happiness will forever elude them. For the aim of life is not to create a consumerist utopia, but to radically transform one's consciousness and being.

It is one of the illusions of modern life to believe that the way to spiritual peace is through material goals, that we can win men's hearts by offering them benefits... There is more in life than economic values. We are men, not merely producers and consumers, operatives or customers. Even if

the world becomes an earthly paradise dripping with milk and honey, even if cheap automobiles and radios are made accessible to all, we will not have peace of mind and true happiness...²⁷

Here Radhakrishnan stakes his ground against those secular ideologies such as liberal-capitalism and Marxian-socialism which advocate a materialistic utopia on earth. Despite being aware of the attraction such ideologies have for people throughout the world, he steadfastly refuses to accept them as adequate solutions to the human predicament because of their commitment to a materialist metaphysics.

The call of communism to the world has the passion of religion. It challenges existing evils, offers a clear and definite programme of action, and professes to provide a scientific analysis of economic and political situations. In its concern for the poor and the lowly, in its demand for a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity, in its insistence on radical equality, it gives us a social message with which all idealists are in agreement. But our sympathy for the social programme does not necessarily commit us to the Marxist philosophy of life, its atheistic conception of ultimate reality, its naturalistic view of man and its disregard of the sacredness of personality. To sympathize with Marxism as an effective instrument for social revolution is different from accepting its metaphysical background.²⁸

Even more problematic is the role such ideologies play in restricting the full realization of the spiritual ideal. Of course anything preventing such a realization is designated a source of human bondage.

We observed earlier how the source of bondage on the individual level is the ego and how for spiritual liberation to occur the ego must be transfigured. There is a parallel development on the social level. The collective ego, in the form of the nation-state, is the source of political bondage. Just as the closed, self-centeredness of the ego leads to individual suffering, the same kind of selfishness is evident in society as a whole and produces social evils. Since a person's individuality, according to Radhakrishnan, is the most concrete embodiment of spirit on earth, anything threatening this individuality or damaging its inherent dignity is suspect. He says, "Any social order built on the pains of spiritual freedom is immoral."²⁹ And since both political individualism (e.g., liberal-capitalism) and collectivism (e.g., Socialism, Fascism) run roughshod over spiritual individuality they must be transcended if true political liberation is to be achieved.

For Radhakrishnan, the individual's spiritual nature and non-difference with the Absolute Reality guarantees certain rights. One of the most important is the right to freedom. Since we are all in essence spirit, we are all free in that spiritual reality implies freedom. "Absolute Being," Radhakrishnan states, "is also absolute freedom... the Absolute is both Being and Freedom."³⁰ But there are a number of things within society that attempt to restrict our right to be free. The most conspicuous is the totalitarian state. The state, Radhakrishnan argues, has the limited purpose of protecting individual rights and helping to create equal opportunities. These can play an important role in facilitating the ultimate aim of

spiritual freedom (*mokṣa*). When, however, the state becomes an end in itself, then individual rights and freedoms get sacrificed and the State idolized. The result is totalitarianism and the crushing of individuality.

This is one of Radhakrishnan's major criticisms of communism in his books *Religion and Society* and *Recovery of Faith*. Although Radhakrishnan admires the Marxist idea of equality, he claims that communism in practice has failed to live up to Marx's vision of a free and equal society. Instead, it has brought about a monolithic, overly-bureaucratic state which attempts to control every facet of people's lives within society. In treating individuals as means towards an end — the state's good — communist societies violate the spirit in human beings. The person is reduced to a slave or automaton, a cog in the wheel of the state-machine. The inner life becomes subjected to stringent outer constraints and the religious life degenerates. This occurs to an even greater extent in fascist societies like Nazi Germany where the right to freedom was completely suppressed. In both communist and fascist societies, then, the state becomes an extension of the individual's self, a collective ego hell bent on satisfying its own rapacious desires at the expense of severely curtailing human rights.

Radhakrishnan believes this can also happen, though to a lesser degree, in liberal-democratic societies. He observes that a dominant elite often comes to rule in liberal states and that elected representatives become subservient to the demands of the party machine and corporate backers. Greater stress should be laid on getting more people to participate in the formulation and execution of public policy.

Although Radhakrishnan was greatly influenced by the Indian nationalism of Gandhi and Nehru, he saw that nationalism should only be seen as a necessary step in establishing an international community. When this end is lost sight of nationalism can then lapse into patriotic chauvinism, even imperialism.³¹ On the one hand, Radhakrishnan describes nationalism as "a political religion which stirs the hearts of men and causes them to service and self-sacrifice."³² But on the other, in worshipping the nation people are simply stroking the collective ego and doing a disservice to their divine selves within. Radhakrishnan argues, "When a nation thinks itself divine and believes that it alone is fit and destined to save the rest by its truth, love of power and dominion spring up."³³ Hence, despite the merits of nationalism, it can produce political bondage in the form of collective selfishness, authoritarian rule, and hostility towards other nations. For all these reasons Radhakrishnan ultimately echews secular ideologies and their vision of a more perfect society. True freedom can only be realized with the establishment of a Kingdom of Spirit, the *brahmāloka*.

Universal liberation (*sarvamukti*) should also not be identified with personal and conditional immortality. "Salvation is different," Radhakrishnan proclaims, "from survival, liberation (*mokṣa*) from rebirth (*saṃsāra*), life eternal from durational continuance."³⁴ By personal immortality is meant preserving one's individual mind and body and living forever. This is obviously at odds with spiritual liberation where there is a radical transformation of consciousness and character. The doctrine of conditional immortality states "Immortality is not our natural birthright, a thing to which we are entitled but a prize to be won."³⁵ It is achieved by immense moral effort and must be maintained in some way. But this falsely equates immortality with physical survival or endless continuity. The notion of immortality as involving the prolongation of one's life into an indefinitely

extended future only belongs to the lower plane of *māyā* and *avidyā* for it presupposes the notion of time. *Mokṣa*, on the other hand, belongs to a higher, more fully spiritual dimension. In Radhakrishnan's words, "Release is life in spiritual consciousness, rebirth is life in becoming."³⁶ In claiming that the *brahmāloka* is life eternal, Radhakrishnan is not suggesting personal or conditional immortality. The eternality of the Kingdom of Spirit transfigures all forms of continual, temporal existence.³⁷

Lastly, universal liberation is not the same as *videhamukti* or liberation after final death. It is important to emphasize again that Radhakrishnan follows the *Advaita Vedānta* in upholding the theory of *jīvanmukti* or liberation while still alive. Other schools of the *Vedānta*, such as Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, reject the possibility of *jīvanmukti* and believe only in liberation after embodied existence. Although some *Advaitins* also accept *videhamukti*, Radhakrishnan says almost nothing about it and prefers to concentrate on highlighting the more positive life-affirming aspects of Hindu thought. For Radhakrishnan, "embodiment and disembodiment makes no difference to the liberated soul"³⁸ and in "either case the soul is freed from conditional existence."³⁹

In sum, Radhakrishnan does not conceive of universal liberation or the *brahmāloka* as a heavenly abode completely transcending the world, nor as an earthly paradise or personal/conditional immortality, nor as a liberation after final physical death. What then does he conceive it as?

(II) POSITIVE SENSE OF *BRAHMĀLOKA*

This brings us to Radhakrishnan's more positive descriptions of the *sarvamukti* ideal. As mentioned earlier, this ideal is variously described as the culmination of the cosmic process, the full realization of the World Spirit, eternal life, a revolutionary transformation of consciousness, and a spiritual community. Perhaps most fundamental of all is the view that the *brahmāloka* is the culmination or end-point of the whole cosmic process. It is, in short, the ultimate meaning of history.

As previously noted, Radhakrishnan is adamant about the *jīvanmukta's* selfless devotion to others. This answers to both the criticism alleging *mokṣa's* propensity to discourage social activism as well as to what the means are to universal liberation. It is the liberated souls who tirelessly work for the salvation of all. They "take upon themselves the burden of the redemption of the whole world."⁴⁰ The eternal spirit is the same in everyone and complete freedom is not possible until all human beings realize their true, blissful self (*Ātman*). Indeed, "The perfect soul cannot look with indifference on the suffering of the imperfect, for they are also his own self."⁴¹ The liberation of all, therefore, is the condition for the liberation of one.

So long as there are unreleased souls, the released souls will here work in the temporal order. The concept of the solidarity of mankind tells us that the saved souls and the sinning are bound to one another. The former work on the latter by persuasion and love until they are transformed and reborn into spiritual souls alive with the life that grows more and more into

life eternal... So long as the cosmic plan is not fulfilled, work will continue, in a spiritual selfless way by the saints, in a material selfish way by others.⁴²

The love and compassion of liberated individuals is what propels society towards the *brahmāloka* or the Kingdom of God. It is essential that after their enlightenment they remain in the world to carry out the work of universal redemption. To this extent the *jīvanmuktas* retain their "individuality as a centre of action so long as the cosmic process lasts."⁴³ The work will continue "until the struggle with evil and imperfection is altogether overcome and the world is restored to spirit."⁴⁴ Only when everyone is saved will the temporal become the eternal.⁴⁵

Radhakrishnan's view of the redeeming action of the *jīvanmuktas* presupposes a particular conception of history, one intimately connected to his idealist philosophy. In *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan claims idealism to be an ambiguous word since three different meanings can be attached to the term "idea."⁴⁶ The first he calls mentalism. Here an "idea is taken as a particular mental image peculiar to each individual."⁴⁷ On this scheme, idealism is a philosophy where reality ultimately consists of mental-stuff, not matter. An example of this is the subjective idealism of Bishop Berkeley. The second meaning posits ideas to be concepts or universal notions that are shared and known by other minds.⁴⁸ The Kantian categories of thought which organize the given sense datum is an example of this kind of idealism together with the absolute idealism of Hegel. Radhakrishnan abides by the third meaning of idea which can be captured in such queries as "What's the big idea?" Here one is not

after mental images or universal concepts but the purpose behind some act. According to this view, idea signifies value, goal, or principle.

This idea or value is the operative creative force. An idealist view finds that the universe has meaning, has value. Ideal values are the dynamic forces, the driving power of the universe. The world is intelligible only as a system of ends... Idealism in the sense indicated concerns the ultimate nature of reality... It finds life significant and purposeful. It endows man with a destiny that is not limited to the sensible world.⁴⁹

So by idealism Radhakrishnan means reality is imbued with purpose, ideals, or values. The stress is on "ideal" in the word "idealism" rather than on "idea."

What this all implies is that history has meaning to it, and humans a purpose. The historical process is not just "one damn thing after another." It has value and is directed toward some final end. The end, according to Radhakrishnan, is the *brahmāloka*, the society of saved souls. The whole purpose of human life is to realize *sarvamukti* or the liberation of all beings.

The meaning of history is to make all men prophets, to establish a kingdom of free spirits. The infinitely rich and spiritually impregnated future, this drama of the gradual transmutation of intellect into spirit, of the son of man into the son of God, is the goal of history.⁵⁰

We are not just spectators in this grand drama but active participants in the long march towards universal salvation.⁵¹ Our final destiny is to attain divine status. This is the fundamental message of all the major religions of the world.

The divinity of the life of man in the individual and the race is the dream of the great religions. It is the mokṣa of the Hindus, the nirvana of the Buddhists, the kingdom of heaven of the Christians. It is for Plato the life of the untroubled perception of the pure idea. It is the realization of one's native form, the restoration of one's integrity of being.⁵²

The final goal of *sarvamukti* is reached through a process of evolution. Radhakrishnan refers to the *Upaniṣadic* idea of the five stages of evolution to explain the future advent of the *brahmāloka*.

In the ancient Upaniṣad, the Taittirīya (eight century B.C.), the cosmic evolution is represented by the five stages of matter (anna), life (prāṇa), perceptual-instinctive consciousness (manas), reflective consciousness (vijñāna), and spiritual and creative consciousness (ānanda). In the cosmic process we have the successive emergence of the material, the organic, the animal, the human and the spiritual orders of existence.⁵³

Matter is the first manifestation of the cosmic process. Early theories conceived matter as "an enduring substance moving through a static space in a uniformly flowing time."⁵⁴ The modern theory of relativity and quantum mechanics altered this conception. We now know matter to be a form of energy in a space-time

continuum. Physical objects are not immutable entities but a series of changing events with connected continuity. In Radhakrishnan's mind, "Matter is the name for a cluster of events, possessing certain relatively persistent habits and potencies."⁵⁵ At this level consciousness is non-explicit, though potentially emergent.

The next stage in the evolutionary ascent is life. From inorganic matter arises living organisms that have characteristics that go beyond and cannot be reducible to, physico-chemical reactions. The functions of assimilation, respiration, reproduction, and growth helps the organism maintain a dynamic equilibrium with its changing environment. This adaptive activity displays a measure of inner direction, a recipient intelligence missing in material objects. Radhakrishnan warns that this intelligence should not be construed as a mysterious vital force as the theory of vitalism suggests. For him, "vitalism is unsatisfactory, since it attempts to explain everything which occurs in a living organism, and we are unable to test its truth."⁵⁶ Best at this time to just recognize the fact "that life is a unique kind of activity for which the formulas of matter and energy are not adequate."⁵⁷

When actual perceptual abilities develop in living organisms there appears perceptual-instinctive consciousness, something Radhakrishnan also terms "animal mind." For him, "animals have only a perceptual consciousness, their mental horizon being restricted to mere perceptions of the present moment."⁵⁸ Unlike human beings, animals live only in the present moment and cannot imagine future possibilities. Although they lack self-consciousness and are governed more by instincts, their perceptual consciousness represents a higher degree of inner direction than is discernable in plants or microorganisms.

Moreover, animals are sentient, meaning they are capable of feeling pleasure and pain.

The next higher level of evolution is human intelligence which involves self-reflection. The human mind "is capable of rising above itself, of comparing itself with other selves and of passing judgment on its own character."⁵⁹ In contrast to other living things, human activity is regulated more by rational deliberation, by the ability to organize sense-data, formulate abstract concepts, and derive inferences. Significantly different too is the ability to construct an array of moral, political, and aesthetic ideals (e.g., goodness, justice, beauty) to live in accordance with.

Despite the advanced quality of human intelligence it is filled with severe pitfalls and so must be superceded by a higher spiritual consciousness. The human mind, in being self-conscious, divides experience into subject and object, thereby excluding itself from all other beings. As Radhakrishnan notes, the "natural outcome of such an intellectual pluralism will be a narrow philistine spirit of individualism, sensualism and selfishness."⁶⁰ The next state will usher in a consciousness that overcomes dualistic ego awareness, directly apprehends the oneness of reality, and transcends all distinctions and conflicts. This is the level of Spirit, the harmonious state of peace and joy (*ānanda*). Such a spiritual consciousness embraces all the lower levels, raises them up, and stands at the peak of the evolutionary ascent.

Ānanda, Spirit, which is the goal of evolution, comprises all the rest. It is not unrelated to the others which it has superceded and resolved into itself. All of them

are activities of the Spirit... In the cosmic evolution the different stages are not opposed as good and evil. It is an evolution from one stage to another and the different stages are distinguishable only within a unity. The one Spirit is manifesting itself in its various activities which are all partial and therefore inadequate. Wholeness belongs to the Spirit itself.⁶¹

When all human beings rise to the level of spiritual consciousness the *brahmāloka* will be established and then, and only then, will the cosmic purpose have been fulfilled.

Radhakrishnan's idealist view of history differs significantly from the standard Hindu cyclical theory, especially as it is found in the *Purāṇic* literature. The *Purāṇas* ("ancient") are a large collection of old legendary lore and mythology connected to the different theistic sects (i.e. *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva*, *Shākta*) of India. Among other things, they articulate a comprehensive vision of the whole cosmic process. According to the *Purāṇas*, cosmic time (*kāla*) operates and is measured in cycles. This world passes through four periods or ages (*yugas*) of declining length in its journey from creation to destruction. (Each *yuga* is named after a side of the Indian die). The first period is the *Kṛta* ("lucky four dots") *yuga* which lasts 4800 divine years or 1,728,00 human years. (One divine year equals 360 human years). This represents the golden age where people completely devote themselves and successfully perform their duties. The second is the *Treta* ("three dots") *yuga* whose length is 3600 divine years or 1,296,00 human years. This stands for the silver age where individuals begin to shirk their responsibilities and public virtue decreases by one-fourth. The third period is the *Dvāpara* ("two dots") *yuga* which exists for 2400 divine years or 864,000 human

years. This represents a bronze age where people become blinded by passion and their virtue decreases by one-half. And lastly is the *Kālī* ("unlucky one dot") *yuga* whose length is 1200 divine years or 432,000 human years. It represents an iron age where there is much strife, discord, and suffering. Righteousness exists to the extent of one-fourth only. The present era is a *Kālī yuga*, estimated to have begun in 3102 BCE. It is the most corrupt of the four ages.

Each cycle of the four *yugas* is known as a *mahāyuga* ("great age") and comprises 12,000 divine years or 4,320,000 human years. One thousand *mahāyugas* or 12,000,000 divine years (4,320,000,000 human years) equals one *kalpa*, a day in the life of the creator god, *Brahmā*. At the end of each *kalpa*, *Brahmā* dissolves the universe and rests for an equal length of time. This is said to constitute a night in *Brahmā*'s life. (The rhythm of these days and nights is likened to *Brahmā* inhaling and exhaling.) One hundred years of such *Brahmā* days and nights make-up a lifetime of *Brahmā*. At the end of *Brahmā*'s life, the entire cosmos totally dissolves for a *Brahmā* century. Then another deity takes *Brahmā*'s place and the immense cosmic cycle begins again, repeating itself endlessly.

In such a grand scheme, the cosmic process consists only of recurrent cycles with no absolute beginning or termination. The same pattern repeats itself in an endless merry-go-round. From this perspective there is no overall progress, with individual human lives appearing insignificant. Radhakrishnan's view of history seems to repudiate the *Purāṇic* cosmology. For him, the cosmic process operates more like a spiral or helix than a constantly revolving circle. The entire universe is progressively moving from inorganic matter to a spiritual kingdom where it will then lapse back into the Absolute. It is because of this

evolutionary process that individuals possess enormous significance, for they have such a crucial role to play in establishing the *brahmāloka*.

Despite this obvious difference, Radhakrishnan alludes to the possibility of some other cosmos coming into being after the present cosmic purpose is fulfilled.

When the self-disclosure of personalities is accomplished, when the integral revelation of the world is achieved, a simple continuance of such a state becomes a useless luxury. As Lotze argues, souls will exist so long as their existence has meaning for the universe. When this world order ends, the creative freedom of the Absolute may find expressions in forms of which we have no knowledge today; other possibilities may be realized in other frameworks.⁶²

Likewise, in *An Idealist View of Life* he maintains "We need not assume that this cosmic process is an end in itself. When its end is reached, when its drama played, the curtain is drawn and possibly some other plot may commence."⁶³ This sounds awfully similar to the *Purāṇic* conception where the entire universe dissolves at *Brahmā's* death and another deity takes over, repeating the whole grand cosmic cycle. The difference is that Radhakrishnan only speculates about another cosmos and is unsure of its actually manifesting. Moreover, he does not believe that the next "plot" will be more or less the same as the previous one, which the *Purāṇic* theory assumes. There will not, in short, be an eternal reoccurrence of the same pattern. For him, "History is a forward movement and not an endless recurrence or repetition."⁶⁴ What Radhakrishnan does is

incorporate the idea of progressive evolution into the traditional Hindu cyclical vision to arrive at a one-spiral pattern of history. To what extent his views were influenced by the Judeo-Christian notion of linear time is uncertain. But it is safe to say that he relied on the evolutionary theory found in *Upaniṣads* as well as on the "process" view of cosmic development found in the writings of such philosophers as Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead.

Another way Radhakrishnan positively describes universal liberation or the *brahmāloka* is by saying it represents the full realization of the World-Spirit (*Hiranyagarbha*). In other words, the *brahmāloka* should be conceived as simply the furthest manifestation of the eternal spirit and not the eternal spirit itself. Following the *Advaita* tradition, Radhakrishnan draws a distinction between *Brahman* itself and the *brahmāloka*. The former contains all possibilities whereas the later is merely the full realization of one of *Brahman's* possibilities, namely, the manifestation of the World-Spirit (*Hiranyagarbha*) in the cosmic process. In his words, the "Brahmāloka is the widest possible integration of cosmic experience, the furthest limit of manifested being... Beyond it there is nothing in the manifested world. It is not the eternal beyond the empirical."⁶⁵ Or more specifically:

The Kingdom of God, a society of saved souls, is the cosmic destiny. It is one expression of the Absolute but not the Absolute itself. It is a manifestation of one of its possibilities. The Absolute, however, is not limited by its manifestation in such a divine society. The peace, the bliss and the oneness of the Absolute are not constituted by or limited to the perfection of this cosmic process.⁶⁶

A distinction is thus made between the absolute being of *Brahman*, the eternal, and the full realization of the World-Spirit which is only an expression of one of *Brahman's* possibilities.

The distinction between the Absolute and its cosmic manifestation is possible because of God who represents the active side of *Brahman*. This creator God, who Radhakrishnan calls *Īśvara* (Highest Lord) and other Hindu texts term *Brahmā*, is responsible for actualizing this empirical possibility in the more limited form of the World-Spirit (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) and so is closely connected to the world. God, or more precisely the World-Spirit, is embroiled in the historical process, edging it closer toward its spiritual goal. "During the course of history, which is the translation of one possibility of the Infinite Spirit, the latter is envisaged by us as the Divine principle controlling the course of this historical succession."⁶⁷ And when God and the world become spiritually one the result will be universal liberation, the establishment of the *brahmāloka*. Afterwards both God and the world will lapse back into the Absolute.

Where there is a complete identity
between God and the world, that is,
when God's purpose is fulfilled,
when all individual spirits are
perfected, God Himself will relapse
into the Absolute...⁶⁸

The *brahmāloka*, then, is not to be identified with the totality of the *Brahman* itself. It only represents the culmination or end-point of the World-Spirit in the cosmic process before it all recedes into Absolute being.

To complicate matters, Radhakrishnan does at times characterize the *brahmāloka* as life eternal or eternal life. "All individuals," he exclaims, "are destined to gain life eternal... when this condition is attained, we have a divine community (*brahmāloka*)..."⁶⁹ This will mean the transfiguration of time since the "temporal mode of the historical world will be taken over into the non-temporal mode of being of the divine. History will move to its end and transform itself into the Kingdom of spirit."⁷⁰ Comments were just made on how Radhakrishnan describes the *brahmāloka* as simply the furthest manifestation of the eternal *Brahman* and not the eternal *Brahman* in its totality. But we should not be tempted to interpret this as signifying a confinement on the part of the soul to temporal existence; for Radhakrishnan explicitly states that "the transcending of time in eternity" is what "we objectify as *brahmāloka*."⁷¹ Universal liberation does denote eternal life, but this is only the full realization of one of *Brahman's* infinite possibilities. Moreover, Radhakrishnan believes "This cosmic-deliverance, which is the close of the world, cannot be accurately described as a terrestrial future for it is a supramundane present."⁷² The notion of eternity at work here is one similar to the Platonic-Plotinian conception in which eternity is a "*nunc stans*" a "standing now," as opposed to time, which is a "*nunc fluens*" or "flowing now." Eternity, therefore, should not be confused with endless duration for it excludes both pastness and futurity. In describing eternity as a supra-mundane presence Radhakrishnan means it exists on a higher dimension, vertically related to the horizontal movement of time. For this reason he says, "Here and now we can attain life eternal."⁷³

This idea of the eternality of the *brahmāloka* is somewhat comparable to Jesus's notion of the Kingdom of God. Before Jesus's time, the Israelites believed that sometime in the near future God (*Yahweh*) would directly intervene

in history and send a new King David to subdue Israel's enemies and make the righteous Israelites rulers of a new earth. But Jesus seemed to reject this eschatology and believed the Kingdom of God to be a present reality. In proclaiming "the Kingdom of God has come upon you" Jesus was implying that the presence of the Kingdom was only in germ-form and would require an indefinite period to perfectly develop. (Mt. 12:28). Just as a person scatters seeds on the ground one day and watches them grow into crops, the Kingdom of God presently exists as a seed possessing the immanent power to fully ripen. (Mt.4:26-9). Interestingly, Radhakrishnan uses a similar analogy in the following passage:

The new world in which the old is in travail is still like an embryo. The components are all there; what is lacking is the integration, the completeness which is organic consciousness, the binding together of the different elements, making them breathe and come to life.⁷⁴

For both Jesus and Radhakrishnan the Kingdom of God (*brahmāloka*) already exists in the world and must be realized by all.

Closely related to the notion of eternal life as a supra-mundane present is Radhakrishnan's view of the *brahmāloka* as consisting of a "revolutionary change in men's consciousness."⁷⁵ It would be inaccurate to envisage the Kingdom of God as a place far removed from terrestrial life and existing sometime in the future. Instead, Radhakrishnan asserts:

Mokṣa, Nirvāṇa, the Kingdom of

of God are not to be pictured as subsequent to or far off from our present existence. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a place of rest after death, something which will someday come on earth. It is a change of consciousness, an inner development, a radical transformation.⁷⁶

This echoes Jesus's claim that the Kingdom of God is not to be found here or there for it is "within you." (Lk. 17:20-1). One must be reborn — experience a fundamental change in consciousness and character — to enter the Kingdom of the Spirit. This change in awareness, as noted in a previous section, is a shift from self-centeredness to Reality-centredness, from a closed, egoistic self to an open, magnanimous self. For Radhakrishnan, such a transformation "results in a complete renewing of one's nature, which is assimilated to the new inward dimension. We feel at home in the world. There is no feeling of estrangement but one of restored harmony. All things are of one piece. Mokṣa, Nirvāṇa, the Kingdom of God are inward states of mind."⁷⁷ The result of everyone experiencing such a radical change of consciousness is the *brahmāloka*.

The final positive description of the *brahmāloka* to be examined involves Radhakrishnan's notion of a spiritual community or commonwealth of spirits. There are numerous passages where Radhakrishnan describes the *brahmāloka* as a "divine community"⁷⁸ or as a "society of saved souls."⁷⁹ The intent is obviously a community made up of entirely liberated beings — *jīvanmuktas*. With the establishment of the *brahmāloka*, "Human society becomes charged with the grace and grandeur of the eternal."⁸⁰

Radhakrishnan believes both freedom and harmony are the marks of a spiritual community. The spiritually communal nature of the *brahmāloka* is

evident in its English translation — the "Kingdom" of God. In the Bible, where the term is most employed, the Kingdom of God has two related meanings. The first refers to God's sovereign reign, while the second relates to the realm over which God rules. This realm of course is heaven where God's elect rejoice in his glorious presence. Thus the biblical Kingdom of God represents a state of perfect unity between God and all saved souls. A unitive state also pertains to Radhakrishnan's notion of the *brahmāloka*. The attainment of the *jīvanmukti* ideal by everyone marks the most perfect expression of the Divine in the cosmic process as the World-Spirit (*Hiranyagarbha*). In this sense one could say that God, as the active side of *Brahman*, reigns in the *brahmāloka* state. A crucial difference, however, between Radhakrishnan's view and the biblical account is that the saved souls realize they are no different from the Ultimate Spiritual Reality and so there is no relationship as such between them and God. But "the liberated individuals are present to each other as one."⁸¹ Their consciousness of the Divine Reality is unified and remains unaffected by different bodily forms. When each person realizes the *jīvanmukti* ideal there results a fellowship of liberated spirits, which constitutes, in Radhakrishnan's words, "a life in which individuals are united by perfect interpenetration of mind by mind... Such a state of perfection or spiritualized harmony is the end of the world."⁸² So the universality of Spirit reveals itself as the community of liberated beings.⁸³

But does this notion of the *brahmāloka* as being a spiritual community, a fellowship of free individuals, mean that some kind of individuality is retained? Some of Radhakrishnan's remarks are ambiguous on this point. On the one hand, he clearly states the *brahmāloka* "marks the end of time itself"⁸⁴ and that individuals only retain their distinction till "the end of the cosmic process is achieved."⁸⁵ This can only mean that individuality is transcended when, and only

when, there is universal liberation, since individuality is associated with the historical process while the *brahmāloka* represents eternal life. On the other hand, in describing the *brahmāloka* as a "society of saved souls"⁸⁶ or a "world fellowship,"⁸⁷ there is a suggestion of a relationship between liberated spirits, a situation obviously presupposing the existence of individual beings. Moreover, Radhakrishnan even claims "There is no question in my scheme of the individual being included in and absorbed by the Divine. What is involved is unity in personal love."⁸⁸ What is it then? Does a sense of individuality remain with the advent of universal liberation (or *brahmāloka*) or is it completely transcended?

I think the ambiguity arises because of Radhakrishnan's failure to clearly distinguish whether the *brahmāloka* represents the actual end of the cosmic process or whether it is the state where "cosmic existence lapses into Absolute Being."⁸⁹ There is a subtle, though exceedingly important difference between the two. In describing the *brahmāloka* as "the furthest limit of manifested being," Radhakrishnan is definitely implying that it is simply the end point of cosmic evolution and not the Absolute Being itself. But his copious remarks about the *brahmāloka* representing a "victory over time"⁹⁰ or the "end of time"⁹¹ suggests it is on par with the Absolute. The difference is really one between eschatology, the doctrine of the world's *final* destiny, and pareschatology or the doctrine of the world's *penultimate* goal. Radhakrishnan continually confuses the two. The *brahmāloka* as the furthest limit of manifested being, in the form of a spiritual community, is the pareschatological end since it only represents the full expression of *one of Brahman's* possibilities, whereas *brahmāloka* as eternal Being is the ultimate, eschatological end for it retreats into the totality of *Brahman* itself. So the retention of individuality makes sense only in terms of the

paeschatological scheme of universal liberation and would certainly be absent in regards to the eschatological conception.

According to Radhakrishnan, a necessary step in eventually realizing a perfect spiritual community is the establishment of a truly international, harmonious, democratic, and just political order. Internationalism is essential. Following the ideas of Tagore and Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan looks upon nationalism as particularly divisive in a world of interdependent nations. His internationalism is a natural development of his insistence on democracy and equality. True democracy demands not only tolerance and good-will among all members of a community but also among members of all communities in the world. To be real democracy must apply to the entire human family. Fortunately he believes the course of history is moving towards the growth of an international community under the reign of law and freedom for all.

What form would this international community take? Radhakrishnan is somewhat ambiguous on this point. In some of his writings, such as *Education, Politics and War*, he talks of a "single commonwealth of nations" which suggests a plurality of nation-states.⁹² But in his *Religion in a Changing World* he explicitly calls for the establishment of one world federal government based on a universal moral order (democracy) and system of legal justice.⁹³ What Radhakrishnan wants is to maintain a diversity of states but to incorporate them within a unity of human fellowship. He certainly rejects mass uniformity and espouses instead a community of common nations. This kind of world-community would be organic in structure, meaning each individual state would be mutually related and dependent on one another for the fulfillment of the whole. For this to occur each nation must subordinate its own narrow interests for the common global good.

Just as an individual must renounce his or her egoistic desires to achieve inner peace and harmony, individual nation-states must renounce their own selfish ambitions to achieve global unity. The United Nations Organization, despite its serious short-comings, represents for Radhakrishnan the nearest we have to world government, and for this reason should be supported and strengthened.⁹⁴

Radhakrishnan is enough of a realist to know that world unity, and eventually a spiritual commonwealth (*brahmāloka*), will not come easily. In fact he believes it will only develop when there is a "Religion of the Spirit."⁹⁵ By this he means the eternal religion or perennial philosophy lying at the basis of all the world's major religions. Like Vivekananda's "Universal Religion" and Tagore's "Religion of Man," Radhakrishnan's "Religion of the Spirit" recognizes the oneness of the individual self (*Ātman*) with the Universal Reality (*Brahman*). Only the realization of our essential divinity can help us perceive the same divinity in others and thus treat them with tolerance and respect. In other words, only when we realize our true divine nature through a "religion of the spirit" can love infuse the world and create a harmonious state of human unity. World politics must be anchored on a religion of the spirit which actually represents a fellowship rather than a synthesis of the world's major religions.⁹⁶

The ideal political order also requires the promotion and protection of civil liberties and economic justice. This means the state has a positive, and not just negative, role to play in society. For Radhakrishnan, the state must safeguard individual rights and prevent any interference with the exercise of individual freedoms. A democratic society would fully guarantee civil liberties such as the right to free speech, association, and assembly. Although one of the state's purposes is to remove constraints on individual liberty this does not warrant

licence. Individuals should not be permitted do anything they want, only that which does not prove detrimental to the rights of others. Here Radhakrishnan supports the views of classical liberal theorists. But he also strongly advocates a more positive function for the state. In other words, liberty is not just a freedom from interference but a freedom towards something. The state should not only protect individuals from external compulsions but show the direction toward which the exercise of this right should lead, namely, self-realization. It must create opportunities, in the form of structures and institutions, which enhance the creative manifestation of the right to freedom. This involves, among other things, genuine elections, true representative and responsible government, and the just rule of law. Additionally, the state should establish the conditions whereby reason and tolerance in interpersonal and inter-state relations can reign supreme, and where friendly persuasion rather than violent confrontation is the norm for settling disputes. All these elements would contribute to creating the ideal environment for the realization of a spiritual community.

Finally, the positive role of the state should extend into the economic sphere. For collective spiritual freedom to be realized the state must attend to the material needs of individuals. So long as a person is not guaranteed at least the basic necessities of life they cannot develop spiritually. "No man can be said to be free if his desire for food, shelter and economic security is not satisfied."⁹⁷ Thus economic democracy as well as political liberal democracy is essential to creating an ideal social order. For Radhakrishnan, it is socialism, in its genuine form, that best guarantees economic democracy because of its commitment to equality. By socialism is meant some public ownership of the means of production and the provision of equal opportunities for all. All people must be given equal opportunity to develop whatever potential they have. In fact, "A free

society is one where each individual has real freedom to live as he wills, short of infringing on the equal freedom of others to do the same."⁹⁸ Radhakrishnan supported the socialistic goals of the Indian Congress party and agreed with the public ownership of some utilities and resources. He certainly rejected the totalitarian practice of Marxism-Leninism and preferred democratic (i.e., parliamentary) socialism. His vision of an ideal social order was one that would be liberal-democratic in its political structure and social-democratic in its economic structure — a social democracy. "A free society is one which provides each individual with economic security, intellectual life and spiritual freedom."⁹⁹ Only such a society could fulfill the rights to freedom and equality which are necessary for the eventual realization of a spiritual community.

In summary, the ultimate meaning and goal of the whole cosmic process is *sarvamukti* or the liberation of all human beings. This will take the form of *brahmāloka*, a spiritual community representing the furthest expression of the Divine Reality in history. The establishment of such a community will facilitate the realization of pure being (*sat*) since it will then lapse back into *Brahman's* absolute Being. Thus universal liberation signals the overcoming of metaphysical limitation (*māyā*), the transfiguration of the finite world of space, time, and causality.

From this second section we have observed that Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) has a positive and not just negative meaning. Negatively, *mokṣa* is release from metaphysical (*māyā*), epistemological (*avidyā*), and affective (*duḥkha*) limitations; positively, it is the full realization of pure being (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*). The real purpose of human life is to first realize individual spiritual

freedom (the *jīvanmukti* ideal), which produces inner peace and outward love, and then work to help liberate all beings (the *sarvamukti* ideal) and establish a spiritual community (the *brahmāloka*). This is the highest good, the ultimate value that we should be trying to realize in our limited lives.

SECTION III
CRITICAL EVALUATION

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPIRICAL PROBLEM OF REBIRTH

(I) INTRODUCING THE EMPIRICAL PROBLEM

Thus far the thesis has sought to describe in detail Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). In this third and final section I wish to draw critical attention to an important aspect of Radhakrishnan's view. It is my contention that Radhakrishnan's theory rests upon certain ideas that are essential to the realization of *mokṣa*. Without these, spiritual liberation, at least as Radhakrishnan conceives of it, would be impossible to obtain. The ideas are the existence of an Ultimate Reality (*Brahman/Ātman*), the presence of individual free-will, the possibility of mystical (integral) experience, and the process of *karmic* rebirth. Because of the importance of such ideas, the obvious philosophical question that arises is whether any of them are rationally acceptable? By this I mean whether the fundamental notions of *Brahman/Ātman*, free-will, mystical experience, and *karmic* rebirth are empirically sound and logically coherent? Are they in fact true and meaningful? If not, then Radhakrishnan's ideal of spiritual liberation loses its metaphysical support and may then become totally disregarded as a legitimate ideal worth pursuing. It is imperative, then, to address this important issue. In the final section, however, I shall limit myself to examining whether the idea of *karmic* rebirth (or reincarnation), as found in Radhakrishnan's writings, is rationally acceptable in the sense of being empirically convincing and logically sensible. More specifically, I shall argue: (i) that the idea of *karmic* rebirth faces some serious difficulties, which cast some doubt on its empirical veracity; (ii) that despite this, it and the whole ideal of *mokṣa* are still worthwhile since they play a key role in

facilitating psychological and moral development; and (iii) that the notion of *karmic* rebirth is logically coherent. In short, the objective of the final section is to demonstrate how rebirth, though empirically dubious, remains existentially valuable and logically possible.

There are three reasons why I chose to critically analyse Radhakrishnan's notion of *karmic* rebirth rather than one or more of the other ideas underpinning his concept of *mokṣa*. The first, and least important, was simply the fact of limited space. Brevity dictated that only one of Radhakrishnan's underlying ideas be exposed and critically discussed.

The second, and more crucial, reason has to do with the nature of the other subjects and/or the work already done on them. It seems to me that a critical evaluation of the whole idea of *Brahman/Ātman* would be too vast a subject to adequately address here. The possible existence or non-existence of such an ultimate reality is just too fundamental an issue to warrant serious consideration in such a restricted amount of space. The idea of individual free-will, though perhaps more manageable to handle, also proves inappropriate since it represents more of the Western influence on Radhakrishnan's thought, via the Judeo-Christian tradition. I wished instead to focus on a concept that Radhakrishnan inherited from his own Indian background. Finally, mystical (or integral) experience, though undeniably central to Radhakrishnan's understanding of *mokṣa*, has already been thoroughly examined by John Arapura in his book *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*. The little I could add to this admirable study in such limited space would seem trite by comparison. Thus I decided to concentrate on Radhakrishnan's notion of *karmic* rebirth because it is: (i) a concept that is possible to adequately, though not

comprehensively, address in the remaining space; (ii) a concept derived from Radhakrishnan's own Indian philosophical-religious background, particularly the *Vedānta*; and (iii) a concept that to my knowledge has not been thoroughly investigated in reference to Radhakrishnan's concept of *mokṣa*.

The third and final reason for working on Radhakrishnan's idea of *karmic* rebirth stemmed from my conviction that a moral theory of the good must include a realistic means for obtaining the good that is affirmed and advocated. In Radhakrishnan's view, the process of *karmic* rebirth is essential for eventually realizing *mokṣa*. Free-will certainly plays a crucial role but its efficacy in regards to fulfilling the goal of *mokṣa* is inextricably tied to the cause-effect law of *karmic* rebirth. And mystical (integral) experience represents more of the end point of the striving towards liberation, at least in reference to a state of consciousness, than an actual means as such. Hence, one is left with *karmic* rebirth as the paramount vehicle for realizing the ultimate ideal, *mokṣa*. This being the case, a critical investigation of the idea of *karmic* rebirth, as it appears in Radhakrishnan's writings, seems justified.

The bulk of the section, as contained in this chapter, will focus on describing some of the empirical problems with Radhakrishnan's *karmic* rebirth hypothesis, while the smaller last chapter will concentrate on its logical coherence. The reason for the discrepancy in size lies in Radhakrishnan's own approach to the issue. Nowhere in his writings does he entertain the thought that rebirth might be nonsensical or a logically incoherent concept. Rather, his remarks are primarily directed to possible empirical objections to the rebirth hypothesis. It is these that he sees as being the principal threat against the doctrine of reincarnation. Moreover, his own reasons for supporting the idea of

rebirth are empirical in nature since they derive from certain observations he makes about nature and the human beings. This is sufficient, I think, to justify the larger portion of the section being devoted to critically analysing the scientific rather than the logical possibility of *karmic* rebirth.

Now if it is true that the idea of rebirth is on empirically shaky ground, this would cast serious doubt on the possibility of realizing *moksa* since rebirth, as noted earlier, is a necessary ingredient in the whole emancipatory scheme. It is certainly indisputable that Radhakrishnan himself believes both individual and collective emancipation to be a real possibility. Concerning the *jīvanmukti* ideal he says it "affirms that man **can attain** his immortal destiny here and now."¹ Similarly, "if we are to rise from a state of intellectuality to spirituality, it is an effort which we have to make, and it is an effort which we **can** make, because others have struggled, have striven, have **achieved** the goal, and what is **possible** for them is **possible** for all."² Radhakrishnan is no less adamant about the eventual realization of the *sarvamukti* ideal. "History," he affirms, "**will** move to its end and transform itself into the Kingdom of Spirit."³ Indeed, "All individuals are **destined to gain** life eternal" and "when this conditioned is **attained**, we have a divine community (brahmaloka)..."⁴ No matter how difficult it may be for us to realize eternal freedom, the **possibility** rears its radiant head for one and all.⁵

Despite Radhakrishnan's heartfelt optimism about realizing *mokṣa*, I remain somewhat more sceptical. If the existence of rebirth remains unproven, then the twin goals of *jīvanmukti* (individual freedom) and *sarvamukti* (universal freedom), as Radhakrishnan describes them, are beyond reach, at least to any significant degree. This "possibility problem," as it might be called, is one way of

criticizing any moral ideal. If the proposed ultimate value in life is forever beyond our grasp, then why bother promoting it as the principal goal worth pursuing? This would seem to be a recipe for continual frustration and guilt. The "possibility problem" was raised early in the history of Western philosophy and is evident in Aristotle's critique of simple hedonism, in the form of the hedonistic paradox.⁶ In Radhakrishnan's case the problem results from his affirmation of the existence of the *karmic* rebirth process and the key role it plays in the realization of *mokṣa*.⁷

The first question, then, to be addressed is whether there is any solid empirical evidence for the existence of rebirth or reincarnation? But before proceeding to investigate this point, an important issue arises. It could be reasonably argued that the question about the empirical validity of the *karmic* rebirth process is, from the Indian perspective at least, utterly beside the point. In other words, for the Indian philosophical tradition the only empirical verification required to "prove" that reincarnation occurs is the existence of actual *jivanmuktas*, *yogis*, or *bodhisattvas*. Chapter three of Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtra*, for instance, documents a list of the yogi's supernormal powers, one of which is the ability to remember and know all of one's previous lives. (Verse 18). The meaning of the term "know" here refers to the higher state of directly apprehending the Real, which supercedes the lower state of knowing by means of reason and sense experience. The possibility that the process of *karmic* rebirth cannot be confirmed by "lower knowledge" should not be used as a strike against it. Attempting to prove reincarnation any other way than by pointing to someone who is spiritually liberated and saying "there" is simply alien to the Indian tradition. The spiritually liberated are living proof of *karmic* rebirth. The question, then, regarding the empirical status of the *karmic* rebirth process is simply a "Western" distortion of the issue.

Though this is an intriguing argument, three points immediately arise that undermine its cogency. The first is that the argument rests on a limited interpretation of what constitutes the "Indian philosophical tradition." It appears to equate this tradition with its more spiritual tendencies and completely neglects to mention the once important *cārvāka* (materialist) school which rejected the whole idea of rebirth, and its related metaphysical concepts, because it could not be verified by the senses. Unlike the other schools of Indian philosophy, the *cārvāka* were staunch materialists who believed sense experience to be the only means of valid knowledge, so that anything like rebirth, that could not be empirically confirmed, had to be rejected. It proves historically inaccurate, then, to say the empirical question about rebirth is essentially a Western imposition, since the question arose within the Indian tradition itself, via the *cārvāka*. (It should also be noted that the more specific question about there even being a subtle body that transmigrates from one physical body to another has been under attack in recent Indian philosophy, most notably by Swami Iswarananda of the Sri Ramakrishnan Ashram. His views will be discussed later in the chapter).

The second point to be made is that Radhakrishnan's philosophy, though essentially *Vedāntic* in outlook, is coloured by a number of Western philosophical and religious ideas, some of which have been discussed in this thesis. One of Radhakrishnan's chief aims was to bring together, in his own life and thought, the best from the Western and Indian traditions. He was quite influenced by Western scientific thought and sometimes referred, quite favourably, to modern scientific theories in biology (e.g. evolution) and physics (e.g. quantum mechanics and relativity). He certainly viewed philosophy as a rational enterprise and championed the spirit of free inquiry. "The temper of science," he remarks, "combines scepticism with openness to new facts." To raise questions about the

empirical status of the *karmic* rebirth hypothesis would certainly not be alien to Radhakrishnan's thought.

And finally, as noted earlier, Radhakrishnan himself raises some possible empirical objections to the rebirth hypothesis and attempts to adequately address them. This being the case, the thesis is simply following Radhakrishnan's lead and delving more deeply into the problem.

Before actually discussing the empirical difficulties confronting Radhakrishnan's notion of *karmic* rebirth, we must first be clear on what is meant by empirical evidence. The central idea is that observable facts are available which prove or disprove a theory or hypothesis. Evidence furnishes information indicating whether something is or is not the case. In this way it lends support to or falsifies certain claims. The two main sources of evidence are observation and experimentation which together make up the scientific method. In observing one is carefully perceiving specific phenomenon or naturally occurring events. An hypothesis (informed guess or idea) is formulated to account for the events and eventually a theory, or coherent set of interrelated hypotheses, is developed to fully explain the phenomenon observed. The theory is then tested by way of an experiment, either in a natural or laboratory setting, to confirm or disconfirm its explanation of events. The unique thing about scientific testing is its reliance on the principle of corroboration. This refers to public evidence. The experiment to test theories must, in principle, be capable of being repeated by independent and impartial observers. The report of one investigator is never sufficient to warrant acceptance of a theory since private claims to truth are often untrustworthy. What is necessary is the replication of the experiment by many

researchers. If successful, corroboration yields strong evidence for particular claims.

Now Radhakrishnan offers two kinds of empirical evidence to support the hypothesis of rebirth. The first derives from certain observations of nature, the second from supposed facts about human beings. Each will be critically examined in detail.

(II) EVIDENCE FROM NATURE

The first apparent evidence for rebirth is the observation that "Throughout nature life is preserved and continued through incessant renewal."⁸ Life is continually pressing forward towards new forms. This is clearly evident at the zoological level where the perpetuation of an animal species is possible by the emergence of new individual members. Cannot the same be said for the perpetuation of individuality at the human level? Here the self develops and is renewed by experiencing many different births and incarnations, just as a species is renewed through the coming into being of many different individuals. In Radhakrishnan's words:

While at the zoological level the perpetuation of the species is the end, at the human level development of unique individuality seems to be the end in view. The self in man is not an abstract quality or essence which remains the same for all time. It is a living experience of which duration is an intrinsic characteristic...⁹

The observed phenomenon of renewal and regeneration becomes the basis for believing in rebirth. If the object of the human self is "the fulfillment of function or development of individuality" it cannot be accomplished in one lifetime.¹⁰ Rebirth is thus necessary for the continuing growth of the *jīva* in the same way as renewal is necessary for the survival and development of animal species.

Closely related to the claim about natural renewal is the observation of continuity in nature. For Radhakrishnan, "the way of nature is continuity within a certain pattern."¹¹ Everything arises from and passes into something which is continuous with it. A tree, for instance, originates from a seed while the seed in turn results from the fallen leaves of the tree. Likewise, day melts into night and night into day. This is the observed pattern in nature. The movement of the empirical self (*jīva*), according to Radhakrishnan, presents no exception to this rule. The process of rebirth simply conforms to the principle of continuity operating in nature.

If everything else in nature arises from something continuous with it and passes into something also continuous with it, the self need not be an exception to the general scheme... If the general plan of consecutiveness is not to be violated, the human selves must continue after death. They carry on past threads, weave out something in the present and prepare for the future."¹²

So two related phenomenon are evident in observing the natural world; the first being the incessant renewal of species for survival purposes, the second being the pattern of continuity seen in a connected series of naturally occurring events. In being part of nature the empirical self is also subject to these processes which

take the form of successive rebirths. Consequently, the pattern of continual renewal in nature indicates the destiny of human selves.

The question is whether this empirical or *a posteriori* argument really works. The principal difficulty lies in the differences between what is subject to regeneration in nature and what is subject to rebirth. What undergoes continual renewal in nature is something concretely material (e.g., animal species) whereas rebirth involves the so-called subtle body whose composition is very fine and transparent. This means that the changes to the former can be observed and measured while the changes to the subtle body are completely imperceptible. The two represent different levels of existence, and what occurs at one level may not necessarily occur at the other. Indeed, a false analogy may be operating here. A particular feature of nature (i.e., continual renewal) is getting erroneously attributed to the empirical self. Moreover, what we observe in nature are individual trees, ants or people being born, reproducing and dying. We do not normally think that the tree growing today is a reincarnation of a tree cut down earlier. Reproduction certainly occurs but this should not be taken to be synonymous with rebirth. That would be "a quantum leap in logic too broad to span."¹³ Radhakrishnan realizes that continuity at the human stage is different from continuity at the lower stages of biological development.¹⁴ At the zoological level it involves the perpetuation of the species, whereas at the human level it is the regeneration of the individual. But this refers more to the goal of the process rather than to its pattern, and it is the pattern at the human stage that is in question.

(III) EVIDENCE FROM HUMAN BEINGS

The second kind of empirical argument put forward by Radhakrishnan to support the hypothesis of rebirth has to do with explaining certain strange facts about human beings. Various human phenomena are noted that apparently escape adequate explanation in terms of natural (e.g., biological or psychological) causes. The only plausible account available is rebirth (reincarnation). The mysterious facts cited by Radhakrishnan to demonstrate rebirth are memory of past lives, special skills and talents, love at first sight, and human inequalities. Each of these point to the process of rebirth at work in the human sphere. As such, I will analyse each separately to determine whether they actually confirm the existence of rebirth.

It is said that many individuals claim to have memories of previous lives. They are able to recollect, in some fashion, experiences from a former incarnation. Radhakrishnan affirms this when he says "Individual cases of memory of past lives are reported."¹⁵ These occur both among those who have realized spiritual liberation as well as ordinary people. It is commonly accepted in Indian religions that the mark of a truly emancipated individual is the ability to remember all their previous lives. Gautama Buddha, for example, envisioned all his past incarnations while experiencing enlightenment under the bo tree. There are also examples of unliberated persons recalling past lives as in the case of Ma Tin Aung Myo of Na-Thul, Burma who at the age of two and three would cry out and run for cover everytime a plane flew overhead. Her explanation was that she was afraid of getting shot because it was her belief that she had been a Japanese soldier during WWII and had been shot and killed by an Allied plane.¹⁶ There are various ways in which people remember their past lives. The most

common being spontaneous recall, regressive hypnosis, dreams or visions, and déjà-vu experiences. Each avenue of recall purports to furnish evidence for the hypothesis of rebirth.

Probably the strongest scientific evidence available for memories of past lives comes from the work of Dr. Ian Stevenson, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Division of Parapsychology at the University of Virginia Medical School. Stevenson has been researching the phenomenon of past-life recall since 1958 and has studied more than 2000 cases from around the world. He has published the results in five large volumes and in numerous articles.¹⁷ He specializes in cases of children, who from the ages of two to five, spontaneously remember a former existence as another person. These are investigated because children at this age apparently recall their past lives much more vividly and have not yet been so influenced by the culture.

A typical case involves a young child who spontaneously recalls and conveys very specific information about a previous life they experienced as a different individual. The child expresses memories of particular names, people, places, times, circumstances, and events which fall outside his or her present experience but fit the life of the person remembered. For example, a child may start talking about living previously in a village hundreds of miles away which neither they or any member of their family know about or have visited. The information is possible to confirm because the child is usually remembering their most recent former life and so some of the people and places described by them still exist and can be visited. When investigated, the child is often brought to the village he or she has remembered and meets their former family. In this way the things the child has been claiming about their former existence can be verified or

shown to be untrue. Stevenson claims that about 90% of the details remembered by the child turn out to be accurate. In fact, during the visit the child is able to immediately recognize the area, their former relatives and friends, and historical events associated with the place, which they could not have otherwise known.

One of Stevenson's most compelling examples of a detailed memory claim being empirically verified is the case of Jagdish Chandra who was born in 1923 in Bareilly, India. The following is a summary of the case from David Lund's book *Death and Consciousness: The Case for Life After Death*:

Jagdish made a rather large number of claims about his previous life. In addition to claiming that his name in that life was Jai Gopal and that his father's name was Babu Pandey, he said that they lived in Benares, that the Ganges river ran near the house, that the gate of the house was similar to the gate of Kuarpur in Bareilly, and that soldiers or guards stood outside the gate. He stated that the house had marble flooring and that there was an underground safe fixed high up and in the wall on the left-hand side of the underground room. He said that there were no daughters in the family but that he had had a brother, Jai Mangal, who was larger than he and who died of poisoning. He implied that he had been a Brahmin and that Babu, his father, was a panda (a supervisor of a bathing pier). He said that Babu's wife was called "Chachi," that she wore gold ornaments on her wrists and ears, and that she did the cooking even though Babu could have afforded a servant. He stated that Chachi made bread, observed purdah, had a long veil, and had a pockmarked face. He said that there were two persons called "Chachi" in the home and that the younger of these, with the pockmarked

face, was his mother. He also claimed that a prostitute, Bhagwati, who was dark complexioned and had a strong voice, come to the house for singing and dancing.

Jagdish also made a rather large number of claims about Babu Pandey...

All of these claims were verified as correct. Many were recorded in writing before the two families met... When Jagdish was taken to Benares he recognized various temples, ghats (piers with steps to facilitate bathing in the Ganges river), bridges, and other buildings. He recognized the Benares Hindu University and said it was under construction in his time. He was especially familiar with the Babu Pandey home and the area surrounding it. One has to pass through a maze of lanes to reach the house. But the child pointed out the way through the labyrinth of lanes without any difficulty. He recognized Babu Pandey and many others.¹⁸

There are two ways that sceptics have responded to such cases of detailed past-life recall. The first is to claim there are other, more "naturalistic" explanations for such a phenomenon, while the second is to raise the point that most people fail to remember living a previous existence. Regarding the first response, four alternative explanations have been offered. The first and most simple one is fraud, either on the part of the child and his or her family or on the part of Stevenson and his research associates. Neither seems likely. Concerning Stevenson, there is little, if any, evidence that deliberate fraud is involved. Stevenson himself was quite sceptical about the theory of reincarnation and only through his own research became convinced of its authenticity. Moreover, Stevenson and his researchers have conducted their work in public at a prestigious medical school and have published their findings in respectable medical journals. Even the sceptics give credit to Stevenson's scientific approach

to the issue.¹⁹ Deliberate fraud on the part of the children and their relatives is fairly remote. Stevenson admits to knowing of only three fraudulent cases, while another prominent researcher, Dr. Satwant Pasrich of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India, has discovered just one case.²⁰ There are serious problems with the fraud explanation. For starters, there does not seem to be any motivation for anyone conjuring up such an elaborate hoax. The children are too young to devise a coherent plan and the parents have received no money, fame or little, if any, publicity. Most come from impoverished backgrounds and so would have little time and labour to expend on constructing such a convoluted scheme. Even more important, a successful hoax would require the collusion of too many people from the villages involved. The secret would eventually leak out.

Perhaps a more acceptable explanation is the one known as cryptomnesia — "buried" or "hidden" memory. It is alleged that each one of us stores millions of details in our subconscious minds which we are unaware of and have temporarily forgotten. On this scheme, the children, though believing what their remembering originates with them, are actually remembering things derived from various sources. In other words, the children have really picked up the information indirectly from overhearing conversations and/or from television, radio, newspapers, and the like. They have forgotten the original source and so mistakenly attribute it to remembered events from a previous life. In this way the previous life turns out to be nothing but a purely imaginative construction using subconscious (hidden) memories of long-forgotten information attained through normal channels.

Though initially persuasive, the cryptomnesia account is ultimately unsatisfactory. It is highly improbable that the amount and type of concrete, detailed information conveyed by these children was obtained only by indirect means. Many of the children could barely talk before they begun relating their apparent memories, and they certainly could not have read written material or understand what was being said on the electronic media. In fact, many of the families did not have these things at their disposal anyway. It also fails to account for the important emotional and behavioral features that are exhibited by the children which bear resemblance to the remembered person.²¹

The third alternative explanation for past-life recall is termed paramnesia, a phenomenon Robert Almeder aptly describes as follows:

This objection asserts that the so-called favorable evidence for reincarnation can be easily explained and dismissed by taking certain cultural facts into consideration. In this view, the young child makes a few statements that, in a culture strongly disposed to belief in reincarnation, the gullible parents interpret as memories of a past life. They then proceed to encourage the child to make more statements, and frequently ask leading questions. From the material they so derive from the child, they identify a deceased person whose life fits, more or less, the statements. The parents then rush to the family of the deceased to relate what the child has said. The latter family, still grief stricken over the deceased member, accepts uncritically the statements as corresponding to the life of that member. The child is asked more questions, and is frequently asked to identify family members, with patently obvious cues and leading

questions. The families exchange information about the child's memories. Thereafter, informants on both sides credit the child with more detailed memories than she or he had. There is no conscious fraud or hoax involved in all of this; it is simply the result of cultural conditioning combined with sloppy methodology.²²

The option of paramnesia is bolstered by Stevenson's own remarks in *Children Who Remember Previous Lives* where he admits it is evident in a number of cases where families had contact before researchers arrived on the scene.²³ And as often pointed out, it is not surprising that the vast majority of Stevenson's cases are taken from cultures who accept the idea of reincarnation such as the Hindus in India, the Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Burma, the Druses in Lebanon, and the Tlingit Indians in Alaska. Very few cases have been investigated by Stevenson in the West. Moreover, there is an unevenness in the distribution of reported cases even in India where most emanate from states like Uttar Pradesh where belief in reincarnation is much stronger than in other parts of India, particularly in the south. Taken together, these facts show how the cases suggestive of reincarnation are highly conditioned by purely local factors and fail to escape cultural influences.

The problem with the paramnesia scenario, though intriguing, is its inapplicability to those numerous cases where the families had not met before being interviewed or where there was a written record of what the child said from an impartial observer. There is also the issue of motivation. Stevenson claims that many parents are reluctant to have the child's statements verified because it might bring harm to the child or they could lose the child to the other family. Equally reluctant is the dead person's family, especially if they are wealthy,

because the child could end up revealing some embarrassing family secrets or they could be exploited by the child's poor family.

The final naturalistic explanation that has been advanced for remembering past lives is called genetic memory. Here it is claimed the child has inherited the memories of the deceased person through genetic transmission. Just as individuals inherit genetic physical traits from their ancestors, so they can also inherit certain memories that are coded and stored in the genes. What the child is actually remembering then is not their own past lives but the life of an ancestor whose memories have been genetically relayed.

Although sounding very scientific, this explanation has three major problems. First, it presupposes that the child remembering is a genetic descendant of the claimed previous personality which is not true for the majority of cases investigated by Stevenson and others. In 88% of the cases no genetic connection could be detected between the child and the alleged ancestor.²⁴ Second, most inherited genetic traits are dispositional rather than actual. What one inherits is more of a potential for certain traits which the environment has to work on before it actually emerges. Some of the traits, however, possessed by the children (e.g., ability to read and understand an unlearned foreign language) were not influenced by the environment and so remain inexplicable to contemporary genetic theory. Lastly, and perhaps even more damaging, is the basic fact that most of the events remembered by the child, including the manner of their previous personality's death, occurred **before** that person's children were ever conceived and born. If this is true, then it would be impossible for the child to have inherited the memory of the other person's mode of death.

It appears that the four major naturalistic explanations proposed so far to account for past-life recall are either seriously flawed themselves or fail to explain enough of the phenomenon. Even so, there are two crucial points to bear in mind. First, this in no way precludes the possibility of a more satisfactory theory being formulated in the future. And second, and perhaps more important, there are a number of methodological faults in Stevenson's research of children remembering previous lives. Many of the cases were only investigated years later and not at the time the child was beginning to relate the events of a former life. This means the details of the story have had time to be forgotten embellished, or exaggerated. Many statements were never recorded so the researchers had to rely on the faded memories of the child or the parents. Then there is the fact that the researchers often pursued their investigations with the help of an interpreter, which left open even more room for misunderstanding. All these factors together reduce the evidential value of the cases involving past-life recall.

Another critical response is to simply say that the vast majority of people, past and present, never remember experiencing a former life or lives. If every human being, as Radhakrishnan assumes, is subject to birth, death, and rebirth, then why have only a small minority claimed to have been reincarnated? It could be the case that only those who remember a past life actually reincarnate, but this view would deviate from what Radhakrishnan and other Hindus believe. For them, rebirth is definitely a universal process encompassing all people. How then to explain why so few people lack memory of former existences?

In both *An Idealist View of Life* and "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra*, Radhakrishnan raises and addresses this forceful objection to rebirth. As he expresses it:

A common objection to the hypothesis of rebirth is the lack of memory of the past. If I am not able to own the past and profit by it, future life seems to be meaningless. Rebirth of an individual without a memory of his previous life would mean the annihilation of the past person and the creation of a second with a similiar character.²⁵

Radhakrishnan's response to this objection is twofold. He first contends that being and continuity do not depend on memory. Many events in our present lives are already forgotten, though that in no way indicates they never happened. "Simply because we do not have a memory of the early phases of our life or of our existence in the mother's body, we do not deny them. Even in this life we forget a great deal."²⁶ We do not remember everything we have experienced in this life, but that does not prove we did not experience them. Although positive memory can provide evidence of one's past, the absence of memory does not establish anything about it.

This may be true but usually there are other people around (e.g., one's mother) to verify whether such events actually occurred or not. Such is not often the case with those claiming previous incarnations. Most individual's reporting past lives describe a specific incident that supposedly took place decades or even centuries ago, making it very difficult to empirically confirm with any certainty. And even in those cases (e.g., some of Stevenson's) where it is

possible, it is still not evidence that reincarnation occurred. One could imagine a case where the memories of A could be taped and fed into another person, B. In such a situation, the memories of B would certainly be the same as the memories of A, though B is not a reincarnation of A. Identity or similarity of memory, then, is an insufficient criterion for reincarnation.²⁷

Radhakrishnan also errs, I think, in equating the process of forgetting something in this life with forgetting a whole previous life or lives. An individual is often forgetful about events in his or her early present life because the things necessary to establish long-term memory (e.g., language, evolved neural networks), and thus the ability to remember, have not fully developed. The equipment, so to speak, is just too unsophisticated to adequately encode and store information that could be retrieved at a much later time. Such is not the case with forgetting about a past life, because in most instances the previous person, in living to adulthood, was in possession of developed cognitive abilities and neurophysiological processes. Why then would the majority of presently existing adults lack memory of all or any part of a former life since the information about it would have been already encoded and stored in the long-term memory of the now deceased individual? In addition, it seems incredulous that a past life, or some major aspect of it, would be something one could forget so easily. In this life it is the more momentous events, rather than the trivial ones, that an individual is more likely to remember. For instance, one would be less inclined to forget one's wedding day or when one's child was born than what he or she ate two months ago. Surely the fact of a former life, or any significant part of it, would be important enough for people to remember. But the fact remains most do not.

This leads us to Radhakrishnan's second response concerning the non-recollection of previous lives. The past is evident in our present incarnation, not so much by remembering details of a former life, but by the effect it has on us now. Though we may not actually be able to recollect particular past-life experiences, they are present in the form of in-born patterns of behavior. "Though we may not have conscious memory," Radhakrishnan claims, "there is a persistence of dispositions and tendencies."²⁸ The death of the physical body definitely neutralizes our ability to remember things, but the past continues in our dispositions of character. Just as the experiences of our early childhood are revealed in and to some extent determine our behavior as adults, the experiences of our former lives are expressed in and influence our present personality. Radhakrishnan sees this as being connected to the whole function of memory:

The purpose of memory is to enable us to grow wiser by experience, and virtuous by effort. Wisdom and virtue are not acquired by the storing of facts in memory but only by the training of the mind and will. The facts we leave and the acts we do may be forgotten but the cultivated mind and the fashioned will remain. Culture is that which remains when we forget everything that we learn, even as character is what remains when we forget all the deeds we did. What matters is the experience, not what we do, but how we do it. The knowledge we acquire and the possessions we gain may not remain with us, but the patience and the care we develop in acquiring them will stick with us... All our experiences consolidate themselves in giving a twist to ourself, a bias to our mind, and it is this we carry across. It remains with us though we have no memory of how we acquired it.²⁹

So we are remembering aspects of our former lives, not in the act of consciously recollecting them, but in our present disposition of character. The tendencies and habits we now have indicate previous incarnations.

There are several problems with this view. To begin with, it still fails to explain why some people spontaneously remember details of former lives while the majority do not. (The apparent fact that some individuals have the ability to recall past lives might be explained by appealing to the effects of *karma* but this would lead us to a whole discussion of the law of *karma* which I will address later on). In any case, referring to inherent patterns of behavior does not account for differences in people's abilities to recall past lives.

A further difficulty involves Radhakrishnan's view of the purpose of memory. For him, memory assists the development of the *jīva* towards the goal of spiritual liberation by imprinting on its character the important lessons learned from experiencing different incarnations.³⁰ But would not more progress be made in virtue and wisdom if we could consciously remember experiences from our previous lives? In other words, would not learning in the "cosmic school" occur at a more rapid pace if we could be made aware of our past-life triumphs and mistakes? On Radhakrishnan's scheme, the process of rebirth appears quite inefficient in terms of leading us closer to spiritual freedom.

A different response to the objection about lack of past-life memories, and one that escaped Radhakrishnan's attention, is the claim that most of us could recall previous incarnations if we were subject to regressive hypnosis. Even if it is true that most people do not spontaneously remember living a former

existence, they can be prodded to remember by being hypnotized. It is estimated that about 80% of the population is hypnotizable.³¹ Under regressive hypnosis, the individual mentally, and sometimes emotionally, goes back and retrieves information about their past experiences. Such a technique was initially used by some psychoanalysts to help cure the neurotic symptoms of their patients. For example, a person suffering from an irrational fear of heights might under regressive hypnosis remember that they fell out of a crib when they were an infant. This information could then prove useful in getting the patient to overcome their agrophobia. Regressive hypnosis has apparently been extended to retrieve information about previous lives. On this view, a person's agrophobia might turn out to arise, not from experiences in early childhood, but from the individual dying from a fall in a former life. Consequently, most of us could indeed remember details of past incarnations if we underwent regressive hypnosis, a fact verifying the hypothesis of rebirth.

The possibility of regressive hypnosis has been subject to much debate. Many cases have been reported, with varying critical reactions. One such reaction points to the phenomenon of suggestibility to account for hypnotic past-life regressions. The hypnotized person, in being in a very suggestible state, is open to receive, either consciously or subconsciously, ideas from the hypnotist and is prone to relay to the hypnotist what they sense the hypnotists wants. If the hypnotist is investigating the possibility of their subject having a former life, the subject may manufacture such a story when they fall into a hypnotic trance. It is difficult for the hypnotist to then confirm the veracity of the past-life details conveyed. Interestingly, Dr. Ian Stevenson has acknowledged the possibility of subjects fabricating past-lives in hypnotic regression. In a newsletter of the

American Society for Psychical Research, Stevenson makes the following observations:

Many persons who attach no importance whatever to their dreams... nevertheless believe that whatever emerges during hypnosis can invariably be taken at face value. In fact, the state of a hypnotized person resembles in many ways — though not in all — that of a person dreaming.

The subconscious parts of the mind are released from ordinary inhibitions, and they may then present in dramatic form a new "personality." If the person has been told by the hypnotist, either explicitly or implicitly, to "go back to another time and place," the "new personality" may be extremely plausible both to the person having the experience and to others watching... In fact, however, nearly all such hypnotically evoked 'previous personalities' are entirely imaginary, just are the contents of most dreams.³²

When such an authority on past-life recall raises such problems with hypnotic regression, it gives one reason to doubt its usefulness in confirming the hypothesis of rebirth.

It is also known that every subject responds differently while under hypnosis and are often inconsistent in dates and other details concerning their former lives. Some information expressed during regressive hypnosis has even turned out to be utterly false. The infamous case of Bridey Murphy, which made frontpage news and national television in the 1950's, is a good example. In

Pueblo, Colorado, a woman by the name of Virginia Tighe was hypnotized by a Morey Bernstein. While under regressive hypnosis, Virginia began to speak in Gaelic and claimed her name was Bridey Murphy, born near Cork, Ireland, in 1798. During several tape recorded sessions, she detailed different events in her life including her death in 1864. After much investigation, it was found that much of what she said was simply untrue and the whole thing was dismissed as an elaborate hoax.³³ To claim, therefore, that most people can in fact remember their past lives through hypnotic regression is rather unconvincing.

The next inexplicable fact Radhakrishnan mentions to prove the hypothesis of rebirth is the possession of special skills and talents, especially in children. He gives two examples:

Infant prodigies are fairly familiar in the East. In the West also we meet with them now and then. When Yehudi Menuhin, as a twelve-year-old violinist, amazed music critics at the Albert Hall by the fully adult nature of his technique and, above all, of his interpretation, when the Belgian baby, Andre Lenoir, multiplied in a flash any five figure number with any other five figure number and performed prodigies of mathematics before the astounded professors of Brussels, may not these be traced to faculties acquired in earlier lives?³⁴

In this way so-called "natural gifts" — those not taught and learned — become another piece of evidence for reincarnation.

A similar point is made by Dr. Ian Stevenson in his research on young children recalling past lives. Stevenson claims that some of the children possessed extraordinary skills and talents they could not have learned through instruction or by imitating others. The only reasonable explanation is that the special "gifts" were acquired in a previous life and passed on to the child living now. In many cases the unlearned skills or talents involved being able to play a musical instrument or to speak and understand a foreign language. Stevenson relates the case of one Bishen Chand Kapoor, born in 1921 in Bareilly, India. At an early age Bishen began incessantly talking about a former life he had lived as Laxmi Narain in the village of Pilibhit, fifty miles from Bareilly. When brought to Pilibhit, Bishen was presented with a set of tabla drums which to everyone's amazement he began to play with skilful ease. The surprising fact was that Bishen had never before seen tabla drums and was certainly never taught to play them. Laxmi Narain, however, the previous personality, was an expert player. Even more astounding, Bishen could apparently speak some Urdu, something no one else in his family could do. Again Laxmi Narain was supposedly able to speak Urdu. This bizzare ability to speak and understand a foreign language that was never learned by the speaker is called xenoglossy, meaning "strange language." Some of the children investigated by Stevenson possessed this talent. According to Stevenson, the alternative explanations of cryptomnesia, paramnesia, and genetic memory cannot fully account for this extraordinary phenomenon. Reincarnation, then, remains the most convincing explanation to date.

Radhakrishnan also addresses the possibility of other explanations for special gifts. The one he focuses on is heredity. All these incredible and unlearned talents are the result of the genetic transmission of traits from one generation to the next and not from some previous incarnation. It is no

coincidence that musical prodigies like Mozart and Brahms came from a long line of musically inclined families. The tendencies or dispositions people have are simply inherited from their ancestors. As Radhakrishnan puts it:

Heredity means the transmission of physical form and biological characteristics from a previous life. A lion generates a lion, not a horse or a tiger. Things transmitted are not only physical and biological but psychical also, mental powers and tendencies. If we hold that man's whole nature is derived from his physical birth, that the body and mind of the individual are only a continuation of the body and mind of his ancestors, then the individual has no past being independent of his ancestors, or future independent of descendants. He prolongs himself in his progeny and there is no rebirth for him. No continued stream of individuality survives the death of the body. If the parents literally make the child, then we do not require either a prior life or divine agency.³⁵

Since the modern science of genetics can sufficiently explain the existence of most, if not all, physical and even "psychical" traits possessed by the individual, then the postulation of rebirth becomes unnecessary.

But is the theory of rebirth really inconsistent with the principle of heredity? Radhakrishnan thinks not. It is true the traits of the physical body are often the product of the parents or some recent ancestor, but this does not exclude the possibility of reincarnation. For what the reincarnating *jīva* does is attract itself to a body suitable for its goal of development. Although the body is a

product of biological heredity, the "person" is a result of the transmigrating *jīva*.

Radhakrishnan explains this idea in the following way:

Human life manifests itself in a body but is not the product of the body. Its characteristics are determined jointly by those which the self had when it began to animate the organism and by the nature of the organism which it animates. The problem is, how does a certain self become associated with a certain organism when the latter is the product of purely biological causation? The theist argues that God creates a suitable mind whenever an organism is conceived and unites the two. In other words, every birth is a miracle. It is more plausible to think that a pre-existent self becomes associated with a certain organism at the moment when the latter is conceived. In nature this kind of adaptive affinity occurs frequently, in chemical affinity, in the selective affinity of spermatozoa for ova of the same species. Minds and organisms attract each other in the same way. The reincarnating ego is attracted to parents from whom it can inherit a particular set of qualities. The psyche appropriates the body necessary for its realization. The natural body derived from the parents according to the laws of heredity is taken over by the soul.³⁶

Such an attempted reconciliation between heredity and rebirth is problematic for three reasons. First, it raises the whole issue of how the disembodied *jīva* (subtle body) comes to "know" which body would be most appropriate for its development towards *mokṣa*. Our cognitive abilities appear

linked to certain brain processes, so it is difficult to comprehend how the non-physical *jiva* could be said to know or be aware of anything. Radhakrishnan needs to explain this in much more detail, which he neglects to do. In addition, if the *jiva* already knows its ultimate goal is to realize *mokṣa*, then why would it have to experience so many incarnations? Second, modern genetics has isolated genes which are responsible for specific physical and even some psychological traits. The Human Genome Project, an international research initiative which is attempting to map all the genes in the human body, will undoubtedly yield important information on how special skills and talents are biologically inherited. And lastly, in saying "there is psychological heredity which is not derived from the parents or the society,"³⁷ Radhakrishnan is only restating the claim that there exists a transmigrating *jīva* instead of actually proving it.

For Radhakrishnan, the third unique fact about human beings that the hypothesis of rebirth best explains is the experience of love at first sight. Here he refers to the ideas of the British philosopher J.E. McTaggart to back up his claim.

McTaggart refers to certain facts which are not explicable on any other hypothesis than that of pre-existence. "Two people who have seen but little of each other are often drawn together by a force equal to that which is generated in other cases by years of mutual trust and mutual assistance." The capriciousness of sex desire is not the whole explanation of love at first sight.³⁸

Although sounding romantic, the rebirth account of immediate love is completely superfluous. Social psychologists have articulated a number of theories to

explain why people rapidly fall in love. One of the most intriguing is called the misattribution theory. According to this view, a person becomes aware of certain bodily sensations — pounding heart, trembling hands, flushed face — and if unsure of its source, looks around the environment, spots an attractive other, and decides the sensation must be due to being in love. Here the physiological arousal caused by one emotional stimulus, whatever it may be, spills over into a second unrelated stimulus, the attractive other. When this happens, the individual mistakes (or misattributes) the real source of the stimulus and relabels his or her feelings as romantic attraction.

Some experiments have supported the misattribution theory of falling in love. In one, a group of male subjects were approached by an attractive woman after they crossed a narrow and unstable bridge, while another group was approached by the same woman when they finished crossing over a broad and stable bridge. It was discovered that the first group of men were more inclined than the second group to be romantically attracted to the woman and when given her number, phoned to organize a future date. The explanation was that the first group, after crossing over the rickety bridge, were already physiologically aroused and when approached by the woman misidentified what they were feeling as romantic passion.³⁹ Love at first sight may not be such a perplexing mystery after all and certainly does not require the hypothesis of rebirth to explain its occurrence.

Radhakrishnan's attempt to explain the origins of specific skills (e.g., musical talent) and inclinations (e.g., falling in love) by appealing to rebirth may in fact rest on a dubious Lamarckian-type theory of evolution. Lamarck (1744-1829) believed changes to life forms took place through an inheritance of

acquired characteristics. Changes in an organism's environment produced alterations in its behavioral habits. The altered habits in turn led to an increase use of some organs and a decrease use of others, eventually culminating in a change of physical form. These changed forms would then be passed on to its offspring. Taking the giraffe as an example, Lamarck would say its long neck and legs developed from repeatedly stretching to reach higher leaves when all of the lower ones were consumed. The enlarged limbs thus acquired were transmitted to future generations, and in this way the modern giraffe evolved. Radhakrishnan recognizes "Lamarck's theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics is questioned on the grounds that there is no mechanism by which the changes in an organism, such as increase of size, could be represented by changes in the structure of the germ cell, and that there is no experimental evidence in support of the inheritability of the effects of use and disuse."⁴⁰ But he also believes "evidence in favour of the Lamarckian hypothesis is steadily increasing."⁴¹

In his article "Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Rebirth," C.T.K. Chari takes issue with Radhakrishnan's implicit reliance on Lamarckian evolutionary theory to explain the rebirth process. According to Chari, there are three kinds of information systems — the genetic, the environmental, and the cultural. The genetic or primary system has no effect (feedback) on the individual but is transmitted to future generations. The environmental or secondary system does partially impact on the individual but is not passed down to later generations. And the cultural or tertiary system both has an effect on the individual and is relayed to other presently existing people and subsequent generations. For Chari, Radhakrishnan's notion of rebirth embraces features of an environmental information system since it suggests present actions modify the individual and that these changes will be passed on to later generations. In his words:

Reincarnation is basically the claim that the environmental information arising from the experience and learning of a specified individual in one generation can modify the genetic or primary information system of a subsequent generation and thereby the secondary and tertiary information systems of a specified individual in that later generation.⁴²

Chari finds this completely unacceptable because it violates, in Crick's famous words, "the central dogma of modern biology," namely, the one-way flow from DNA to RNA to protein. For Chari, rebirth appears to reverse this unidirectional process of biological information. "On its premises," he asserts, "information flows first from the DNA via RNA to protein in one generation and then, after the death of the individual, from the protein of the deceased to the DNA of a newly-born individual in another generation."⁴³ Thus modern genetics undermines Radhakrishnan's Lamarckian-type explanation for the mechanism of rebirth.

But does it? Chari's whole criticism assumes Crick's "central dogma" about one-way genetic flow to be essentially correct. Contemporary molecular biologists believe otherwise. Thanks to the pioneering work of Barbara McClintock in the 1950's, a "second revolution" in genetic theorizing, after the Watson-Crick discovery of the double helix, has recently taken place. McClintock's research on transposable elements in maize at Cold Spring Harbor, which won her a Nobel Prize, showed the genome (a cell's compendium of genetic information) to be much more fluid and mobile than originally thought, with genes being able to detach themselves from chromosomes and move around to different locations (transposable) in the genome. This startling

discovery eventually led to a rejection of Crick's "central dogma" of one-way genetic flow. The reasons for this have been clearly enunciated by the Harvard biologist Stephen Jay Gould:

If these processes replace a static with a more mobile genome subject to rapid and profound rearrangement, the central dogma with its one-way flow of information from code to product has also been breached. A substance called "reverse transcriptase" can read RNA into DNA and insert new material into genetic programs by running backward along the supposedly one-way street of the central dogma. A class of objects, called retroviruses (and including the cause of AIDS), uses this backward path, placing new material into chromosomal DNA from the outside. In short, a set of new themes — mobility, rearrangement, regulation, and interaction — has transformed our view of genomes from stable and linear arrays, altered piece by piece and shielded from any interactions with their products, to fluid systems with potential for rapid reorganization and extensive feedback from their own products and other sources of RNA. The implications for embryology and evolution are profound and largely unexplored.⁴⁴

The intriguing question is whether Radhakrishnan's conception of rebirth, involving the transmigration of the subtle body, can fit the new molecular genetic model? On this scheme, the information contained in the protein of the deceased person would have to be transmitted by the subtle body to the genomes of a newly-born individual in another generation. An obvious difficulty with this scenario is that the two-way flow of information — DNA to RNA to protein and

then the reverse — transpires within a present living organism and not between generations. The problem persists even if the subtle body contains the memory impressions of the deceased; for memory storage involves changes in RNA leading to the production of specific proteins, something not happening if there is a reverse flow of genetic information. Chari summarizes the predicament:

How does the suksma sarira, I ask, produce changes in the secondary and tertiary informational systems without first acting directly on the primary genetic material? The indications are that the unfertilized egg, although it contains a wide assortment of RNA, the messenger, ribosomal, and transfer forms, restricts RNA translation into proteins until fertilization occurs. Even after fertilization, considerable differentiation can proceed without the new RNA synthesis so basic to memory and learning. There is little or no evidence of accumulated results of experience and learning associated in a cryptic fashion with the fertilized egg and waiting to be triggered off. Nor is there a shadow of such evidence in the studies of infantile amnesia conducted with animals and beings, for instance in the recent work of Xenia Coulter. There seems to be a real immaturity of information storage systems, in structure and function, in the newly born which is very hard to reconcile with accumulated long-term memories presupposed in reincarnation.⁴⁵

So whether using the old Watson-Crick model of the genome or the newer genetic theory, Radhakrishnan's conception of rebirth still runs into serious difficulties.

It has also been argued that the facts of biogenesis cast doubt on the necessity of the subtle body in the rebirth process. For Radhakrishnan, the mechanism of rebirth definitely involves the existence of an invisible, non-gross material part of ourselves, the subtle body, which contains all of our psychological experiences from past lives in the form of impressions (e.g., mental dispositions) and transports these through a series of different incarnations until the individual has finally realized their true self to be *Ātman*.⁴⁶ Some Hindu thinkers have expressed reservations about this view. The most noted in recent years is Swami Iswarananda of the Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, whose provocative book, *Does the Soul Reincarnate?*, caused quite a stir in Indian academic circles.⁴⁷ According to the Swami, the hypothesis of rebirth via the subtle body is untenable in light of the facts about biogenesis, and consequently, it must either be abandoned or "modified in such a way as to leave room for the fact of biogenesis and its immediate implications."⁴⁸ The fundamental biogenetic law is that all living cells originate from pre-existing cells with no spontaneous or independent generation of cells occurring in organisms. Biological reproduction only happens asexually by the division of a single cell (agamogenesis) or sexually by the fusion of two cells (gamogenesis). For the Swami, "these biological facts militate against the theory of the entry of a dis-embodied agent into the physical frame at birth ... Biogenesis thus excludes the need as well as the possibility of a dis-embodied spirit entering into living or non-living matter for rebirth."⁴⁹ The *jīva*, then, is simply associated with the living organism. There is no subtle body separate from the physical entity. This implies that when the cell divides, a new *jīva* comes into being, an idea heretical to the traditional Hindu notion of the *jīva*'s beginningless nature. As the Swami describes it:

Now since even a lowly germ-cell is sentient, it must be thought of as encouled, according to Hindu thought, since there can be no life without a soul or a *jiva*. If so, then, since the cells undergo a process of division, it would appear that a *jiva* also undergoes a process of division and gives rise to another *jiva*. The hypothesis of a division of soul is repugnant to Hindu philosophy, no doubt, but the facts of biogenesis seem to require some such idea. Hence, the need for a new hypothesis of self-division parallel to cell-division.⁵⁰

Since Radhakrishnan affirms both the existence of a subtle body and the beginningless nature of *jīvas*, the facts of biogenesis undermine his theory of how rebirth operates. This, together with the earlier remarks made about molecular genetic theory, sabotages his attempt to use the idea of rebirth to account for the acquisition of special skills and talents.

The last inexplicable fact apparently supporting the hypothesis of rebirth, and which the later best explains, is the existence of human inequalities. Why is it that some people are quite fortunate in life (healthy, wealthy, sane) while others seem to experience one damn tragedy after another? Why, in short, is there such an unfair distribution of suffering in the world? This of course is the evidential, as opposed to the logical, problem of evil.⁵¹ To address it, Radhakrishnan draws upon his interpretation of the law of *karma* which accounts for these inequalities of birth and circumstance.

According to Radhakrishnan, "karma is a hypothesis devised by the later Vedanta writers as an explanation of the inequalities of this life and a solution of

the problem of future life."⁵² He also states "the theory of rebirth... accounts for the apparent moral disorder and chaos of suffering."⁵³ Individuals are born unequal in this life in many ways — unequal in wealth, health, talents, status, opportunity, and in all sorts of physical, intellectual, and moral endowments. What accounts for these inequalities at a fundamental level is the presence of a moral order in the universe. *Karma* is the natural moral law pervading the entire cosmos. It represents the principle of cosmic justice. All human actions have consequences — good ones leading to good results, bad ones to bad results. What an individual is experiencing in this life, be it good or bad fortune, is not a matter of chance or caprice. His or her present quality of life is a result of good and bad deeds performed in previous lives, deeds that are now only fructifying. For Radhakrishnan, *karma* "is a principle governing the universe. We reap what we sow. The accidents of birth and fortune in this world are but the rewards and penalties of our deeds in the past life."⁵⁴ Thus *karma* is a kind of balancing act operating in the universe, restoring moral equilibrium through a series of causes (deeds) and effects (rebirths). People's present fortunes and misfortunes are simply the effects of past-life actions, and it is this which best explains the present inequalities of birth and circumstance.⁵⁵

There are numerous difficulties with this account of the origins of human inequality, some being more of an empirical nature, others being more strictly moral. The principal moral issue is that it's even doubtful whether *karma* is really promoting justice at all. This is particularly evident if we assume personal identity to be connected with bodily continuity. According to Radhakrishnan, sometime after the death of the gross body the transmigrating *jīva* takes on another physical form. If personal identity depends on possessing a physical body, however, the reincarnated *jīva* is actually another person laden with the previous

individual's *karma*. The present individual then suffers for the actions of someone else, hardly a fair arrangement. Mark Albrecht, in his book *Reincarnation: A Christian Appraisal*, gives a vivid example of such an injustice at work:

These problems may be illustrated by using that perennial example of evil, Adolph Hitler... Hitler died in 1945; let us suppose that he was reborn in 1947 as a crippled baby named Edgar Jones. Edgar, who was born in New York, has no idea that he is really Adolph Hitler reincarnated or that he is suffering for the crimes of the Nazi Fuhrer. It is at this point that justice breaks down totally, for the truth of the matter is that only Adolf Hitler can work off his karma and be punished for his evil deeds. But he is gone, since his personality actually ceased to exist in 1945, and little Edgar Jones now bears the massive burden of Hitler's karmic debt. Hitler thus cheats the hangman while Edgar is victimized. There is a fundamental difference between this "justice" and justice as we know it. Put a man in jail or execute him, and at least he will know what he is being punished for; society will be fairly avenged. With reincarnation, however, society and the individuals suffer meaninglessly...

When Edgar dies another person is born with Hitler's karma, and so the process is repeated millions of times... Thus Hitler's sin is not paid for by Adolf Hitler, the perpetrator of the crime. Instead the effects of his sins are multiplied through the further suffering of millions in future reincarnations.⁵⁶

This is a powerful argument against the justice of *karma* assuming one's identity is inextricably linked to one's physical body. Only if past deeds are seen as *my* deeds performed in *my* previous lives will justice reign. Both a solid identity from life to life as well as an awareness of past actions done in former lives are necessary for *karma* to be a just cosmic law.

This brings us to the more empirical problems with Radhakrishnan's *karmic* rebirth hypothesis. A main one involves the mechanics of *karmic* justice or moral balance in the universe. By what means are good and bad actions translated into good and bad results? How, in short, is *karmic* justice administered? Some Hindu thinkers believe this is a natural orderly process. *Karma* automatically produces the appropriate result like any other law in the natural domain. No supernatural entity (God) is required for moral justice to be properly dispensed. But as the American philosopher, Paul Edwards, has astutely noticed, several questions immediately arise:

How, to begin with, are good and bad deeds registered? Is there some cosmic repository like a huge central social security office in which the relevant information is recorded and translated into some kind of "balance"? Next, how and where is it decided what will happen to a person in his next incarnation as a result of the balance of his acts in a given life? How and where, for example, is it decided that in the next life he will become a human being rather than a roach, a man rather than a woman, an American rather than an Indian, white rather than black or yellow, physically well formed rather than crippled, intelligent rather than retarded, sane rather than insane? Finally, there is still the problem of how

such decisions are translated into reality.⁵⁷

Edwards goes on to use the example of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 to illustrate his point. Many people died or were seriously injured during that natural catastrophe, while others went unharmed. "How and where," Edwards asks, "were the bad deeds of those killed and injured and the good deeds of those spared registered? How and where were the penalties and rewards decided? And just how did karma determine the geological condition whose existence is not disputed as the "natural" or at least the "immediate" cause of the disaster."⁵⁸

The postulation of an all-knowing, all-powerful God who judges human deeds on high is an obvious solution to the questions posed above. Edwards even alludes to this when he says "Surely, if ever intelligent planning was needed, this is a case in point."⁵⁹ A super just and intelligent being would guarantee the administration of just rewards and punishments to those who actually deserved them. No guilty person would go unpunished, no innocent one unrewarded. All would receive their just deserts.

But does the hypothesis of rebirth exclude the theist option? Radhakrishnan thinks not. He insists "Karma... is the embodiment of the mind and will of God. God is its supervisor, *kurmudhyaksah*. Justice is an attribute of God."⁶⁰ This sounds close to theism but Radhakrishnan goes on to say the divine laws "are not so much imposed from without as wrought into our own natures."⁶¹ This means God should not be seen as a being who transcends the world and judges human deeds from above. Since *Brahman* is all, "The judge is not without but within."⁶² In being immanent, God resides in the machinery of *karma*. Only anthropomorphically can one say God controls the *karmic* process.

In reality, the "divine expresses itself in law but law is not God."⁶³ It is difficult to fathom how this adequately explains how *karmic* justice gets administered. Radhakrishnan is not claiming God dispenses justice as described in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition since that would presuppose the existence of a transcendent God, which violates his view of the integral nature of reality. And he does not speak, as some theosopher's have (e.g., Annie Besant), of "Lords of karma," those "great spiritual intelligences" who keep records of people's deeds and ensure justice is done by overseeing the whole *karmic* process.⁶⁴ So even if *karma* is an expression of God's will, there remains the nagging question of how precisely does it adjust moral effects to causes? Without this information, the *karmic* theory of the origins of human inequalities proves transparently insufficient.

A further difficulty pertains to the evolutionary aspect of *karma*. For Radhakrishnan, the *karmic* rebirth process has a definite direction and goal. He believes "samsara" to be " a succession of spiritual opportunities."⁶⁵ In other words, " Life is a stage in spiritual perfection, a step in the passage to the infinite. It is the time for preparing the soul for eternity."⁶⁶ *karma* supposedly assists the movement of spiritual progression by ensuring that good deeds get eventually translated into a better life where an individual will have a greater opportunity to advance towards *mokṣa*. The key ingredient in all this is individual free-will. Each person is endowed with the capacity to determine, within limits, their actions in life. He or she may choose to lead an ethically pure existence devoted to social service or a selfishly oriented one hell-bent on personal gain. There is no incompatibility between the law of *karma* and freedom. The reason, as explained in Chapter I, lies in the double aspect of *karma* — the retrospective and the prospective. The retrospective aspect involves results of acts from previous lives

which set the conditions for our present lives but does not completely determine them. We still enjoy many possibilities and can choose to act in myriad ways. As Radhakrishnan describes it:

The past can never be cancelled though it may be utilized. Mere defiance of the given may mean disaster, though we can make a new life spring from the past. Only the possible is the sphere of freedom. We have a good deal of present constraint and previous necessity in human life. But necessity is not to be mistaken for destiny, which we can neither defy nor delude. Though the self is not free from the bonds of determination, it can subjugate the past to a certain extent and turn it into a new course. Choice is the assertion of freedom over necessity by which it converts necessity to its own use and thus frees itself from it... The past may become either an opportunity or an obstacle. Everything depends on what we make of it and not what it makes of us.⁶⁷

Freedom lies in the prospective rather than retrospective aspect of *karma*. And moral and spiritual progress is possible because of both the opportunity to alter our selfish behavior and the fact that this will result at some point in a better future life due to the workings of the *karmic* law. The growth of the *jīva* is evidence for the existence of *karmic* rebirth.

How convincing is this evidence? Not very. The course of human history shows little, if any, moral and spiritual progress. There has of course been great strides made in the sciences and technology, but scant development in wisdom

and virtue. If Radhakrishnan's evolutionary view of *karmic* rebirth were true, then we should have witnessed more growth in peaceful and selfless behavior. The opposite in fact appears to be the case. The twentieth century has probably been more horrific in terms of conflict and massive suffering than any other in human history. Since *karma* and *samsāra* are beginningless, each human being has lived through a countless number of reincarnations and has had ample opportunity to learn and personally develop. Surely by now some noticeable increase in the moral and spiritual growth of humankind would be evident. But it is not. It may be the case that each individual *jīva* only gets reborn once every few thousand years, making development a slow process. But nowhere does Radhakrishnan suggest such a possibility. So the problem of a lack of moral and spiritual progress remains.

The preponderance of moral corruption in human history might even be explained by the *karmic* results of bad deeds. In general, bad *karma* may be increasing at a greater rate than good *karma*. A person's evil acts in one life generates more evil conditions in future lives. For example, Hitler's horrendous deeds will be paid for throughout subsequent incarnations thus setting off a chain reaction of suffering states. The end result is burgeoning bad *karma* which explains the lack of moral and spiritual advancement.

Moreover, the fact that *samsara* is beginningless means each *jīva* has an enormous stock of old *karma* (*prārabdha* and *sāncita karma*) to contend with. This accumulated *karma* is no doubt so immense that it undermines any attempt to improve one's moral and spiritual standing. Though one is technically free to act in different ways, their accumulated past *karma* is asserting too much influence. How do we know, for instance, whether our present actions are a

result of free-will operating now or of *karma* emanating from past deeds? As Arvind Sharma expresses the problem:

How do we distinguish between old and new *karma*? And between one's own and another's *karma*? A simple illustration should suffice. Suppose A performs an act of charity towards B. Now: (1) Did A perform it under the influence of his past *karma* or is it new *karma*; (2) Did A perform it under the influence of B's past *karma* or present *karma*? How is all this worked out? Is there a celestial super computer or what?⁶⁸

If the accumulated stock of *karma* undercuts individual initiative, then it is difficult to comprehend how moral and spiritual progress can result from using one's inherited *karmic* condition in a free and creative manner. Lack of free-will thus explains why humanity has remained morally and spiritually stagnant throughout its history.

The beginningless character of the *karmic* rebirth process encounters a further obstacle. John Hick has argued that explaining human inequalities by referring to a beginningless regress of incarnations simply delays rather than generates a genuine answer. Claiming something (e.g., inequalities) is a product of something else that has no initial origin is not explaining much at all. To account for an event properly and thoroughly requires tracing it back to some ultimate, or at least significant, point. In Hick's words:

Let us return to the inequalities of human birth and ask whether the idea of reincarnation can after all

really help to explain these. Either there is a first life characterized by initial human differences, or else (as in the Vedantic philosophy) there is no first life but a beginningless regress of incarnations. In the latter case the explanation of the inequalities of our present life is endlessly postponed and never achieved, for we are no nearer to an ultimate explanation of the circumstances of our present birth when we are told that they are consequences of a previous life, if that previous life has in turn to be explained by reference to another, and so on in an infinite regress. One can affirm the beginningless character of the soul's existence in this way, but one cannot then claim that it renders either intelligible or morally acceptable the inequalities found in our present human lot. The solution has not been produced but only postponed to infinity.⁶⁹

So the use of the idea of *karmic* rebirth to explain certain facts about human inequalities of birth and circumstance proves futile.

Or does it? Arvind Sharma, in his book *A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion*, offers a thoughtful reply to Hick's concern. He argues that on closer examination Hick's criticism loses its bite. Most explanations fail to posit an absolutely first cause but they are still considered acceptable. What happens is that we trace the chain of causes back to a point which satisfies our curiosity. This can be only one or a few steps removed from the event to be explained, but rarely do we seek its ultimate origins. Sharma compares a medical and *karma* explanation to illustrate his point:

I fall sick and ask a doctor for an explanation; he tells me I have

caught a virus; just as I might go to a Hindu thinker and ask him why I have failed in business and he tells me it is the bad result of evil financial practices pursued in past lives. Now I return, apparently satisfied with the doctor's answer, but, suppose I begin to ask: where did the virus come from? Which earlier virus did it mutate from? One would be getting back to the distinction in evolution between organic and inorganic life. In other words, if not correctly understood, the idea of beginninglessness can easily become a red herring.⁷⁰

The trouble with Sharma's account is that it fails to highlight an important difference between a scientific and the *karmic* rebirth explanation. Though science can adequately explain something by referring to its immediate rather than ultimate origin, in can, in principle at least, trace something back to its initial cause. The virus, for instance, could be ultimately explained by the big-bang, the formation of the earth, and the evolution from inorganic to organic matter. It is quite different with the *karmic* rebirth account for there is no beginning point, not even in principle. The transmigrating *jīva* has always existed through countless births and rebirths. There was no act originally responsible for igniting the chain of *karmic* results. In other words, there was no one time that we fell prey to rebirth. Ask why there appears to be a greater balance of bad *karma* over good *karma* and the answer is ignorance (*avidyā*). And if ask where ignorance comes from, the answer is it is mysteriously beginningless. One is no further ahead in understanding the initial genesis of human inequality.

In sum, Radhakrishnan's attempt to verify the hypothesis of rebirth by showing how it best explains the facts of past-life recall, special skills and talents,

love at first sight, and human inequalities is riddled with serious weaknesses. This, together with the flaws found in his argument about rebirth conforming to nature's pattern of continual renewal, casts solemn doubt on the empirical validity of rebirth and by extension on the whole possibility of fulfilling the ideal of spiritual liberation. For without the existence of the *karmic* rebirth process, there is no way individual (*jīvanmukti*) or collective (*sarvamukti*) freedom can be realized.

(III) THE VALUE OF *MOKṢA* AND *KARMIC* REBIRTH

This brings us to a crucial question. If the process of *karmic* rebirth fails to be empirically convincing, then mokṣa, as described by Rādhakrishnan, may be an ideal impossible to fully realize. This is due to the fact that for Rādhakrishnan *karmic* rebirth is essential to the whole emancipatory scheme. Rebirth offers opportunities for individuals to be reborn in a situation where they can become enlightened as to their divine nature. In this way, rebirth is the chief means by which the ultimate goal of *mokṣa* can be fulfilled. If such a process, however, turns out to be non-existent, then mokṣa would be an ideal that is out of reach. Facing such a problem why would one seek to promote it as the principal end worth pursuing? Would not this be a sure-fire recipe for frustration and guilt? On this view, Rādhakrishnan's ideal of spiritual liberation would seem utterly senseless and futile.

An immediate response to this problem would be to agree with the value theorist R. B. Perry who claims in his book *General Theory of Value* that "attainability and security in and of themselves have nothing to do with value. The greatest goods may be those which are most remote, most uncertain and

most precarious."⁷¹ This may be true but in Radhakrishnan's case one is discussing a value — *mokṣa* — whose realization may be impossible, not just rare.

In light of this, three other options remain open. The first would be to try to verify Radhakrishnan's hypothesis of *karmic* rebirth in some other empirical way and thus retain the possibility of realizing *mokṣa*. This, I believe, would prove exceedingly difficult and so will not be attempted here.

The second is to describe how the ideal of *mokṣa* is still realizable without the existence of the *karmic* rebirth process. This means that a direct experience of *Brahman/Ātman*, together with a radical transformation of consciousness and character, could occur in a single lifetime. I suppose this is possible but highly improbable, for at least one major reason. If the process of *karmic* rebirth, which is beginningless, has only produced a few spiritually liberated individuals in the world so far, then how likely is it that anyone will become liberated in just one lifetime. Such a feat would require both superhuman effort and a super-effective technique that produced quick results. But many people are still unaware of even the need to be spiritually liberated, never mind actually fulfilling the goal. It is thought that many lifetimes are required to even arrive at the stage where one is in the position to take up the path leading to *mokṣa*. Even the Zen Buddhist view of "sudden enlightenment" hinges on the theory that the individual must experience a countless number of rebirths. One must be ready and prepared to tread the path to enlightenment, a journey that takes much time. The myriad distractions involved in just living one life would in all likelihood steer one from the goal.

The third and final option would be the view that moksa is still a valuable ideal even though it may not be fully realizable. This is because the ideal itself can be "demythologized," that is, purged of its dubious metaphysical assumptions and placed in a more existential, moral context. To be more specific, I contend that it is possible to follow the lead of such thinkers as Ludwig Feuerbach,⁷² Rudolph Bultmann,⁷³ J. H. Randall,⁷⁴ and R. B. Braithwaite,⁷⁵ in translating metaphysical statements (e.g., about *karmic* rebirth and *mokṣa*) into statements about human existence and moral possibilities. In this way, one can transmit Radhakrishnan's message without tying it to ideas (i.e. *karmic* rebirth) that are empirically problematic. The justification for this demythologization project lies in Immanuel Kant's distinction between theoretical (pure) and practical reason.⁷⁶ For Kant, theoretical reason involves both analysing and synthesizing data derived from the senses and moulded by the categories of the understanding, whereas practical reason involves making moral and pragmatic decisions that affects one's life. Religious existentialists like Kierkegaard and Bultmann subsume religious thinking and experience under the operation of practical reason and in this way are able to detach religious beliefs and language from the realm of theoretical reason (or cognitive meaning) and place it in a framework of existential-moral discourse. I propose to do something similar with Radhakrishnan's concept of *mokṣa*, together with *karmic* rebirth, by focusing on it strictly as a value and arguing that it is a goal worth pursuing, despite its epistemological vacuity, because of the essential role it plays in facilitating individual psychological and moral development.

Regarding individual psychology, an intrinsic value like *mokṣa* can have profound affects on one's orientation and meaning in life.⁷⁷ Values act as

standards that guide behavior in a variety of ways. As the social psychologist M. Rokeach notes, values

(1) lead us to take particular positions on social issues, and (2) predispose us to favor one particular political or religious ideology over another. They are standards employed (3) to guide presentations of the self to others, and (4) to evaluate and judge, to heap praise and fix blame on ourselves and others. (5) Values are central to the study of comparison processes; we employ them as standards to ascertain whether we are as moral and as competent as others. (6) They are, moreover, standards employed to persuade and influence others, to tell us which beliefs, attitudes, values, and actions of others are worth challenging, protesting, and arguing about, or worth trying to influence or to change.⁷⁸

Values also aid self-esteem by rationalizing certain beliefs and actions that might otherwise be personally troubling (e.g., an inhibited sex life rationalized as a life of self-control).⁷⁹

Another positive function values have is to provide a structure and meaning to one's life. Even if the final goal of spiritual liberation is ultimately unreachable, the ideal itself can motivate one to continue striving in that direction. This may seem unconvincing at first glance. If an individual is aware that the goal he or she is aiming for is impossible to achieve, then would not this prove very discouraging and perhaps undermine his or her motivation? This is a definite possibility, but there are many cases, especially in the athletic world,

where a person is fully aware of the unobtainability of a goal but strives to achieve it anyway. For instance, an individual aiming to run a two hour marathon may think this is unreachable but continues to train nonetheless to perform such a feat. Such a situation often has the effect of making one train harder, with substantial improvements. One may never actually run a two hour marathon, but the goal propels one to new heights. The same can be said for the ideal of moksa. Even if it is thought to be completely unrealizable, it can be used to facilitate some degree of transformation in character and consciousness.

In any case, the intrinsic value of *mokṣa* supplies a meaning to life by answering the question "Why am I living?" In being an intrinsic value *mokṣa* has primacy in the system of concerns that constitutes a personality or culture. It is not derived from or dependent upon other values and is all-pervasive. This means it is unlimited in scope, affecting the totality of experience. Consequently, an intrinsic value has the aim of giving meaning and purpose to one's existence. As many psychologist have pointed out, this is an essential ingredient of a balanced psyche. Victor Frankl, for instance, claims all human beings possess a "will to meaning," that is, an impetuous desire to search for a purpose in life.⁸⁰ According to Frankl, meaning is embodied in values, the most important being spiritual in nature. Without such values, a profound sense of meaninglessness, of psychological emptiness, pervades one's entire being. Such a condition Frankl terms "the existential vacuum," which he claims affects 60% of American students.⁸¹ Unlike other animals, human beings are no longer told by instinct what they must do. And in contrast to humans in former times, people now are no longer told by tradition and values what they should do. Instead, individuals either do what everyone else does (conformism) or do what others order them to (totalitarianism). In either case, the result is the existential vacuum which can

lead to "noogenic neuroses" — the unsatisfactory longing for an ultimate meaning in life.⁹² The effect of noogenic neuroses is a fragmentary sense of identity. Ultimate values help integrate the different aspects of a person's life, pulling everything together towards a common goal. Frankl believes progress in personal integrity is possible because of the objective nature of meaning-values. Meaning is to be discovered, not created. Values are more than a mere self-expression of the subject or a projection of the self onto the world. Meaning and value is in a sense already in the world, poised to be uncovered. This coincides with Radhakrishnan's conception of *mokṣa* which is interpreted as a state of being, in fact the ultimate being, as well as a moral-spiritual ideal. It has, in short, both ontological and ethical status. An intrinsic value like *mokṣa*, then, serves the important psychological function of giving a sense of meaning and direction to one's life even though the ideal itself may never be completely realized.

The ideal of *mokṣa* can also have positive effects on individual moral development. This relates to the theory of the cognitive meaningfulness of religious language. Theorists such as R. B. Braithwaite argue that religious statements primarily serve an ethical rather than informative function. They express a person's adherence to, and intention to carry out, a particular course of moral action. Religious statements are thus really ethical statements in disguise. They declare that one is committed to an ethical program or way of life. For example, the statement "God is love" reveals a person's intention to live a life of compassion and loving kindness. Likewise, the assertion "*mokṣa* is the realization of *Brahman/Ātman*" discloses an individual's commitment to live a life consistent with the ideals of freedom and harmony. In both cases the essential point is not the veracity of the statements but their moral import. According to Braithwaite, all religious language is backed-up by stories or myths. However, it

is irrelevant whether these stories are true or not. What is important is whether individuals believe in them and act in ethical accordance.

Now the concept of *mokṣa* can play an indispensable role in cultivating moral and spiritual virtues. The high standards it sets impinges upon our hearts and minds, prodding us to develop the benevolent aspects of our nature. In growing up one acquires certain psychological and behavioral habits which crystalize into personality traits and influences one's relationship with others. Many of these traits, however, are pernicious in nature, leading to much interpersonal conflict and troublesome behavior. Striving to realize an ideal like *mokṣa*, although unattainable, can help short-circuit some of these destructive tendencies. Such a value can serve as a useful tool for smoothing the rough edges of our selfish behavior, steering us closer towards a more constructive lifestyle.

Interestingly, Eliot Deutsch has shown how some Indian philosophers have attributed a similar function to the concept of *karma* (and by extension rebirth). They maintain the law of *karma* (and the associated phenomenon of rebirth) cannot be established through any of the "valid means of knowledge recognized by the system"⁸³ In other words, the chief sources of knowledge according to Indian philosophy — perception (*pratyakṣa*), comparison (*upamāna*), non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*), inference (*anumāna*), postulation (*arthāpatti*) and testimony (*śabda*) — all fail to confirm the truth of the *karmic* rebirth hypothesis. Nevertheless, the concept is interpreted as being a "convenient fiction" that contributes to solving two nagging problems. The first has to do with persuading people to act morally and to live virtuously. The concept of *karmic* rebirth accomplishes this by providing people with an

awareness of their immoral state which needs to be overcome. The idea of being in bondage to *karmic* rebirth helps inspire the search for spiritual liberation which in turn requires moral discipline. In this way some degree of moral rectitude is assured.

A second way the notion of *karmic* rebirth can solve the problem of persuasion is nicely summed up by Deutsch himself:

If men feel that a tremendous importance is attached to every moral act and decision, that whatever they do will yield results that have an influence on the entire nature of their being, now and in the future, they will think twice about leading anything other than a moral life. Salvation consists in enlightenment; morality is helpful to enlightenment; he who acts otherwise is doomed to *samsara*.⁸⁴

Significantly, Radhakrishnan also highlights the ethical value of accepting the law of *karmic* rebirth:

To those discouraged by life's disabilities, the doctrine of *karma* teaches patience and persistent behavior. When we see the long procession of men either deformed in body or warped in mind, with faint hearts and weak wills, we should not judge them harshly. When man is set alone against the vast background of his destiny, when he finds that he cannot defy his fate and unfaltering despair overtakes him, belief in *karma* steadies his nature.⁸⁵

Both thinkers agree that the concept of *karmic* rebirth can assist in convincing people to take up and live moral lives.

The second problem the concept of *karmic* rebirth can help untangle relates more to teachers (*gurus*): how can they avoid discouragement and retreat among their students? Again Deutsch claims the "doctrine of *karma* solves this difficulty very directly. No effort goes to waste. What one cannot attain in this life, one will attain, or be better prepared to attain, in another life."⁸⁶ In all these ways, the doctrine of *karmic* rebirth, though perhaps empirically questionable, serves the worthwhile purpose of initiating and enhancing moral development.

This ethically pragmatic account of certain concepts and values can also be found to some degree in the Hindu idea of *sādhana*, a term Troy Wilson Organ interprets to mean "the instrument for the attainment of perfection."⁸⁷ In being the method used to achieve some purpose, *sādhana* consists of "activity, movement, change, process, struggle, and power."⁸⁸ The emphasis is on striving towards the desired goal of *mokṣa* rather than actually obtaining it. In this sense, Hinduism is more of a quest than a programmatic end. The aim is not perfection but "perfecting." Its soteriology is progressive, rooted in human endeavour and directed towards meliorating individual suffering. By following a religious path (*marga*) and practising the moral-spiritual disciplines of *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga* one at least approximates the ideal of perfection, thereby improving their moral character. Progress, not completion, becomes the goal and this is enough to justify promoting the ideal of spiritual liberation as an end worth pursuing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LOGICAL PROBLEM OF REBIRTH

(I) INTRODUCING THE LOGICAL PROBLEM

Although the phenomenon of rebirth has not been empirically verified at this point, there is still the question of its logical status. Even if rebirth does not in fact occur, it remains to be seen whether it could conceivably occur. In other words, even if rebirth is scientifically dubious, is the idea of rebirth logically possible? This is a potentially more damaging criticism than the one concerning rebirth's falsity since it involves the intelligibility of the concept itself. To say that an idea is logically intelligible is to say it is coherent, noncontradictory, and meaningful. A concept is logically consistent if it holds together well and does not lapse into absurdities. In contrast, an illogical concept would be one that is literally nonsensical and impossible to coherently envisage. If Radhakrishnan's notion of rebirth turns out to be hopelessly unintelligible, no better reason could be given for rejecting it wholesale. The question, then, is whether it is indeed intelligible or logically possible? Radhakrishnan himself certainly believes so when he emphatically states: "The theory of rebirth is quite as logical as any other hypothesis that is in the field..."¹ In this final chapter, I shall concur with Radhakrishnan's view and argue that the idea of rebirth, though facing some formidable challenges, succeeds in being logically coherent.

The issue of the logical (im)possibility of the concept of rebirth has primarily arisen in recent Anglo-American philosophy, particularly in its critical analysis of the different views of life after death.² According to Antony Flew,

there are three basic theories of personal survival.³ The first he calls the "Platonic-Cartesian way" which amounts to a theory of disembodied existence. On this scheme, a person is thought to be composed of two separate parts, one material (i.e., the physical body), the other immaterial (i.e., the mind, spirit, or soul), with only the latter surviving after death. The second is termed the "reconstitutionist way" which involves the resurrection of the body. Here a person is conceived of as a unity of body and soul, with the two reuniting in some fashion sometime after the death of the physical body. The last theory Flew labels the "way of the astral body." According to this view, a person has both a gross (flesh and blood) body which eventually withers and dies, and an astral (or subtle) body that survives death. The astral body is transparent enough to escape detection by ordinary sensory means. The theory can either stand on its own, as in some spiritualist traditions, or be linked to some doctrine of rebirth or reincarnation, as it is in Radhakrishnan's philosophy.

For Flew and some other analytic philosophers, all three theories of personal survival are logically incoherent and thus unintelligible. The major reason for this is bound up with problems about personal identity. In the last thirty years or so a plethora of material has been published on the question of what constitutes personal identity and how one can identify a person as being the same person when the latter has experienced and undergone numerous changes over time. Put differently, how does one determine the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person P2 at a time t2 being identical to a person P1 at a time t1? Though the problem was substantially addressed by past philosophers such as John Locke, more recent Anglo-American philosophers like Flew and Terence Penelhum have delved more deeply into its fascinating complexities.⁴ In this chapter I wish to first describe how some

contemporary philosophers have characterized the problems besetting the theories of disembodied survival and resurrection, and then show how Radhakrishnan's notion of rebirth, as involving the subtle body, escapes these difficulties and is thus logically possible or intelligible.⁵

(II) THEORIES OF PERSONAL SURVIVAL

As mentioned previously, the theory of disembodied survival — Flew's "Platonic-Cartesian way" — presupposes a dualistic view of the person where one consists of a material substance called the body and an immaterial substance called the mind, soul, or spirit. The body is thought to be a corporeal entity composed of visible, tangible matter, whereas the soul is conceived of as an incorporeal, intangible being. The body is dense, occupies space, and is completely unconscious, while the soul is unearthly, spaceless, and totally conscious. Put differently, the body is the seat of all physical actions (e.g., eating, walking, talking), while the soul is the seat of all mental actions (e.g., thinking, willing, remembering). Moreover, the body is subject to time and will decay and eventually perish, whereas the soul transcends time and is immortal. This being the case, it is the soul rather than the body that is thought to comprise the real person and define his or her essential identity.

Thinkers like Flew and Penelhum have pinpointed numerous problems with the theory of disembodied survival. The most fundamental and fatal is that the whole idea of a "disembodied" or "discarnate" existence is utterly nonsensical. "To put it no stronger," Flew opines, "it is far from obvious that disembodied personal survival is conceivable or that the idea of persons as

'substantial' incorporeal souls is coherent."⁶ It seems the very idea of persons existing independently of their bodies is incomprehensible. One could not even imagine what such a disembodied person would be like nor would they be able to describe such an entity in any intelligible manner. Flew likens disembodied survival to the idea of kingless chess.⁷ Just as a game of chess played without a king would resemble, though not constitute, genuine chess, an individual without a body would resemble, though not really be, a person.

For the idea of disembodied survival in the Platonic-Cartesian sense to be logically coherent, there must be a suitable criterion (or criteria) for identifying that which is separate from the body. "The crux," according to Flew, "is to discover, or to develop, a viable concept of an incorporeal person; and that requires that we provide an account of the principles of identity and individuation which would apply to such incorporeal persons."⁸ The difficulty is that such criteria do not exist. There are no characteristics (predicates) that we could first sensibly attribute to bodiless persons and then use to identify and to reidentify them. In other words, there are no unique features possessed by a soul which would enable it to be recognized and distinguished from other souls.

The simplest way that one identifies and distinguishes persons in ordinary life is by their physical traits. I am able to recognize my friend in a crowd because of the way he or she looks or appears. According to Flew and Peter Geach, this obviously will not work with spirits or souls since they are completely disembodied.⁹ In fact, because so little of what can be attributed to a person can be attributed to a soul, no soul could qualify as a person. How could one really conceive of oneself as existing as the self-same person in a disembodied state? A soul, in possessing no sensory equipment, could not perceive things or receive

any information from the sense-organs. Nor could it do anything that would require the use of the physical body such as talking, walking, or even feeling. The soul could not think or be self-aware since consciousness is connected to brain activity. In short, none of the physical characteristics normally used to identify and distinguish persons could be applied in the case of disembodied souls or spirits. "The crux," as Flew puts it, "is that within their everyday meanings, words such as 'minds', 'personalities', 'souls', or 'selves' are not words for substances; they are not, that is, words that significantly describe what could survive the deaths and dissolutions of the flesh and blood persons whose minds or personalities they are."¹⁰ This being the case, if there is anything that survives "my" death, it would not be "I" existing; for something that cannot think, feel, or perceive could not be a personal being. Hence, survival of a soul does not necessarily entail survival of oneself.

A related problem has to do with reidentification. For the soul to be an intelligible concept there must be a way of determining whether a soul which exists at t_1 is the same that exists at t_2 . In other words, for Soul B to be identified with Soul A, Soul B must have had the same experiences as Soul A. And for this to occur, Soul B must have occupied the same place that Soul A occupied when it had those experiences. But now one is talking about spatial position which only applies to embodied entities. So without the presence of a body one cannot really settle whether Soul B has had Soul A's experiences; and if this is true, then reidentification is logically impossible, and along with it the whole notion of soul or spirit.

It should be noted that there have been attempts to positively describe the state of personal disembodied existence, one of the most noted being H. H.

Price in his 1953 article 'Survival and the Idea of "Another World".'¹¹ As Price envisages it, the "other world" will consist of three outstanding characteristics. The first is that it will be mind-dependent. This means perceptions will be similar to those in dreams, formed from mental images acquired during embodied existence. Second, events in such a world will differ from those in bodily life in that they will exhibit more of an illogical sequence like those we observe in dreams. But whereas dreams are private experiences, the post-mortem world will be a public affair involving real communication and interaction between minds by means of extra-sensory perception (e.g., telepathy). Lastly, the composition of the other world will be determined by the power of our desires, that is, by a kind of individual wish-fulfilment arising from earthly memories. The portrait Price paints is really one of spiritual-psychological survival after the death and decay of the physical body.

How reasonable is such a belief? Some thinkers have seriously questioned the logical coherence of Price's vision of disembodied existence. His talk of "another world" filled with dream-like objects resulting from individual memories and desires presupposes a kind of spatial environment which in turn points to an embodied state. His idea of a disembodied mind when carefully analysed actually leads to a kind of astral body view of post-mortem existence, something different from the traditional Platonic-Cartesian view of the soul or mind. This is affirmed by John Hick in saying "when the notion of the survival of the disembodied mind is developed it turns out not after all to be a radical alternative to the possibility of an embodied post-mortem existence, but rather a special form of that possibility."¹²

Another logical difficulty perceived by Hick is the tension existing between Price's view of the public nature of personal survival on the one hand, and the production of such a world out of individual desires on the other. In Hick's words:

At this point however we notice the tension which I have already mentioned between the notion of a common world and the wish-fulfilment theme. For the latter points to a solipsistic rather than public after-life... Thus it is not easy to combine the two suggestions that the post-mortem world is created by human wishes and that it is common to a great number of people. For desires inhere in individuals, and at the level of everyday wishes at any rate it may be presumed that no two individuals' and certainly no large community of persons' desires coincide sufficiently to be capable of being fulfilled in identically the same state of affairs. I do not believe that we can in fact imagine a coherent world created by the desires of a multitude of different people out of the material of their several sets of earthly memories. For the different wishes of different individuals would, left to themselves, produce different features and states of the environment.¹³

So Price's attempt to describe the nature of personal disembodied existence proves logically incoherent.

The second theory of personal survival Flew calls the "reconstitutionist way," but which in more religious parlance is termed the resurrection of the body.

According to this view, as mainly expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, life after death can be understood in bodily rather than non-bodily terms. The basic assumption is that each human being is an indissoluble psycho-physical unity. At death, the physical body decays, but due to God's sovereign power it will later rise again and reunite with the soul. St. Paul conceived this to be a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*) inhabiting a spiritual world.¹⁴ In any case, some kind of re-creation or reconstitution takes place, one in line with the physical body.

Now the doctrine of the resurrection of the body sidesteps some identity problems associated with the theory of disembodied existence. If physical continuity is necessary for identifying a person, then the idea of a reconstituted body conforms somewhat to that criterion. Consequently, talk about bodily life after death is at least commensurate with talk about the existence of a person. As Terence Penelhum expresses the matter:

In the case of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the problem of how the post-mortem, resurrected person can remain identical through time in the future state does not look very difficult, since the sort of life envisaged for this being is an embodied one, similar in enough respects (one may suppose) to our own. So even if we decided that the continuity of the body is a necessary condition of the continuance of a person through time, this condition could easily be said to be satisfied in the case of a resurrected person.¹⁵

However, Penelhum goes on to suggest a major flaw with the doctrine of resurrection. Identifying a resurrected body could still present difficulties because

there is no way of determining whether the post-mortem person is the same as the pre-mortem person. In other words, it is logically possible that "the resurrection is not, after all, the reappearance of the original person but the (first) appearance of a *duplicate* person — no doubt resembling the former one but not numerically identical with him."¹⁶ If this is true, then there are no criteria of personal identity available to link the resurrected person with the earthly person. Consequently, the idea of a self-identical resurrected person proves nonsensical.

Whether these arguments against the logical coherence of the concepts of disembodied existence and resurrection of the body are sound or unsound is not my primary concern here. I certainly realize that there may be ways to affirm continuity in terms of these concepts. But I simply wanted to describe, in brief form, two theories of personal survival — the Platonic-Cartesian (or disembodied existence view) and the reconstitutionist (or resurrection of the body view) — and show how they have been construed by some contemporary philosophers as being logically incoherent. My main purpose is to argue that Radhakrishnan's notion of rebirth is a variation on the astral body theme, and though not free of certain problems, is ultimately an intelligible concept.

Although the term "astral body" mainly developed within Western theosophical literature (e.g., Annie Besant's *The Ancient Wisdom*), where it denoted a ghostly counterpart to the physical body imperceptible to ordinary senses but sometimes evident to paranormal senses in the form of an aura, the basic idea has its roots in the ancient Hindu doctrine of the subtle body. Though Radhakrishnan refers to the subtle body, he seems to connect it to the idea of an astral or ethereal body in order to make it more understandable to the Western audience he is often addressing in his writings.¹⁷ In any case, for Radhakrishnan

and other Hindu thinkers what transmigrates from life to life is not the physical (gross) body but the subtle body. As noted in Chapter I, Radhakrishnan accepts the Vedantic view of the empirical self (*jīva*) as consisting of five sheaths or layers (*kośas*) divided into three different bodies. There is the physical or gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) which is made up of the matter (food) and life (vital breath) sheaths and is connected to the state of waking consciousness; the subtle body (*liṅga śarīra*) which encapsulates the mental (sense-mind) and intellectual sheaths and is related to the state of dream consciousness; and the causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*) which involves the bliss sheath and is tied to the state of deep sleep.¹⁸ The subtle body, like its gross counterpart, belongs to the category of the material (*prakṛiti*) rather than to pure consciousness (*puruṣa, ātman*). But it differs in being composed of a much finer and more permanent material which is imperceptible to the normal senses. The subtle body is best described as a transparent vesture that registers and embodies the psychological life of human beings. It is a psychic entity or what C.D. Broad called the "psychic factor," a cluster of mental elements in dispositional form which solidify into a cohesive structure.¹⁹ Put differently, the subtle body is like an active, opaque sheet which receives and collects all the residual impressions that human thoughts, desires, and actions leave from both this life and all previous incarnations. Whatever a person has desired and acted upon is stored up in the form of impressions (*samskāras*) in the subtle body. Each similar or recurring impression modifies the subtle body and creates a set of tendencies or mental dispositions. In this way, the subtle body is the seat of all the individual's psychological experiences built up over a series of human lives.

Upon death of the physical body, the subtle body continues to survive through a succession of different incarnations until *mokṣa* is finally realized.

When it departs from its gross counterpart, the subtle body carries with it all the residual impressions that human actions (*karma*) leave. This means all the *jīva*'s merits and demerits, right and wrong actions, good and evil tendencies are imprinted on the subtle body and it is these that will determine the kind of incarnation the *jīva* will next experience. More specifically, after the death of the gross body the whole inner life of a human being continues to exist in the form of dispositions, the most predominant of which will determine the nature of the physical body the *jīva* will eventually receive. Radhakrishnan describes this process as follows:

How does the self find a new home after death... Again it is held that the self is not altogether discarnate. It is invested in a finer vehicle, the subtle body (*sukshma sarira*) when it leaves the gross one. The necessary physical basis is secured by the subtle body. The *linga sarira* or subtle body which is said to accompany one throughout one's empirical existence is the form on which the physical body is moulded. It is this which assumes the body necessary for its efficiency at its next birth by attracting physical elements to itself. At physical death, only the gross outer form perishes. The rest of the self is not disturbed. Rebirth is only the renewal of the instrument through which the self works. The self is not at each birth a new entity but a continuous process.²⁰

Similarly elsewhere:

When the gross body drops, the

soul is accompanied by the subtle body, transparent and invisible though material. It is the basis for consciousness and memory. We cannot localize subtle bodies which survive physical death. The subtle body is the reflex image of our personality in all its phases. The *linga-sarira* is the carrier of *karma* and assumes a body which, though different from the present one, is not altogether discontinuous with it.²¹

So the mechanism of rebirth involves the existence of an invisible, non-gross material part of ourselves, the subtle or astral body, which contains all of our psychological experiences from past lives in the form of mental dispositions and transports them through a series of different incarnations to the point where we finally realize our true self to be *Ātman*.

(III) REBIRTH AND PERSONAL CONTINUITY

Given the crucial role the transmigrating subtle body plays in Radhakrishnan's scheme of spiritual liberation it behooves us to ask whether it is a logically coherent concept or not. In other words, is his idea of rebirth as involving the subtle body intelligible at all or is it basically nonsensical? If the latter, then there is no doubt that Radhakrishnan's conception of rebirth, as presented in this thesis, must be rejected or radically modified, and with it his notion of spiritual liberation.

The issue originates from the old personal identity problem encountered earlier in the chapter. With the necessary adjustments, the question now is: How can one determine that the person presently living in a particular physical body is

in any way the same person who has supposedly undergone a countless number of past incarnations? More simply, what criterion, if any, can be used to identify persons from one rebirth to another? Looking at Radhakrishnan's notion of the subtle body it would appear some form of continuity can be found in the impressions or mental dispositions carried over from one physical life to another. He says, "The self is not at each birth a new entity but a continuous process."²² As such, his theory embraces, at least implicitly, a kind of psychological criterion of personal identity which states that "P2 at t2 is the same person as P1 at t1 if and only if P2 at t2 is psychologically continuous with P1 at t1."²³ I say "kind" of psychological continuity criterion because unlike the classic theory (e.g., Locke's), which focuses on actual mental events, the experiences of the empirical self are stored as impressions or dispositions in a subtle body. However, it is this matrix of dispositional character traits, memories, skills, and the like, which accounts for personal continuity across successive rebirths.

Or does it? There are three significant problems that Radhakrishnan's theory must contend with here. The first involves the view that personal identity must be equated with physical body identity. More specifically, the only logical criterion acceptable for identifying a supposedly reincarnated person as being the previously deceased person is their physical appearance. On this scheme, P2 at t2 is the same person as P1 at t1 if and only if P2 has the same physical body (e.g., biological traits) as P1 had. Some gross bodily form must persist even though its matter undergoes gradual, material alterations.

But there are real and imagined cases where we would not identify a person primarily on the basis of their observable body. Take the situation of identical-looking twins. Let's say an individual was best friends with only one of

the twins and arranged to meet him or her for dinner. But as a practical joke, the other twin shows up and tries to pass him or herself off as the twin that one is friendly with. In such a situation the mere physical appearance of the person would not be sufficient to correctly identify one's friend. Other things like character traits, shared memories, and the like would also be required to verify his or her true identity. Or take the case of two physically different people whose characters and memories get completely switched. Although at first confusing, a close relative or friend of one of the switched personalities would no doubt eventually be convinced that the person is the same one they knew despite the difference in physical form. These examples are enough, I think, to demonstrate the weaknesses in the bodily criterion of personal identity.

A second problem facing Radhakrishnan's theory has to do with the beginningless character of the subtle body and the whole rebirth process. If the subtle body has always existed, then it must have transmigrated a countless number of times and undergone an unlimited array of different incarnations. With each incarnation, however, the subtle body accumulates more *karmic* effects in the form of psychological dispositions from the actions of the living, embodied agent. As a result, it is wholly possible that the matrix of dispositional character traits, memories, and skills has been completely modified and replaced by entirely new matrixes. And since it is the matrix of such dispositions that constitute the subtle body, if the former substantially changes so does the latter. What one is left with is the possibility of different subtle bodies coming into being and eventually being replaced by other subtle bodies. In such a situation, how can any sense of personal identity be ascertained?²⁴

Related to this is a third problem raised by John Hick.²⁵ Hick questions whether the theory of psychological dispositions firmly establishes a strong sense of personal identity across different rebirths. To what degree does P2 at t2 have to exhibit the same psychological characteristics as P1 at t1 before it can be said with a modicum of certainty that P2 is the reincarnation of P1? And even if this is set at a high degree, the fact of two individuals expressing a large number of similar character traits does not in itself mean they are one and the same person.

The two above problems, I think, make it impossible to conclude that a strong sense of personal identity, ($A = A$), can be discerned in Radhakrishnan's open-ended, non-static conception of the subtle body. Too many changes occur to the psychological impressions to warrant an absolute symmetry where if 'x' is identical with 'y,' then 'y' is identical with 'x.'²⁶ But the point to be stressed is that a denial of strict identity does not imply a denial of continuity, and as long as some sense of personal, psychological continuity can be established in the rebirth process, then the idea of a beginningless, transmigrating, subtle body remains logically meaningful.

The question, then, is what can preserve a sense of psychological continuity? The only possible answer is some thread of latent memories which would connect only one series of previous lives. Only this could link the different dispositional matrixes of character traits, etc., to one transmigrating subtle body and distinguish it from other such bodies. As John Hick explains it:

This continuously lengthening
thread of memory picks out from
all the lives lived in the past

those which constituted the previous existences of a particular present individual, though these memories remain latent until a final moment of total recall as the reincarnating soul at last attains to enlightenment. When we speak of the individual who lived, say, a hundred years ago and who was me in a previous incarnation, we are accordingly speaking of a uniquely identified individual whose experience is totally recorded in the same memory chain that is now recording my own experiences. For memory, whether conscious or unconscious, does not link me with the lives of all those in the past who share certain character traits with me but only with one particular life or succession of lives."²⁷

From this Hick significantly concludes: "With the memory link restored in this way, reincarnation stands thus far as a viable hypothesis."²⁸

This brings us to the idea of memory, or more precisely latent memory, as constituting the criterion of personal, psychological continuity across successive incarnations. How logically coherent is such a view? Immediately one runs smack into Bernard Williams's famous reduplication argument against the psychological criterion of personal identity.²⁹ Williams asks us to consider a case where a presently existing person named Charles claims to have acquired the memory and character of the deceased Guy Fawkes, and seems to know everything that Guy Fawkes himself would have known. Given this scenario, would we be justified in concluding that Charles is personally identical to Guy Fawkes, that Charles and Guy are one and the same person? Williams thinks not; for if one person can claim to be Guy Fawkes, and provide evidence for it, so could conceivably another man at the same time. "What," asks Williams,

"should we say in that case?" He responds: "They cannot both be Guy Fawkes; if they were, Guy Fawkes would be in two places, which is absurd... Hence we could not say that they were both identical with Guy Fawkes."³⁰

One critical response to Williams's reduplication argument is known as the "best candidate" or "closest continuer" theory of personal identity.³¹ According to this view, "P2 at t2 is the same person as P1 at t1 just in case P2 at t2 is (sufficiently) psychologically continuous with P1 at t1 and there is no other continuer of P1 existing at t2 who is psychologically continuous with P1 to an equal or greater degree."³² When applied to the case of rebirth, the candidate who possesses more actual or latent memories of their previous life is the "closest continuer" of the deceased. This is obviously not the same thing as absolute identity since the best candidate is simply the "closest," not identical, continuer. But this is not logically pernicious because the closest continuer at least establishes some psychological continuity. Intelligibility is thus retained.

But what if the individual fails to remember any past lives and no one is able to detect the presence of latent memories? How could any sense of personal, psychological continuity be affirmed in such a case? Two responses are possible. First, Radhakrishnan claims that memories from previous lives are in fact present in the psychological traits and abilities of presently existing individuals. Just as one might have forgotten the circumstances surrounding their learning of a particular motor skill (e.g., riding a bicycle) but still retain that ability, so specific psychological characteristics are manifest even though their origin in previous lives is not actually remembered. Second, the fact that such memories are in abeyance and cannot be detected proves inconsequential as

long as at some point in the future the individual will remember his or her previous incarnations, as some do after realizing spiritual liberation.

All this presupposes, of course, the logical possibility of someone remembering doing or experiencing something that someone else, or deceased, did or experienced. Derek Parfit calls such memory "q-memory," which he originally defined as follows:

I am q-remembering an experience if
 (1) I have a belief about a past
 experience which seems in itself
 like a memory belief, (2) someone
 have such an experience, and (3)
 my belief is dependent upon this
 experience in the same way (whatever
 that is) in which a memory of an
 experience is dependent upon it.³³

The burning question now is whether the idea of q-memory is intelligible or not?

Some thinkers, such as Richard Wollheim, side with the negative. In his book *The Thread of Life*, Wollheim argues that the nature of q-memory rests on the belief that a memory disposition could originate in one person and be transferred to another, an idea he finds riddled with weaknesses. The first is that "there is nothing in what we already know about mental dispositions that could encourage us to think that mental dispositions could shift from one person to another and remain intact."³⁴ But a classic fission example in personal identity theory undermines this claim. Consider the case of one person's brain being divided and each half transplanted into two separate, though physically similar, bodies. The resulting persons would then possess all the psychological traits, including the apparent memories, of the donor. In such a situation, one could not

say that the resulting persons are absolutely identical to the donor because they are not absolutely identical to each other and identity is a transitive relationship.³⁵ But if this is true, then the resulting persons' apparent memories of the donor's life are really q-memories rather than real ones. Hence, the fission example, which is intelligible, demonstrates the logical coherency of the notion of q-memory.

Wollheim goes on to argue that it is impossible for one person to incorporate memories from another person's mind into their own psyche. This is because the full psychological context of one's experiences would have to accompany the q-memories. For example, Wollheim asserts "that if he were to remember his father's childhood walks, he would have to have a native speaker's knowledge of German, a sense of the aspirations of a late nineteenth-century Central European schoolboy, a familiarity, which did not depend upon something he had been told, with the details of his father's family, with the books he would have read, with the thoughts he would be inclined to have when he looked up into the sky... and so on."³⁶ A case of apparent reincarnation, as in the Stevenson examples described in Chapter VII, would present similar problems. This difficulty, however, is effectively dealt with by Raymond Martin in the following quote:

But the remembrance of some event is not so firmly entrenched in the original psychological context. The literature on retrograde amnesia is full of descriptions of people who completely lose their memories of some period of their lives, sometimes a very long period, and then gradually recover their memories in bits and pieces. The initial memories recovered arrive

substantially devoid of the psychological context which was present when the event was originally experienced. So if this can happen, as it can, in the case of actual memory, why assume that it is impossible in the case of q-memory?

Even the language problems that Wollheim mentions are not serious. Many years ago I used to have an elementary speaking knowledge of Spanish. I have since forgotten Spanish. But I can remember having long conversations in Spanish with the cook who prepared my food. Would Wollheim say that since I have forgotten Spanish I cannot now remember talking in Spanish with the cook?

Or consider the literature on multiple personality. It is full of descriptions of cases in which memories from a seemingly foreign psychology are successfully integrated into a different psychology, just the sort of thing that Wollheim suggests is impossible.³⁷

The upshot of all this is that the idea of q-memory, which is a way of remembering past lives, can be interpreted as a logically meaningful concept. Even though it does not establish strict identity across different incarnations, it undoubtedly circumstantiates a sense of personal, psychological continuity by means of latent (dispositional) memories.

In sum, Radhakrishnan's idea of the subtle body as a matrix of mental dispositions (e.g., memory, character) establishes a form of personal, psychological continuity that can be discerned amongst the welter of different rebirths. The idea thus escapes specific problems arising from the notion of personal identity, and in so doing secures its own logical coherence.

It is important to note, however, that once *mokṣa* is fully realized, and the remaining karma finally exhaust themselves, then the physical and subtle (including causal) bodies are transcended. In such a pure, non-dualistic state there would be no differentiation and thus no personal identity. In being non-different from *Brahman*, the one and only Ultimate Reality, *Ātman* is also one. This means there are no distinct or multiple *Ātmans*. But if this is the case, is not the issue of personal identity completely irrelevant? I believe not. The reason for this is connected to Radhakrishnan's distinction between relative and absolute reality. From the absolute perspective of *Brahman/Ātman*, the question of personal identity makes no sense since there is only one Ultimate Reality, *Brahman/Ātman*. But from the relative perspective of *maya* or *avidyā* personal identity is obviously necessary, for it is the individual who is in bondage and who is seeking deliverance. According to Radhakrishnan, *karmic* rebirth is essential to the process of spiritual emancipation. But it can only work if there is a form of personal continuity; for someone must be accumulating the experience of living many lives and benefiting from the good deeds performed. In other words, there must be something continually existing and improving to the point where it is finally in the position to realize *mokṣa*. The question of personal identity or continuity, therefore, remains important and relevant from the perspective of finite existence. The two levels of being, the relative and the absolute, must be kept distinct when analysing problems of personal identity, *karmic* rebirth, and *mokṣa*.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the thesis has been to meticulously and accurately present Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) in an effort to show how it conforms to, or is an example of, a perfectionist theory of the highest good (*summum bonum*). This task was accomplished by dividing the thesis into two descriptive sections, the first dealing with liberation as a release from certain kinds of limitations, and the second describing liberation as a realization of pure consciousness, pure bliss, and pure being. A second aim has been to critically analyse Radhakrishnan's notion of *karmic* rebirth, which is essential to the liberation process, from both an empirical and logical standpoint. This was achieved in the third section of the thesis.

The first section described in minute detail Radhakrishnan's ideal of *mokṣa* as consisting of a release from metaphysical (finitude or *māyā*), epistemological (ignorance or *avidyā*), and affective (suffering or *duḥkha*) limitations. Metaphysically speaking, we are all constrained by finitude (*māyā*), that is, by the finite world of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*saṃsāra*), and causality (*karma*). Epistemologically, our trouble is ignorance (*avidyā*) which is defined as both a lack of knowledge of *Brahman/Ātman's* non-difference and a mistaken knowledge about our true self being the empirical ego (*jīva*) instead of the eternal soul (*Ātman*). This delusion leads to the affective limitation of suffering (*duḥkha*) which is the psycho-physical experience of radical unsatisfactoriness in the forms of deep insecurity, overwhelming anxiety, and inner discord. In Indian soteriological fashion, Radhakrishnan traces our imperfect, limited condition to ignorance (*avidyā*) which produces selfish desire (*kāma*), active attachments (*karma*), and successive rebirths (*saṃsāra*). To be spiritually liberated on this

view means to be released from this limiting cycle fueled, in modern language, by fundamental narcissism.

The second section explained Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation as (self)-realization. This was first put in the context of describing the *jīvanmukti* ideal or the state of the living, liberated individual. The first characteristic of such a being explored was the realization of pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), defined as a consciousness free of the concealing and distorting functions of ignorance or dualistic awareness. Such a state is realizable, first in a preliminary sense by means of *karma-yoga* (the path of moral actions) and *bhakti-yoga* (the path of love and devotion), and then in an ultimate sense by means of *jñāna-yoga* (the path of spiritual knowledge). It was further shown that from a religious perspective God's merciful grace was also required for realizing *mokṣa*.

The thesis then examined a second characteristic of the *jīvanmukta*, namely, the realization of pure bliss as expressed in the qualities of inner peace and outward love. On this scheme, the *jīvanmukta* is an example of a being who embodies spiritual perfection ("saintliness"), an ideal upheld in many religious traditions.

Next, the thesis noted that for Radhakrishnan the ultimate goal of the cosmic process is not simply the actualization of the *jīvanmukti* ideal, but the full realization of the *sarvamukti* ideal or universal liberation. The fulfillment of the *jīvanmukti* ideal is seen as a necessary, preliminary step towards collective emancipation in that each spiritually free individual works for the liberation of all human beings. According to Radhakrishnan, *sarvamukti* will take the form of a

community of liberated beings (the *Brahmāloka* or Kingdom of God) which represents the furthest manifestation of one of *Brahman's* infinite possibilities. The pattern is one of the involution of *Brahman*, through its active side *Isvara*, into the finite world and the evolution of the empirical self (*jīva*) towards the realization of *Brahman's* pure being (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*). Thus Radhakrishnan's theory of the highest good is freedom as self-realization where there is a direct apprehension of our true self as being the eternal *Ātman* instead of the changing *jīva*, and how *Ātman* is identical to the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*. In short, liberation lies in realizing our essentially divine nature.

Lastly, the third section of the thesis critically analysed Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation by focusing on the idea of *karmic* rebirth. Without the phenomenon of rebirth, the varied opportunities for altering our lives and character would be lost and with it the possibility of realizing *mokṣa*. The thesis argued that the rebirth phenomenon has not been empirically verified at this point because of certain problems with the supposed evidence of observed patterns in nature (i.e., continual renewal) and unique facts about particular human beings (i.e., past-life recall, special skills and talents, falling in love, human inequalities). This does not mean, however, that the ideal of *mokṣa* is utterly useless because it can be detached from its dubious metaphysical context ("demythologized") and shown to assist people in their psychological and moral development. In addition, the concept of rebirth itself was shown not to be logically absurd because it does establish, through the idea of a subtle body as a matrix of mental dispositions, a sense of personal, psychological continuity across different incarnations.

There is still one question I wish to raise and briefly address in the remainder of this thesis: Is spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) truly the highest good (*summum bonum*), ultimate value, or supreme ideal of human life? Radhakrishnan is definitely committed to a monistic view of intrinsic value, believing there is a single good, a *summum bonum*, irreducible to other goods, this supreme good being spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). As mentioned in the Introduction, this is a form of perfectionism which states "there is an ideal form for human life to take, a form in which human nature flourishes and reaches perfection."¹ We saw that for Radhakrishnan this ideal form consists of self-realization, or more specifically, the wholesale recognition that the true self is the eternal *Ātman* which is non-different from the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*. Perfection as self(*Ātman*)-realization is thus the only intrinsic value and highest good.

But what about the other contender for intrinsic value mentioned in the Introduction, namely, welfarism? Recall that welfarism is the view that happiness, no matter how defined, is (or should be) the principal goal of human life. It, and it alone, is the highest good. Does this mean welfare (happiness) should take precedence over perfection in the general scheme of values?

In a sense, Radhakrishnan's theory escapes this problem because to some extent it incorporates a conception of happiness into its perfectionism. An important part of realizing *mokṣa* is knowing the self (*Ātman*) to be pure being, pure consciousness and *pure bliss*. Now pure bliss, as described in Chapter V, is expressed in the *jīvanmukta's* qualities of inner peace and outward love. Interestingly, the notion of inner peace or serenity of mind was the definition of happiness given in Epicurean philosophy. Unlike the Cyrenaics, who equated

happiness with the sum of immediate, intense pleasures, the Epicureans characterized happiness in terms of mental tranquility. The aim, they insisted, should not be to maximize bodily pleasures but to maintain a long-term balance of mental delights over pain. The result would be a life marked by scrupulous moderation leading to peace of mind. If this is what is meant by welfare, then Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation as self-realization definitely includes it. Perfectionism, however, remains paramount because the tranquility of mind realized in the *jīvanmukti* state reflects the nature of the essential self (*Ātman*) and is not the product of egoistic preferences which characterize most modern welfarist views (e.g., utilitarianism) of happiness.

Now some moral theorists, like L. W. Sumner, have argued for the superiority of welfarism over perfectionism, claiming happiness, not perfection, to be the only intrinsic value.² This is an exceedingly important point that weighs heavily on Radhakrishnan's account of spiritual liberation. For if any perfectionist value like *mokṣa* turns out to be really extrinsic and nonfoundational, then it is obviously not the value one should ultimately pursue in life. In such a situation, the whole Indian theory of *puruṣārtha* (the ends of life), where *mokṣa* is seen to be superior to the other three values of pleasure (*kāma*), wealth (*arthā*), and duty (*dharma*), becomes seriously undermined.

Sumner suggests an intrinsic value is one which is pursued for its sake alone and not simply for the sake of some other value it helps to bring about. On this score, a perfectionist value is not intrinsic because, first, "it is *not always* worth promoting in its own right" and second, "it is *never* worth promoting in its own right."³ According to Sumner, a perfectionist value is not always worth promoting in its own right for the reason that "it applies to just about everything."⁴

This conclusion follows from the nature of perfectionist values themselves. Perfectionism judges something to be intrinsically good if it exhibits the excellent characteristics of its nature. In other words, each thing belongs to a particular kind which embodies certain standards of excellence; and if a thing belonging to a kind fully exhibits this standard, then it is deemed to possess intrinsic value. As Sumner explains it:

To say something has perfectionist value is to say that it is a good instance or species of its kind, or that it exemplifies the excellences characteristic of its nature. Perfectionist evaluation assesses life by means of standards derived from the species, or other natural kind, to which the subject of that life belongs. The traits or abilities selected by those standards will count as personal excellences for each member of the species, regardless of their contribution to the well-being of their bearer.⁵

Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation is a perfectionist value because it involves realizing our essential nature (*Brahman/Ātman*) which is pure being, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. The problem is that any object, animate or inanimate, can have intrinsic value if it perfectly expresses the standards of its kind. Consequently, a countless number of things can be pursued for their sake alone. But according to Sumner this is preposterous. There are numerous things not worth promoting in their own right. Take machines for instance. The reason why we want to build better, more perfect machines (e.g., computers) is not because they harbour intrinsic value, and so will add to the sum total of perfection in the world, but because of other purposes we have in mind. Expressed differently, machines only have extrinsic value for

they are instrumental in fulfilling other goals we think our more important (e.g., efficient production leading to increase consumer goods which promotes a greater happiness for a greater number of people). In sum, the problem with perfectionism as an intrinsic, fundamental value is that it is too broad in scope.⁶

In response, one can argue (as Thomas Hurka has) that only the perfection of living things matter.⁷ One could go even further and restrict the scope of perfection to human beings only. This is initially implied in Radhakrishnan's theory where spiritual liberation, at least as found in the *jīvanmukti* ideal, is experienced by individual persons, not by inanimate objects or other living organisms. This is also true for the ultimate ideal of *sarvamukti* when it is interpreted simply as a community of *jīvanmuktas*. The case is not so clear when *sarvamukti* is conceived of as a transfiguration of the world where everything eventually gets taken up (integrated) into *Brahman*.

The Absolute therefore is the whole,
the only individual and the sum of
perfection. The differences are
reconciled in it and not obliterated.
The dead mechanism of stones, the
unconscious life of plants, the
conscious life of animals and the
self-conscious life of men are all
parts of the Absolute and its
expression at different stages...
The Absolute thus is an organized
whole with interrelated parts.⁸

On this view it seems everything gets redeemed since everything is part of *Brahman* which represents "the sum of perfection." Radhakrishnan further claims in "the world process all things yearn towards their ideal forms. They struggle to throw off their imperfections and reflect the patterns in the divine mind."⁹ Does

this mean Sumner's claim about perfection applying to "just about everything" holds true for Radhakrishnan's theory?

I think not. What must be reiterated is that ultimately speaking there is only one reality, *Brahman*. This means there is only one "kind" to which everything belongs and one standard of excellence consisting of pure being, pure consciousness, pure bliss. Further, it must be emphasized that for Radhakrishnan it is through a transformed human consciousness that *Brahman* most expresses one of its infinite possibilities.

At the spiritual level, the individual becomes aware of the substance of spirit, not as an object of intellectual cognition but as an awareness in which the subject becomes its own object, in which the timeless and spaceless is aware of itself as the basis and reality of all experience.¹⁰

So the attainment of non-dualistic awareness in human beings best reflects the pure consciousness and bliss of the Absolute in the empirical realm. Indeed, the "awakened man draws back from his mind, life and body, and all else that is not true being and knows himself to be one with the eternal spirit..."¹¹ Hence, it is human beings, who by realizing the ideals of *jīvanmukti* and *sarvamukti*, bring the cosmic process to an end where everything then lapses back into the pure, perfect being of *Brahman*. In this way, it can be maintained that only human beings are actual bearers of the perfectionist value of *mokṣa*, thus deflating Sumner's argument about the category of the highest good in perfectionism applying to everything.

Sumner's second criticism against perfectionism is that "there is never any ethical point to promoting perfection for its own sake."¹² The basic problem is perfectionist values threaten individual autonomy. By imposing a standard of excellence derived from the species onto an individual, perfectionism by-passes the agents own interests and concerns. The individual then ends up playing no decisive role in determining what is good for him or her. In Sumner's words:

...the perfected value of your life is in no way determined by your interests and concerns. Perfectionist evolution imposes on an individual standards derived from the species as a whole; it enforces the hegemony of the natural kind. But then by preferring your perfection to your welfare involves completely overriding any say you might have in the matter. However you may feel about it, whatever the impact on your aims or aspirations, you will be compelled to live up to an ideal reflecting the standpoint of the species. (Imagine raising a child this way). To put it mildly, this accords little recognition or respect to your individuality, or to your say over the management of your life.¹³

This criticism sounds very similar to the standard liberal response to collectivist ideologies (e.g., Marxism) where any way of thinking that offers a vision of the human good based on supposed knowledge of the nature of the world and the essence of human beings invariably winds up promoting totalitarian practices. The trouble with any perfectionist theory, including Radhakrishnan's, is its arrogant dismissal of individual preferences in favour of an objective standard

(e.g., essence) of the good. Perfectionism, in brief, leaves little room for personal desires and concerns.

The above criticism leads Sumner to champion welfarism over perfectionism as the prime candidate for the *summum bonum*. The strength of welfarism is that, unlike perfectionism, it takes into account the preferences and goals of agents.¹⁴ From the perspective of welfarism, the highest good is what is good for the individual subject, which more often than not turns out to be the subject's own happiness or well-being. In this way, welfarism respects individual autonomy and individuality. The reason why welfare is something to be pursued for its own sake, and thus is the sole intrinsic value, is because it relates to the agents own desires. It contributes to making people's lives better prudentially.¹⁵ Any kind of perfectionist value, including spiritual liberation, would only be worth pursuing if it proved instrumental in helping one secure the greater goal of individual happiness. Hence, a perfectionist value like *mokṣa* simply has extrinsic status and should never be promoted for its own sake.

This is a powerful argument, but is it convincing? Its persuasiveness begins to erode when one takes a closer look at welfarism's reliance on subjectivity. On the welfare scenario, an individual's happiness is evaluated from his or her own standpoint, without input from an objective standard. The problem is how is one to trust that judgements concerning their own well-being are accurate or not? How can one know with any degree of certainty that their own interests are being truly served? Sumner himself recognizes the dilemma:

The great strength of welfare
as a candidate for the fundamental
good for ethics is its subjectivity.

This may also be its great weakness. A person's well-being is ultimately assessed from her own point of view: it is constituted by the way she feels about her life. But points of view are not handed down from a Platonic heaven; they are socially constructed and therefore, profoundly affected by the external circumstances of one's life. The way I feel about the conditions of my life — how satisfying I find them — will depend in part on my expectations for myself and my sense of my own worth. It is notoriously possible for people to be so demoralized — by poverty, domination, manipulation, brainwashing, socialization, and so on — that they internalize their oppression in their self-assessments. Other factors can also cloud perception or judgment: mood or emotion, for example, or mind-altering drugs. A conception of welfare which identifies it with happiness must take care, lest it be committed to advancing as paragons the blissed out druggies of *Brave New World*.¹⁶

From the standpoint of welfarism, the only possible remedy to the possibility of self-deception is the cultivation of informed judgement and rationality. This can take one so far but ultimately falls short of complete success. The reason is obvious from Radhakrishnan's perspective: rationality is still subject to the concealing and distorting functions of ignorance (*avidyā*). Informed, sober judgement about one's well-being remains circumscribed by dualistic, egoistic consciousness. Cultivating one's rationality can certainly aid in controlling some obsessive passions and is an important part of moral discipline (*karma-yoga*). But this proves insufficient in eradicating the concealing and distorting functions of ignorance where the empirical self (*jīva*) is mistaken for the real self (*Ātman*). In such circumstances, an individual has difficulty in

distinguishing authentic needs from artificial ones. Only deep spiritual insight (*jñāna*), deriving from a true, divine nature (*Brahman/Ātman*), can guarantee our genuine well-being. Therefore, the happiness advocated by welfarism ends up being incidental to the truly intrinsic (and perfectionist) value of spiritual liberation. As Aristotle observed long ago, happiness is simply a by-product of the pursuit of excellent activity.

In conclusion, it is Radhakrishnan's belief that spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*), which he describes as a release from finitude (*māyā*), ignorance (*avidyā*), and suffering (*duḥkha*) towards a (self)-realization of pure being (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit-Ātman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*), stands as the supreme value and ultimate goal of human existence. For him, it is the highest good (*summum bonum*) imaginable, the ideal that above all else gives meaning to our imperfect condition and makes our lives profoundly worthwhile. This is a good that he thinks is realizable, first on the individual level in the form of *jīvanmukti*, and finally on the collective level in the form of *sarvamukti*. The *jīvanmukti* ideal is that of the completely transformed individual who embodies and expresses inner peace and outward love. But ultimately, Radhakrishnan insists that all human beings can realize *mokṣa*, an experience that would lead to the establishment of the *brahmāloka* or the Kingdom of Spirit. This would represent the end point of the cosmic process before it lapses back into the absolute pure being of the *Nirguṇa Brahman*. Thus Radhakrishnan's soteriology, like most others, embraces a "cosmic optimism" since it proclaims a limitlessly better life for all based on the existence of some Ultimate Reality (e.g. *Brahman/Ātman*). This cosmic optimism, or better yet, gospel ("good news"), is no better expressed than by Radhakrishnan himself when he exclaims, "The immanent

purposiveness of the world is not inconsistent with the presence of evil, ugliness, and error" for "Spirit is the reality of the cosmic process."¹⁷

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is regarded as one of India's greatest philosophers of the twentieth century. He had a remarkably esteemed life, filled with a multitude of academic and political achievements.

Radhakrishnan was born on September 5, 1888 in the town of Tirutani, forty miles northwest of Madras in southeast India. His parents were poor *Telugu Smarta Brahmins*, devout *Vaishnavaites* who worshipped the popular god Krishna. His early life was spent in Tirutani and nearby Tirupati, both famous as places of pilgrimage. While living in these towns Radhakrishnan attended Christian missionary schools run by German Lutherans. In 1903, at the age of sixteen, he married a distant cousin, Siva Kumaramamma, aged ten. The marriage was arranged by his parents. They later had five daughters and one son. Radhakrishnan entered Madras Christian College in 1904 and there received both his B.A. (1907) and M.A. (1909) degrees in philosophy. (His first introduction to philosophy was a logic course taught by V.P. Adiseshiah). In 1909 Radhakrishnan landed his first teaching job as a lecturer in Philosophy at Madras Presidency College, and in 1918 he was selected Professor of Philosophy at the new University of Mysore. In 1921, he was appointed to the most important chair of philosophy in India, the King George V Chair Of Mental and Moral Sciences at the University of Calcutta. Radhakrishnan was invited in 1926 to give the Upton Lectures on the Hindu view of life at Manchester College, Oxford University. During this period he also founded, in collaboration with other philosophers, the Indian Philosophical Congress. He delivered in 1929 the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford on *An Idealist View of Life*. In 1931, he was knighted by King George V and was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University. From 1931 to 1939 Radhakrishnan was a member of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, deputed by Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India. In 1936, Radhakrishnan became Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford University, a position he held uninterruptedly until 1952, irrespective of his other appointments. From 1939 to 1948, Radhakrishnan was Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University, and in 1940 was elected Fellow of the British Academy and later a Fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford University. When the government of independent India established a University Education Commission in 1948, Radhakrishnan was chosen its chairman. Finally in 1975, Radhakrishnan became the first non-Christian recipient of the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

His political career proved equally fulfilling and no less spectacular. In 1946, Radhakrishnan became a Member of the Constituent Assembly in India. Between 1946 and 1951 he was leader of India's delegation to UNESCO and in 1948 was elected Chairman of the UNESCO board. From 1949 to 1952 Radhakrishnan was India's first Ambassador to the Soviet Union. In 1955, he received France's *Pour la Merit*, was appointed in 1963 to the British Order of Merit, and given the Golden Spur, the Vatican's highest award, in 1964. Between 1952 and 1962, Radhakrishnan was India's Vice-President. And finally, in 1962 Radhakrishnan became President of India, a post he held until 1967.

Radhakrishnan published more than 160 articles, speeches, and books. (See R. Minor, *Radhakrishnan: A Religious Biography*, {Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987} for a complete list of Radhakrishnan's publications,

pp.165-176.) He suffered a cerebral stroke in 1968 and another in 1974. Radhakrishnan died in a nursing home on April 17, 1975 in Madras. He was cremated the same day at a state funeral at the Mylapore cremation grounds.

With his first publication *The Ethics of the Vedānta and Its Metaphysical Presuppositions*, Radhakrishnan began a life-long defence and reaffirmation of the *Vedānta* tradition of Hindu philosophy. For this reason he is often included in the neo-*Vedāntic* movement along with Vivekananda, Tagore, Aurobindo, and Gandhi. But perhaps Radhakrishnan will best be remembered as a man who both in thought and in deed tried to bridge the huge chasm between East and West.

2. In his *Radhakrishnan and the Ways of Oneness of East and West* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989), Troy Wilson Organ describes some of these criticisms of Radhakrishnan's writings. See pp. 11-20.

3. S. Radhakrishnan., *An Idealist View of Life*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1988), p. 9.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

5. J. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, fourth edition, (Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1990), p. 3.

6. The *Vedānta* is one of the six historically important schools of Hindu philosophy. The other five are the *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, and *Mīmāṃsā*. These are all regarded as orthodox (*āstika*) systems since they accept the authority of the *Vedas*, the ancient sacred texts of India. There are also three heterodox (*nāstika*) schools who reject the authority of the *Vedas*, these being the *Cārvāka*, Jainism, and Buddhism. The *Vedānta*, though divided into a dozen or more sub-schools, has been one of the most popular systems of Hindu thought. The term itself means "the end of the *Vedas*," signifying that it contains the essence of the *Vedic* teachings.

7. For example, in his *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, Radhakrishnan asserts: "The Upanisads did not draw any hard and fast line of distinction between the simple one of intuition supported by Samkara and the concrete whole of Ramanuja. If we separate the two, it will become impossible for us to admit any distinction or value in the world of concrete existence. The Upanisads imply that the Isvara is practically one with Brahman." P. 168.

8. For instance, Radhakrishnan is repeatedly insisting that Śāṅkara, in Rāmānuja-type fashion, should not be interpreted as thinking the world is an illusion: "Samkara, who is rightly credited with the systematic formulation of the doctrine of *māyā*, tells us that the highest reality is unchangeable, and therefore that changing existence such as human history has not ultimate reality (*paramarthika satta*). He warns us, however, against the temptation to regard what is not completely real as utterly illusion. The world has empirical being

(*vyavaharika satta*) which is quite different from illusory existence (*pratibhasika satta*).⁹ (*Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, second edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 86).

9. See his "Reply to Critics," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, P. A. Schilpp, ed., (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1952), p. 796. His attempt to bring together different trends of thought, East and West, also results from his belief that philosophy consists of an attitude of synthesis, an organic unity.

10. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, second edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 80.

11. In his useful book *Christian and Hindu Terminology*, (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974), Bror Tiliander traces the meaning of *moksa*. He says, "*Mokṣa* and its twin word *Mukti* is based on the verb root *Muc: deliver*. *Mokṣa* is derived from desid. form *mokṣate: to long for deliverance*. The word *Mukti* belongs to the Indo-European stock. Lithuanian *Mukti* and Lettish *Mukt* in the sense of 'escape' reveal the kinship. Probably the original meaning of *muc* is 'slide away', in its caus. form: 'to let go'. It often means 'to slack reins' or 'to loose fetters'. Pp. 164-65.

12. S. Radhakrishnan, trans., "*Bṛhad-aranyaka Upanisad*," I.3.28 in *The Principal Upanisads*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 162.

13. P. Deussen, *The System of the Vedanta*, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1912), p. 253.

14. This seems contrary to Troy Wilson Organ's view as expressed in *Hinduism: Its Historical Development*, (Woodbury, New York: Baron's Educational Series, Inc., 1974), pp. 28-34. In short, Organ argues that the Hindu ideal is one of "perfecting" rather than actual "perfection." Though Radhakrishnan would not disagree with the perfecting aspects of Hindu thought and practice, he would nevertheless maintain the possibility of realizing a perfected state of being. "*Mokṣa*," he declares, "is self-emancipation, the fulfillment of the spirit in us in the heart of the eternal." *The Hindu View of Life*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980), p. 58.

15. See L. W. Sumner, "Two Theories of the Good," in E. Paul, F. Miller, and F. Paul, eds., *The Good Life and the Human Good*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1-14.

16. Bradley for instance conceives of this essential self as social in nature as does Marx.

17. See S. Kagan, "The Limits of Well-Being," in *The Good Life and the Human Good*, pp. 169-70.

18. The contemporary form of the debate can be observed in *The Good life and the Human Good*.

19. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hindusthan*, (Madras: G.A. Natesan & Company, 1936), p. 23.

NOTES

CHAPTER I: RELEASE FROM FINITUDE (MAYA)

1. This view is challenged by Arabinda Basu in "Historical Perspectives of Liberation in Hinduism," *Journal of Dharma*, Vol.II, No. 1, (January 1972), pp. 83-4. Many scholars, however, would agree with B. Tiliander who claims "Mokṣa and Mukti are not found in the *Veda* but appear in the *Upanisads* and are from the beginning connected with samsara. *Christian and Hindu Terminology*, p. 165.

2. See A. M. Esnoul, "Mokṣa," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, M. Eliade, editor in chief, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 28.

3. For an introductory account of some of these schools see P. Nagaraja's, *The Schools of Vedānta*, (Bombay: Bhavstiya Vidya Bhevan, 1963).

4. The meaning of these terms will be explained a little later in the chapter.

5. Refer to the relevant quote on page 43 of this chapter.

6 S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, Centenary Edition, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 720.

7. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," in *The Philosophy of Ārvapalli Radhakrishnan*, P. A. Schilpp, ed., (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1952), p. 820. Unfortunately, Radhakrishnan never really spells out in detail how he has deviated from Śaṅkara's philosophy.

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahman Sūtra*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 210.

9. In his "Introduction" to the *The Principal Upanisads*, Radhakrishnan writes: "To say that the nature of Brahman cannot be defined does not mean that it has no essential nature of its own. We cannot define it by its accidental features, for they do not belong to its essence. There is nothing outside it. As no enquiry into its nature can be instituted without some description, its *svarupa* or essential nature is said to be *sat* or being, *cit* or consciousness, and *ananda* or bliss. These are different phrases for the same being. Self-being, self consciousness, and self delight are one. It is absolute being in which there is no nothing. It is absolute consciousness in which there is no non-consciousness. It is absolute bliss in which there is no suffering or negation of bliss." P. 69.

10. It is also the arena for our liberation in the form of *karmic* rebirth. As Radhakrishnan puts it: "The long series of births and rebirths though in one sense a chain of bondage, is in another sense a means to self-knowledge." (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 100.)

11. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedānta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," *The International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, (April 1914), p. 433.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 432.

13. *Ibid.*

14. In his later writings (e.g., *An Idealist View of Life*, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*) Radhakrishnan reinterprets Saṅkara's conception of *māyā* and insists he never held the illusional view.

15. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedānta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," p. 440.

16. For instance, see *The Ethics of the Vedānta and Its Metaphysical Presuppositions*, (Madras: Guardian Press, 1908).

17. A. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 165.

18. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 76.

19. See M. Hunnex's "Mysticism and Ethics: Radhakrishnan and Schweitzer," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. III, No. 3-4, (Oct. 1958 - Jan. 1959), pp. 121-136, for a view of the strengths and weaknesses of Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Schweitzer's criticisms.

20. S. Radhakrishnan. "Reply to Critics," p. 800.

21. S. J. Samartha, *Introduction to Radhakrishnan: The Man and his Thought*, (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 58.

22. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 86.

23. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 800.

24. *Ibid.*

25. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search For Truth," in R. McDermott, ed., *Radhakrishnan: Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion, and Culture*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 42.

26. In his "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra* Radhakrishnan emphasizes this point when he writes: "Though the world has not absolute reality, it is not to be compared with illusory appearances." P. 140.

27. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 801.

28. S. Radhakrishnan, "Introductory Essay," in *The Bhagavadgītā*, trans., S. Radhakrishnan, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), p. 38.

29. For example, he says, "In the Upanisads, a fourfold distinction of the Supreme Being is set forth. (1) Brahman, the Absolute Being (2) Isvara, unconditioned free activity (3) Hiranya-garbha, Praja-pati, Brahma, the World-Spirit in its subtle form and (4) Viraj, the World-Spirit in its gross form." ("The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need: Fragments of a Confession," in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 41. Hereafter simply referred to as "Fragments of a Confession"). By "poises," Radhakrishnan means the sides or aspects of the Supreme Reality that are held in perfect equilibrium or a steady, balanced position.

30. This perhaps bears some resemblance to Aquinas's *via negativa*, especially when Radhakrishnan notes: "When we refer to the Supreme as Brahman, as Transcendent Reality, we employ the negative method." (*The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 121).

31. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 80.

32. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 39.

33. It should be noted that the *māyā* to be released from refers more to the second sense of the term, particularly in its expression as the process of *karmic* rebirth.

34. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, (London: MacMillan & Company, 1920), p. 444.

35. In explaining this Radhakrishnan says: "The world is traced to the development of *prakṛti* which is also called *māya* in the Advaita Vedānta, but this *prakṛti* or *māya* is not independent of spirit. It is dependent on Brahman. Brahman with *prakṛti* or *māya* is *sa-guṇa* Brahman or Isvara comprehending the diversity of souls and objects. Isvara as the lord of all existences is immanent in the cosmic process." ("Vedānta — The Advaita School," in *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Volume 1, S. Radhakrishnan, A. R. Wadia, D. M. Datta, H. Kabir, eds., {London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967}, p. 276).

36. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 32.

37. *Ibid.*

38. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 132.

39. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 39.

40. In this way the *Hiraṇyagarbha* represents the mind of God in action.

41. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 171.

42. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 40.

43. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 171.

44. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 265.

45. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 171.

46. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 42.

47. B. Bruteau, *Worthy is the World: The Hindu Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), p. 256.

48. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 82.

49. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 40.

50. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 141.

51. L. S. Rouser, "Creationism and Emanationism: A Problem in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, Vo. XXIV, No. 2 (April 1974), p. 227.

52. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 82.

53. In his "Fragments of a Confession," Radhakrishnan says, "I feel that these disclose great depths in the Supreme Being and only logically can we distinguish them. They are all united in the Supreme." P. 41.

54. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 273. A similar view is also evident in the same book on p. 37 and p. 84.

55. The seven other texts where the epistemological perspective can be found are: *The Bhagavadgita*, pp. 23-28; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 28-30, 92; "My Search For Truth," p. 54; *Religion and a Changing World*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), pp. 121-22; "Indian Approach to the Religious Problem," in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, C. A. Moore, ed., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), p. 180; "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," *The Monist*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, (April 1916), p. 226; and "The Spirit in Man," in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead, eds., (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 498, 501.

56. The four poise theory can be found in the following texts: *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 172; "Fragments of a Confession," p. 41; "Reply to Critics," pp. 796-97; *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 39-40, 61-65, 71-72; *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 135, 143, 207; and *Recovery of Faith*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968; Orig. publ. by Harper and Brothers, 1955), pp. 89-90.

57. See C. Webb, "Theism and Absolutism in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, pp. 385-90; M. N. Roy, "Radhakrishnan in the Perspective of Indian Philosophy," *Ibid.*, pp. 543-64; and R. Puligandla, *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 269-70.

58. See H. Kabir, "Radhakrishnan's Political Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, pp. 689-708; E. S. Brightman, "Radhakrishnan and Mysticism," *Ibid.*, pp. 393-415; S. P. Singh, *Revival of Upanisadic Thought in Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, (Patna: Delhi Pustek Sadan, 1974), pp. 210-15; E. L. Hinman, "Modern Idealism and the Logos Teaching," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 178, (July 1921), pp. 345-51; and Hinman's review of Radhakrishnan's book *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* in *The Philosophical Review*, Vo. XXIX, No. 61, (1920), pp. 582-86.

59. See G. P. Conger, "Radhakrishnan's World," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, pp. 85-111; C. A. Moore, "Metaphysics and Ethics in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy," *Ibid.*, pp. 281-312; and V. S. Narvane, *Modern Indian Thought*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967), p.247.

60. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 10.

61. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.720.

62. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, (London: Macmillan & Company, 1918), p. 117.

63. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search For Truth," p. 54.

64. This could be a result of Radhakrishnan's adherence to the dialectical logic of Jainism and Hegelianism over Aristotelian either-or logic.

65. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 796.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 797.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, p. 801.

69. D. Braue, *Maya In Radhakrishnan's Thought*, (Columbia, Missouri: South Asia Books, 1985), p. 66.

70. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 41.

71. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 139.

72. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 72.

73. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 41.

74. S. Radhakrishnan. "Reply to Critics," p. 797.

75. See the "Rg Veda," 10.90 in S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 35-7.

76. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 32.

77. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 87.

78. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 28.

79. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 187.

80. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 196.

81. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 127.

82. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 216.

83. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 131.

84. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 47.

85. In the *The Bhagavadgītā* Radhakrishnan notes: "While there is one reality that is ultimately perfect, everything that is concrete and actual is not equally perfect." p. 28.

86. For instance, *The Sankhya-Karikas* of Isvarakrsna.

87. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p.108.

88. See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 55.

89. In his *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, Radhakrishnan says the "respective functions of sattva, rajas and tamas are manifestation (prakasa), activity (pravrtti), and restraint (niyamana), producing pleasure, pain and sloth." P. 263. Also see *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, pp. 502-3.

90. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 55-56.

91. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 503.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Ibid.*
94. There are of course some differences in their conception of rebirth. Buddhism, for example, rejects the idea of a reincarnating soul while Sikhism affirms it.
95. "Just as a leech (or caterpillar) when it has come to the end of a blade of grass, after having made another approach (to another blade) draws itself towards it, so does this self, after having thrown away this body, and dispelled ignorance, after having another approach (to another body) draw itself together (for making the transition to another body)." "Brhad-aranyaka Upanisad," IV. 4.4.3, in S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 227.
96. More will be said about the idea of the subtle body later in the chapter and in Chapters II and VIII.
97. "Maitra Upanisad," I. 4, in S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 797.
98. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 214.
99. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 90.
100. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 135. See Also *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 95.
101. See his "Fragments of a Confession," p. 10.
102. A description of these theories occurs in *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 252-62, and in "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 34-38.
103. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 37-38.
104. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 178.

105. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 799.
106. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 45.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
108. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 153.
109. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 119.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 433.
111. This relates to the Hindu concept of *ṛta* or cosmic order.
112. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p.144.
113. A. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1936).
114. See Radhakrishnan's *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 219.
115. See Radhakrishnan's "Introduction," to *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 195.
116. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 221.
117. In *The Hindu View of Life*, Radhakrishnan remarks that, "Free will in the sense of an undetermined, unrelated, uncaused factor in human action is not admitted, but such a will defies all analysis." P. 54.
118. For example, in *The Hindu View of Life*, Radhakrishnan expresses the following: "The principle of Karma reckons with the material or the context in which each individual is born. While it regards the past as determined, it allows that the future is only conditioned. The spiritual element in man allows him freedom within the limits of his nature... The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past Karma, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom." P. 54. Also see a similar view articulated in his "The Ethics of the Bhagavadgita and Kant," *The International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. XXI, No. 4, (July 1911), pp. 467-68, and "The Ethics of the Vedānta," *The International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, (January 1914), p. 181.

119. See his *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 218-19.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

121. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 197.

122. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 218-19.

123. In his "Introduction" to the *Brahma Sūtra* Radhakrishnan writes: "The law of *karma* has nothing in common with the popular teaching that rewards and punishments are dependent on the arbitrary will of God... *Karma* is not predestination." P. 196. He also claims "Freedom and *karma* are the two aspects of the same reality." (*Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 248).

124. In this way *karma* not only connects us with the past but offers alternatives for the future.

125. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 53.

126. R. Minor, "In Defence of Karma and Rebirth: Evolutionary Karma," in *Karma and Rebirth: Post-Classical Developments*, R. W. Neufeldt, ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). p. 16.

127. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 45-46.

128. This is somewhat similar to the Tantric idea of the means to liberation where one uses that which is keeping them in bondage (e.g., desire) to seek release.

129. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 229.

130. See Radhakrishnan's "Introduction," to *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 204-5.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

132. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

133. See Radhakrishnan's description of the three types of *karma* in *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 509.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 247, 509.

135. See the *Chāndoyga*, V, 10.7 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, VI, 3.1.

136. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 251. The aboriginal tribes Radhakrishnan is referring to are no doubt the Dravidian people who inhabited the Indian sub-continent before the Aryan invasions. They were responsible for the great civilizations of the Indus Valley (i.e., Mohenjodaro and Harappa) dating back to about 2500 BCE.

137. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 232.

138. In *The Brahma Sūtra*, Radhakrishnan states: "The Atman or the Universal self which is present as saksin throughout successive experiences is a mere spectator." P. 205.

NOTES

CHAPTER II: RELEASE FROM IGNORANCE (AVIDYĀ)

1. In this way *avidyā* is synonymous with the word "*ajñāna*" which literally means "non-knowledge."

2. For example, see Alex Wayman, "The Meaning of Unwisdom (*Avidyā*)," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. VII, No. 1-2, (April-July, 1957), pp. 21-25.

3. E. Solomon, *Avidyā — A Problem of Truth and Reality*, (Ahmedabad: Gufarat University, 1969), p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

7. "To sum up, 'avidyā' conveys the following shades of meaning in the Upaniṣads: (a) Knowledge of something other than Ātman or Brahman - and hence the distinction between *avidyā* and *vidyā*. *Avidyā* is represented as auxiliary to, or inferior to, *vidyā*. (b) In the Praśna Up., *vidyā* and *avidyā* have a common object and *avidyā* means lack of knowledge or inadequate knowledge of the objects of metaphysical inquiry. (c) '*Avidyā*' in the Maitrī Up. indicates false knowledge, of course, according to dogmatic valuation. But the word has acquired a logical sense here. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up IV. 3, it signifies a mental tendency to imagine things where they do not really exist. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. IV 4.3 it can be interpreted to mean that principle which leads one to identify the atman with the body. (e) The Svetāśvatāra Up. uses the word to mean the mutable world as governed by the Supreme Being. '*Avidyā*' is used as a synonym of '*prakṛti*' or '*māyā*.' The Maitrī Up. IV 2 uses the word '*moha*,' an equivalent of '*avidyā*' in the sense of a congenital principle which does not allow the soul to cognize reality." E. Solomon, *Avidyā — A Problem of Truth and Reality*, pp.29-30.

8. Quoted from T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Superimposition in Advaita Vedānta*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Private Ltd., 1985), p. 1.

9. Śrī Śaṅkaracaryā, *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, Swami Gambhirananda, trans. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," pp. 801-2.
12. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.574.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 582.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 588.
15. S. Radhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Volume I, p. 280.
16. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahmā Sūtra*, p. 91.
17. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 89.
18. These six meanings of *māyā* are found in the following texts: *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, pp. 546-47; *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, pp. 573-74; *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Volume I, p. 279; *The Bhagvadgītā*, pp. 42-43; and "Reply to Critics," pp. 800-02.
19. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 801.
20. Post-Śāṅkara *Advaita* both developed Śāṅkara's philosophy of unqualified non-dualism and defended it against other schools of the *Vedānta*, especially Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* ("qualified non-dualism") and Mādhva's *Dvaita* ("dualism"). The two main schools of Post-Śāṅkarite thought were the *Vivarana*, founded by Padmapada (8th century), and the *Bhamati*, founded by Vacaspati Misra (9th century). They mainly differed in their interpretations of the relation between *Brahman* and *māyā*, and *Ātman* and *jīva*. Differences can also be found regarding their views of *avidyā* and *adhyāsa* (superimposition). For an introductory account of Post-Śāṅkara *Advaita* see P. T. Raju's contribution to the *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Volume I, pp. 287-304.
21. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.571.
22. See L. T. O'Neil, *Māyā in Śāṅkara: Measuring the Immeasurable*, (Columbia, Missouri: South Asia Books, 1980), p. 100.
23. This view of *māyā* and *avidyā* can be found in Vidyāranya's *Pancadasi*.

24. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.590.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 460.
26. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 42.
27. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 94.
28. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 571.
29. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 21.
30. Radhakrishnan writes: "Māyā is sometimes said to be the source of delusion (moha)... Through the force of māyā we have a bewildering partial consciousness which loses sight of the reality and lives in the world of phenomena." (*The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 41).
31. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 88.
32. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 89.
33. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.505.
34. See his *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 168.
35. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 89.
36. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 95.
37. *Ibid.*
38. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 32.
39. See his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 66; *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, pp. 549-50, 192; and *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 41, 42, 218.

40. See *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 146.
41. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 217.
42. *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 213.
43. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 41.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
45. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 209.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-12.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
57. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 604.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. As in the Western traditions of mysticism (e.g., Eckhart), *Advaita Vedānta* uses analogies to describe and explain the nature and workings of the Ultimate Reality. These can definitely aid our understanding but they should not be mistaken for the real thing. That is why Radhakrishnan says it ultimately remains a mystery from our limited, finite perspective.

61. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.607.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 607-8.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 607.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 606.

66. The weaknesses Radhakrishnan describes are essentially the ones expressed by one or the other school of the *Advaita Vedānta* as well as by Saṅkara in his *Bhāṣya on the Bhagavadgītā*. See *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 608.

67. E. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1969). p. 54.

68. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 91.

69. *Ibid.* Radhakrishnan seems to deviate from the traditional *Advaita* view in connecting the vital breath sheath (life) to *both* the gross and subtle bodies. It is usually just associated with the subtle body.

70. See *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 198-99 and "Fragments of a Confession," p. 28.

71. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 203.

72. In *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan states: "There is something specific in the behavior of living organisms which is not traceable in the non-living. The processes of assimilation, respiration, reproduction, growth and development are different from physico-chemical reactions." P. 197.

73. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, pp.596-97.

74. Radhakrishnan, in *An Idealist View of life*, says, "At physical death, only the gross, outer form perishes." P. 234.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

76. *Ibid.*

77. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," pp. 201-2.

78. The seventeen elements are the five life or vital organs, the five organs of action, the five sense organs, and the two inner organs (sense-mind or *manas* and intellect or *buddhi*).

79. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.597.

80. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 790.

81. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 204.

82. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 206.

83. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 105

84. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

86. S. Radhakrishnan, "Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 207.

87. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 105.

88. S. Radhakrishnan, 'Reply to Critics,' p. 790.
89. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 105.
90. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 106.
91. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 208.
92. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 106.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
94. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 91.
95. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 604.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
99. See C. Rogers, *On Becoming A Person*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).
100. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 212.
101. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 144.
102. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p.604.
103. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 213.
104. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 147.
105. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 95.

106. See S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p.208.
107. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 98.
108. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 210.
109. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 147.
110. In *Religion in a Changing World* Radhakrishnan asserts, "The consciousness of death is the source of anxiety." P. 63.
111. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 94-5.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
113. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 47.
114. *Ibid.*
115. See E. Fromm, *To Have or to Be*, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1976).
116. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 106.
117. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 94.
118. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 103.
119. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 94.
120. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Life," pp.230-31.
121. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 155.
122. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 104.

123. This remark requires some qualification. The central place of ignorance in humanity's downfall is well recognized in the Western mystical traditions (e.g., Kabbalism, Sufism) and the connection between ignorance and free will has also been perceived by Thomas Aquinas. The view, therefore, is not unique to Indian philosophy.

124. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 212. Similarly, Radhakrishnan states that *avidyā* involves "confinement within the narrow bounds set by the mind and the senses." (*East and West: Some Reflections*, {London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.}, p. 23).

125. See *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 598.

126. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 97.

127. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 98.

128. R. Metzner, *Opening to Inner Light*, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1986), p. 29.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

130. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 91.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

132. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

133. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 63.

NOTES

CHAPTER III: RELEASE FROM SUFFERING (*DUḤKHA*)

1. B. L. Lal, "Suffering in Contemporary Indian Religious Thought," in *Suffering: Indian Perspectives*, K. N. Tiwari, ed., (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), p. 202.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 92.
3. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 44. He also says in *Religion in a Changing World* that " 'I suffer, therefore I am' is more correct than the Cartesian 'Cogito ergo sum', I think, therefore I am." P. 141.
4. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 92.
5. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 46.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search For Truth," p. 59.
7. It is interesting to note that classical *Sāṅkhya* philosophy also distinguished three kinds of suffering — personal (*adhyātmika*), external (*adhibhautika*), and cosmic (*adhidaivika*).
8. Radhakrishnan is influenced by existentialism because it thoroughly examines, as does Hinduism and Buddhism, the human predicament of pain and sorrow. Significantly, in *Religion in a Changing World* he says: "Every philosopher is both an analyst and an existentialist... The analytic and the existential tendencies are found in the Upanisads and early Buddhism..." P. 59.
9. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 70.
10. In *The Principal Upaniṣads* Radhakrishnan declares, "The Objective world is the 'fallen' world, disintegrated and enslaved, in which the subject is alienated from the object of knowledge." P. 98.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 49.
12. Radhakrishnan writes the following in the *The Principal Upaniṣads*: "Cosmic process is one of universal and unceasing change and is patterned on a duality which is perpetually in conflict." P. 59.

13. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 61.
14. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 93.
15. For instance, in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Radhakrishnan opines that because of self-consciousness and intellectuality one becomes "aware of the inevitability of death. This knowledge of death produces the fear of death. He worries himself about the ways and means by which he can overcome death and gain life eternal... An overmastering fear thwarts his life, distorts his vision, and strangles his impulse." P. 43.
16. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 93.
17. In *Religion and a Changing World*, Radhakrishnan says: "Suffering is the result of the conflict in man. He belongs to two worlds, the spiritual and the natural. He is Being and non-being. As a citizen of an earthly state, he is subject to the dominion of death. He also belongs to the world of spirit, not bounded by time." P. 67.
18. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 48.
19. See *Recovery of Faith*, p. 90.
20. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 48.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
23. In *Recovery of Faith* Radhakrishnan writes: "When *Advaita Vedānta* speaks of an eternal unchanging self, this is the Universal Self which is non-participating. The individual self is perpetually changing." P. 97.
24. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 51.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 97.
26. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 837.

27. See T. R. V. Murti's "Radhakrishnan and Buddhism," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, pp. 565-605.
28. *Ibid.*, p.573.
29. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 838.
30. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 48.
31. See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans., (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 167-68, 210-24.
32. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 63-64.
33. See S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, W. Lowrie, trans., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).
34. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 51-52.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
36. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 43-44.
37. D. Evans, "Towards a Philosophy of Openness," in *Analytical Philosophy of Religion in Canada*. M. Faghfoury, ed., (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1982), p. 260.
38. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 44.
39. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 98.
40. *Ibid.*
41. See for instance *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 44; "Fragments of a Confession," p. 49; and *Recovery of Faith*, p. 97.
42. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 42.

43. See D. Evans, "On the Nature and Origin of Good and Evil in Human Beings," *University of Ottawa Quarterly*, Vol. LV, No. 4, (October-December 1985), pp. 193-207.

44. *Ibid.* p. 195.

45. D. Evans, "Towards a Philosophy of Openness," pp. 254-61.

NOTES

CHAPTER IV: REALIZATION OF PURE CONSCIOUSNESS (*CIT-ĀTMAN*)

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 97.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 108.
3. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 148.
4. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 805.
5. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 32.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Spirit in Man," p. 482.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 240.
8. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 219.
9. S. Radhakrishnan, "An Indian Approach to Religion," *The Present Crisis of Faith*, (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1971), p. 54.
10. See R. Neville, *Soldier, Sage, Saint*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1978).
11. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 273. The same thought is echoed in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: "When all desires that dwell within the human heart are cast away, then a mortal becomes immortal and (even) here he attaineth Brahman." Pp. 646-47.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 621.
13. See J. Arapura, "The Question as to the *Jīvan-mukti* Ideal," in his *Hermeneutical Essays on Vedānta Topics*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 19), pp. 124-34.
14. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections*, (London George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), p. 26.

15. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 241.
16. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 221-22.
17. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 215-18.
18. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 76.
19. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 179.
20. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 153.
21. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 98.
22. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 64-65.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
24. This objection is raised by A. C. Das in his "Advaita Vedānta and Liberation in Bodily Existence," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. VI, No. 2, (July 1954), pp. 113-24, where he argues that the notion of *jīvanmukti* is self-contradictory.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume II, p. 645.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 645-46.
27. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 104.
28. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 106.
29. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 69.
30. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 106.
31. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 240.

32. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 258.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. For example in *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 108-12, and "Reply to Critics," pp. 790-95.
37. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 72.
38. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 61.
39. See R. M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1901).
40. For the view of mysticism as a "recovery of immediacy" see M. L. Furse, *Mysticism: Window on a World View*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), p. 6, 36.
41. K. Wibur, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1977), p. 79. Transpersonal theory or psychology focuses on the spiritual dimensions of the human psyche and investigates, among other things, the higher states of human consciousness (e.g., mystical experience). The term "transpersonal psychology" was coined by Stanislav Grof.
42. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 72.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
45. "Sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to cross, difficult to tread is that path (so) sages declare." "Kāṭha Upaniṣad," I.3.15, in S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 628.

46. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 152. In regards to self-effort Radhakrishnan says: "Perfection at the human level is a task to be accomplished by conscious endeavour." (*The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 51).

47. In *Recovery of Faith* Radhakrishnan notes: "We may reach the end through devotion, meritorious action and intellectual contemplation. These are not exclusive; they interpenetrate." P. 161.

48. See "Reply to Critics," p. 791.

49. Refer to *An Idealist View of Life*, 105-7; "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 60-62; and "Reply to Critics," pp. 790-91.

50. In *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan exhorts the following: "The ethical soundness, the logical consistency and the aesthetic beauty of the universe are assumptions for science and logic, art and morality, but are not irrational assumptions. They are the apprehensions of the soul, intuitions of the self quite as rational as faith in the physical world or the intellectual schemes, though not grasped in the same way." P. 123. Also see pp. 138-66 for an elaborate description of the four kinds of intuition. And in "Reply to Critics" he says, "Apart from sense perception, there are intuitions of a logical and scientific, aesthetic and ethical, philosophical and religious type." P. 791.

51. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 795.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 794-795.

53. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 61.

54. S. Radhakrishnan, *An idealist View of Life*, p. 270. Similarly, "Self-realization is possible through the grace of the Divine." (*The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 102).

55. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 102. This is similar to the debate in Christian thought between Augustine and Pelagius, which Radhakrishnan discusses in *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 63-4. Augustine believed that once Adam and Eve ate the apple corruption entered them and all their progeny. None of us can abstain from sin of our own power. Only by God's merciful grace are some elected for heaven; not because we deserve it, but because God's grace is bestowed upon us. In contrast, Pelagius believed in the efficacy of free will and thought human beings could make something of themselves and contribute to their own salvation. In this sense Radhakrishnan would definitely side with Pelagius over Augustine.

56. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 33. Also see *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 265, 267.

57. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 147.

58. In his book *The Perfectibility of Man*, (London: Duckworth, 1970; paperback ed., 1972), John Passmore distinguishes three types of perfection — technical, obedientiary, and teleological. (See p. 19). Radhakrishnan's ideal of *mokṣa* is more in keeping with teleological perfectionism.

59. One way Radhakrishnan describes this experience in *An Idealist View of Life* is to say: "The religious intuition is an all-comprehending one, covering the whole of life. While the spirit in man fulfils itself in many ways, it is most completely fulfilled in the religious life. Here is consciousness at its full and simultaneous realization." P. 159.

60. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 210-11.

61. See Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," in R. McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), Bk. X: Ch.7 & 8, pp. 1104-8.

62. For a recent review of this debate see Timothy Roch, "The Perfect Happiness," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XXVII, *Supplement on Aristotle's Ethics*, pp. 103-25.

NOTES

CHAPTER V: REALIZATION OF PURE BLISS (ĀNANDA)

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 90.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 549.
3. Quoted from E. Lott, *Vedāntic Approaches to God*, (New York: Barnes & Nobble, 1980), p. 129. It is a translation of Sankara's *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya*, 2.8.1-4.
4. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 98. Similarly, in *Recovery of Faith* Radhakrishnan comments: "There is a world of light beyond the earthly shadows, where the obstinate questionings of the mind are answered and the troubles of the heart are allayed. To experience this reality, to live in it is moksa or life eternal. It is release from finitude, fragmentariness, distractedness, unawareness, bondage. It is to be born again, to live in a condition of joy and holy healthfulness." P. 106.
5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 129.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 43. A similar remark can be found in *The Hindu View of Life*, p.46.
7. In his "Introduction" to *The Principal Upaniṣads* Radhakrishnan states: "In our transfigured consciousness where our egoistic individuality is absent... Our body, life, mind are no more binding, but become the transparent vehicle of our divine consciousness." P. 1-6.
8. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections*, pp. 26-7. See also *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 98.
9. S. Radhakrishnan. "My Search for Truth," p. 53.
10. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 50.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 213.
12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
16. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 165.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
22. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 178.
23. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 129.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 52.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
29. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Spirit in Man," p. 476.
30. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 68.

31. See R. Kieckhefer and G. D. Bond, eds., *Sainthood: Its Manifestation in World Religions*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
32. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 273.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 270.
34. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 76.
35. In "Fragments of a Confession," Radhakrishnan says of the *jīvanmukta*, "When he attains 'integrality,' there is harmony in his life and its expression is joy." P. 62.
36. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 176. Similar comments are made in *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 127; *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 129; and "The Spirit in Man," p. 477.
37. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 213.
38. R. Neville, *Soldier, Sage, Saint*.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-46.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-69.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-97.
42. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 129.
43. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 65.
44. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 212.
45. S. Radhakrishnan, "Creative Religion," in *Radhakrishnan: Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion, and Culture*, p. 301.

46. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*, B. Nyanamoli, trans. (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976.)

47. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 124.

48. Quoted from J. Kattackal, *Religion and Ethics in Advaita*, (Freiburg: Editiones Herder, 1980), p. 118.

49. *Ibid.*

50. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 107.

51. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 53.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

55. E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

56. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

58. *Ibid.*

59. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 54.

60. See E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, (New York: Rinehart, 1941).

61. E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, p. 13.

62. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 73.

63. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 46.

64. See J. Arapura, "The Question as to the *Jīvan-mukti* Ideal," p. 133. Also see *Jīvanmukti-viveka*, S. S. Sastri and T. K. Śrīnivāsā, trans. and eds., (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1978).

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

66. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 123-28.

67. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 159. He also states: "We are called upon to act in a disinterested way, free from egotism." (*The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 158). And this involves a "quality of utter disinterestedness." (*East and West in Religion*, p. 112).

68. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 217-18.

69. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p.109.

70. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 64-5.

71. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 126-27.

72. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 90-1.

73. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 67.

74. J. Hospers, *Human Conduct: Problems of Ethics*, shorter edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), pp. 61-2.

75. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedanta," p. 171.

76. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search for Truth," p. 45.

77. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Spirit in Man," p. 477.

78. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 65

79. *Ibid.*

80. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p.127.
81. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 105.
82. *Ibid.*, 108.
83. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 127-29.
84. See U. Tahtinen, *Ahiṃsā: Non-Violence in the Indian Tradition*, (London: Rider & Company, 1976), p. 2.
85. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 396.
86. U. Tahtinen, *Ahiṃsā: Non-Violence in the Indian Tradition*, p. 52.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
90. See *The Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gītā According to Gandhi*, M. H. Desai, ed., (Ahmedabad: Narvajivan, 1946).
91. See J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 100.
92. M. Gandhi, *The Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gītā According to Gandhi*, p. 129. Also see *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, revised edition, J. V. Bondurant, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 116.
93. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, second edition, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1948), p. 230. Also refer to "Fragments of a Confession" where Radhakrishnan says he was friends with Gandhi "for nearly thirty years" a relationship that had "tremendous significance" for him. P. 10. Radhakrishnan wrote several articles on Gandhi and even edited a book called *Mahātmā Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939; second edition, 1949). Interestingly, they never got along

when they first met. See *Radhakrishnan: A Religious Biography*, R. N. Minor, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 65.

94. S. Radhakrishnan, "Mahātmā Gandhi: His Message for Mankind," in *Radhakrishnan: Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion, and Culture*, p. 271. Originally published in *Mahātmā Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His life and Thought*, pp. 336-61.

95. In *Religion and Society* Radhakrishnan warns us about the catastrophic consequences of not adhering to these precepts: "A blind impulse to destroy seems to have taken possession of mankind, and, if there is no check to it, we will take a long stride towards final extinction and prepare for an era of intellectual darkness and ethical barbarism in which man's noblest accomplishments of the past would be laid waste." P. 11.

96. S. Radhakrishnan, "Mahātmā Gandhi: His Message for Mankind," p. 275.

97. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 73-4.

98. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 93.

99. M. Gandhi, *Young India*, (January 19, 1921) as quoted in *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, p. 24.

100. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 91-2.

101. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1933), p. 83.

102. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 46.

103. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 176.

104. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 83.

105. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 213.

106. *Ibid.*

107. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 85.

108. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 92.
109. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 86.
110. S. Radhakrishnan, "Mahātmā Gandhi: His Message for Mankind," p. 271. Significantly, in his *Religion and Society* Radhakrishnan proclaims: "The saints of the world are believers in absolute non-violence. They use persuasion and passive resistance to evil. They believe in endurance, voluntary suffering, tapas. For violence breeds fear, hatred and callousness, and is possible only for the spiritually immature or perverted. The saints establish the traditions of pacific behavior, of just dealing towards all, and of mercy towards the weak... Saintly souls cannot use force, for all their passions have been killed; yet they are able to overpower evil." P. 205.
111. See *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, pp.100-1.
112. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 92.
113. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 65.
114. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p.112. Similarly, Radhakrishnan writes in "Fragments of a Confession" that for "individuals who have realized their true being... Selfish action is not possible for them. Ignorance and craving have lost their hold. They are dead to pride, envy, and uncharitableness." P. 64-5.
115. Quoted from W. King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*, (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1964), pp. 151-2.
116. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedānta, p. 175.
117. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 83.
118. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 65.
119. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 85. Radhakrishnan relates the story on pp. 83-85.
120. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search for Truth," p. 47.

121. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedānta," p. 175.
122. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Spirit in Man," p. 490.
123. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 165.
124. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 173.
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Ibid.*
127. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
128. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 32.
129. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 267.
130. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 274.
131. *Ibid.*
132. In his "Introduction" to *The Bhagavadgītā* Radhakrishnan writes: "The avatāra is the demonstration of man's spiritual resources and latent divinity. It is not so much the contraction of Divine majesty into the limits of the human frame as the exaltation of human nature to the level of Godhead by its union with the Divine... The incarnation of Krishna is not so much the conversion of Godhead into flesh as the taking up of manhood into God." P. 32, 36.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
135. See *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 35.
136. Quoted from "Radhakrishnan and Buddhism," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 567.

137. *Ibid.*

138. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 78. Radhakrishnan notes that the Buddha uses "eternal righteousness" to positively designate the Ultimate Reality (e.g., *nirvāṇa*). He goes on to say that for the Buddha "it is the principle of the universe and the foundation for all conduct." Pp. 78-9. For a more detailed analysis of this interpretation of Buddhism see the "Appendix" to *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, especially pp. 682-90.

139. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 92.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

142. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 128-29.

NOTES

CHAPTER VI: REALIZATION OF PURE BEING (*SAT-BRAHMAN*)

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 91.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 219.
3. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 244.
4. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 64.
5. In his "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra* Radhakrishnan calls this "corporate salvation." P. 218.
6. In *An Idealist View of Life* Radhakrishnan states: "Till this goal is reached, each individual is the centre of the universal consciousness." P. 98.
7. Also referred to as the *satyaloka* or sphere of Truth, where Manu presides.
8. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 799. See also "Fragments of a Confession," p. 30 and 45.
9. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 153.
10. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 88.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 225.
12. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 150.
13. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 43.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
15. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 32.

16. *Ibid.*
17. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 264.
18. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession, p. 45.
19. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 268.
20. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 32.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
22. This seems to be Charles Taylor's position in *Hegel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
23. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller, trans., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 31.
24. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 245.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 220.
26. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 45.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-62.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
30. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 39.
31. Here Radhakrishnan is influenced by the thinking of Rabindranath Tagore on the issue of nationalism. See Tagore's *Nationalism*, (London: Macmillan & Company, 1917).

32. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 50.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.
34. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 241.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
36. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 207.
37. See *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 117-18.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
40. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 76.
41. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 130.
42. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 219.
43. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 43.
44. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 129.
45. In "My Search for Truth," Radhakrishnan expresses this thought in the following way: "No individual is really saved until society is perfected. If the historical process is a burden from which the soul attempts to free itself, it can free itself only when the historical process reaches its fulfilment. The stronger individuals help the weaker ones until all are saved. Universal salvation is the aim of the historical process, and when the goal is reached the process disappears. The temporal becomes the eternal." P. 53.
46. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 9.
47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.* p. 10.
50. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 30.
51. In "Fragments of a Confession" Radhakrishnan states: "The end of the cosmic process is the achievement of universal redemption, redemption of all persons who continue to live as individuals till the end of history." P. 68.
52. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 97-8.
53. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 27.
54. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life.*, p. 179.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
57. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 28.
58. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 207.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
61. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 30.
62. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 221.
63. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 246.
64. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 81. Likewise on the same page Radhakrishnan notes: "The world is not a mere repetition of order; it makes advances into the future."

65. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 130-31.
66. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 220-21.
67. S. Radhakrishnan, "My Search for Truth," p. 53.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
69. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 244.
70. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 153.
71. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 45.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
73. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 106.
74. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 19.
75. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 45.
76. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 106.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
78. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 244.
70. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 220.
80. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 65.
81. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 131.
82. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 244.

83. Interestingly, John Arapura shows the influence of Plato's notion of the ideal state on Radhakrishnan's thought. See his "Idealism, Utopia and the Spiritual Commonwealth," in G. Parthasarathi and D. P. Chattopadhyaya, eds., *Radhakrishnan: Centenary Volume*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 279-96.
84. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 146.
85. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 799. In a similar passage he says: "They retain their centres as individuals until the cosmic consummation is reached." P. 800.
86. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 220.
87. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 57.
88. S. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," p. 799.
89. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession," p. 46.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
92. S. Radhakrishnan, *Education, Politics and War*, (Poona: The International Book Service, 1944). p. 62.
93. See *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 157, 163.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
95. Radhakrishnan describes this idea in numerous writings including "Fragments of a Confession," pp. 78-82.
96. *Ibid.*, 75-7.
97. S. Radhakrishnan, "Education and Spiritual Freedom," in *Education, Politics and War*, p. 94.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.* Similarly, in the same article Radhakrishnan writes: "A free society is one in which economic security is provided for all and freedom of thought and action is permitted within the limits of a reasonable social harmony." P. 27.

NOTES

CHAPTER VII: THE EMPIRICAL PROBLEM OF REBIRTH

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 54. All bold lettering mine.

2. S. Radhakrishnan, "Inter-Religious Understanding," in *Our Heritage*, (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1973), p. 55. Radhakrishnan says similar things elsewhere: "The Upaniṣads declares that we can get to the real, get to the love of God, to the immortal." ("The Promise of the Future," in *The Creative Life*, (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1975), p. 130; "We see the events in the world, we see the events in nature — poverty, unemployment, disease, death. Are they inevitable? Is it necessary for human beings to suffer from all these things? Is it not possible for human beings to overcome them, to redeem themselves from them and make themselves into essential human beings?... To that question all the great religions have given one answer. They have said it is possible for us to redeem ourselves from the tyranny of time." ("The Future is Not Inevitable," in *The Creative Life*, p. 119).

3. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World*, p. 153. Likewise he says: "The redemption of the human race as a whole is the goal of human history. That kind of redemption can happen if each individual exerts himself, disciplines himself, puts himself to all sorts of exercises, understands that religion is a costly business." ("The Fulfilment of Man," in *The Creative Life*, pp. 71-2).

4. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 244.

5. Radhakrishnan's optimism about everyone, no matter how evil, being able at some point to realize *mokṣa* is clearly evident from the following passage: "From the emphasis on the immanence of the Divine in man, it follows that there is not one single individual, however criminal he may be, who is beyond redemption... All men are the children of the Immortal, *amrtasya putrah*. The spirit is in everyone as a part of one's self, as a part of the very substratum of one's being. It may be buried in some like a hidden treasure beneath a barren debris of brutality and violence — but it is there all the same, operative and alive, ready to come to the surface at the first suitable opportunity. The light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world cannot be put out. Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, the Divine is in us and the end of man consists in attaining conscious union with the Divine." ("The Asian View of Man," in *Our Heritage*, pp. 89-90). And in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, he claims "Whatever the individual has done, the race, too, may and should eventually succeed in doing." P. 57.

6. For Aristotle, pleasure is not something that can be consciously and directly attained because it is simply an unintended consequence or by-product of

6. For Aristotle, pleasure is not something that can be consciously and directly attained because it is simply an unintended consequence or by-product of performing some activity well. For example, the individual who either strives to ski perfectly or to serve God faithfully may well find enjoyment in their devotion and dedication. As smoke is to fire, pleasure is to excellent activity. It makes no sense to posit pleasure as one's ultimate aim in life for then it will always allude one's grasp. And that is the rub of the hedonistic paradox: by actively pursuing pleasure, and only pleasure, one eventually experiences its opposite — pain and frustration. Moreover, by promoting pleasure as the highest good, the hedonist actually decreases one's chances of achieving it. The whole adventure, then, is a self-defeating enterprise.

7. In his "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra* Radhakrishnan claims: "A single life is not enough for achieving perfection." P. 191. He also states that, "Indian thought asks us to liberate ourselves from bondage. We must pass from samsara, life in time subject to discords to mokṣa or enlightenment or eternal life. Until we reach the unitive life we will have opportunities. The doctrine of samsara governed by the law of karma stresses that each being has many chances to achieve this goal. Each person is the result of his actions and attitudes which he can modify by the exercise of his will." (*Recovery of Faith*, p. 101).

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 228.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-29.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

12. *Ibid.*

13. See *Reincarnation: A Christian Appraisal*, M. Albrecht, (Downers: Intervarsity Press, 1982), p. 82.

14. See *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 228.

15. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 201. It should be noted that Radhakrishnan raises and addresses the empirical objections to the rebirth hypothesis in both *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 235-39, and in his "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 198-204.

16. See M. Arvey, ed., *Reincarnation: Opposing Viewpoints*, (San Francisco: Greenhaven, 1989), p. 30.

17. Two of Stevenson's most popular books are *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, second edition, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), and *Children Who Remember Previous Lives*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987).
18. D. Lund, *Death and Consciousness: The Case for Life After Death*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), pp. 215-17.
19. For instance, Paul Edwards, "The Case Against Reincarnation, Part I" *Free Inquiry*, (Fall 1986), p. 33.
20. See S. Pasricha, *Claims of Reincarnation: An Empirical Study of Cases in India*, (New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 1990), p. 186.
21. Stevenson himself says his "main objection to cryptomnesia as applied to cases of the reincarnation type derive... from consideration of the young age at which most of the subjects first begin to talk about the previous lives they claim to remember... Some subjects refer to their memories when less than two years old." (*Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, Vol. III, {Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1980}, pp. 346-48).
22. R. Almeder, *Death and Personal Survival: The Evidence For Life After Death*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), pp. 30-1.
23. I. Stevenson, *Children Who Remember Previous Lives*, pp. 150-53.
24. See. S. Prasricha, *Claims of Reincarnation*, p. 187.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 237. Also refer to his "Introduction" to *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 198-99.
26. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 337-38. Also refer to *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 200.
27. This leads to the whole problem of personal identity which will be discussed in Chapter VIII.
28. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 200.

29. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 238.
30. The British philosopher J. E. McTaggart, in his *Human Immortality and Pre-existence*, ennuiciates a similar view. For him, memory can make us wiser and more virtuous, despite the fact that we sometimes fail to remember certain details of our past. As he puts it: "Can we be wiser by reason of something which we have forgotten? Unquestionably we can. Wisdom is not merely, or chiefly, amassed facts, or even recorded judgments... And so a man who dies after acquiring knowledge — and all men acquire some — might enter his new life deprived indeed of this knowledge, but not deprived of the increased strength and delicacy of mind which he had gained in acquiring the knowledge. And, if so, he will be wiser in the second life because what has happened in the first." Quoted from *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, J. Head and S. L. Cranston, eds., (New York: Julian Barnes/Crown Publishers, 1977), p. 473.
31. See M. Avery, *Reincarnation: Opposing Viewpoints*, p.32.
32. Quoted from Tom Harper, *Life After Death*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), pp. 76-7.
33. See Colin Wilson's *Afterlife* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), for a full account of this affair.
34. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 229-30.
35. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, pp. 201-2.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 202. Also refer to *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 235.
37. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 202.
38. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 229.
39. See D. G. Dutton and A. P. Aron, "Some Evidence for Heightened Sexual Attraction Under Conditions of High Anxiety," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. XXX, (1974), pp. 510-17.
40. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 202.
41. *Ibid.*

42. C. T. K. Chari, "Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Rebirth," *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. 12, (1977-78), p. 137.

43. *Ibid.*

44. S. J. Gould, *An Urchin in the Storm*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), p. 159.

45. C. T. K. Chari, "Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Rebirth," p. 138

46. This idea of the subtle body as consisting of mental dispositions will be examined more carefully in Chapter VIII.

47. See the *Indian Philosophical Annual* Vol, 1, 1965.

48. Swami Iswarananda, "Does the Soul Reincarnate?," *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. I, 1965, p. 11.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

51. The logical problem of evil focuses on the apparent contradiction between the existence of evil in the world and the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God. The evidential problem concerns itself primarily with the facts of evil and suffering, namely, its types, amounts, and maldistribution.

52. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedānta," p. 180.

53. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 254.

54. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedānta," p. 180. And elsewhere he says: "The law of karma is the counter-part in the moral world of the physical law of uniformity. It is the law of the conservation of moral energy. The vision of law and order is revealed in the ṛta of the Ṛg-Veda. According to the principle of karma there is nothing uncertain or uncapricious in the moral world. We reap what we sow. The good seed brings a harvest of good, the evil of evil." (*Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, pp. 244-45).

55. Radhakrishnan further states: "This hypothesis of rebirth gives us some explanation of the original difference. It makes us feel that the joy and suffering

of the world are there for the progressive education of character. (*Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, p. 255).

56. M. Albrecht, *Reincarnation: A Christian Appraisal*, pp. 90-1.

57. P. Edwards, "The Case Against Reincarnation, Part 2," *Free Inquiry*, (Winter 1986/87), p. 40.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 53.

61. *Ibid.*

62. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 78.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

64. See A. Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, ninth edition, (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972).

65. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 147.

66. *Ibid.*

67. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 221.

68. A. Sharma, "Karma and Reincarnation in Advaita Vedānta," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. XVIII, (1990), p. 232.

69. J. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 139.

70. A. Sharma, *A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 146.

71. R. B. Perry, *General Theory of Value*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 611.

72. L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, G. Eliot, trans., (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

73. R. Bultmann, "The New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, H. W. Bartsche, ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

74. J. H. Randall, *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1958).

75. R. B. Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

76. See I. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, N. Kemp Smith, trans., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), and *Critique of Practical Reason*, N. Kemp Smith, trans., (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956).

77. There are numerous positive effects values can have on society as well. For instance, they can help create and maintain a sense of collective identity which is essential for social harmony.

78. M. Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values*, (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 13.

79. *Ibid.*

80. See V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1959).

81. V. Frankl, "Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychiatry," in E. A. Mazierz, ed., *Value and Values in Evolution*, (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1979), p. 72.

82. See V. Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), p. 43.

83. E. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, p. 79.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.

85. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 198.

86. E. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, p. 78. Deutsch also mentions how the doctrine of *karmic* rebirth helps solve the problems of inequality and evil. This was touched on earlier and is not pertinent to us here.

87. T. W. Organ, *The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man*, (Athens: Ohio University, 1970), p. 23.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

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CHAPTER VIII: THE LOGICAL PROBLEM OF REBIRTH

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, p. 254.
2. Two principal works are: T. Penelhum, *Survival and Disembodied Existence*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); and A. Flew, *God, Freedom, and Immortality: A Critical Analysis*, (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1984).
3. For a further description of these theories see his *God, Freedom, and Immortality: A Critical Analysis*, pp. 105-7.
4. See note 2 above for their main relevant works.
5. Due to certain restrictions I will not be able to cover all of the problems that have been raised relating to this issue. I shall focus only on those that are directly pertinent to the thesis.
6. A. Flew, "Transmigration and Reincarnation," in *Reincarnation: Fact or Fable? An Examination of the Case for and Against*, A. Berger and J. Berger, eds., (London: Aquarian Press, 1992), p. 108.
7. See his *A New Approach to Psychical Research*, (London: Watts & Company, 1953), p. 80.
8. A. Flew, *God, Freedom, and Immortality*, p. 131.
9. See P. Geach, *God and the Soul*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
10. A. Flew, "Transmigration and Reincarnation," p. 110.
11. See H. H. Price, "Survival and the Idea of 'Another World'," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, (London), Vol. L, (1952). A similar view has been formulated by H. D. Lewis, *The Self and Immortality*, (London: Macmillan, 1973), Chapter 8.
12. J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 276.

13. J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, p. 270.
14. For some of St. Paul's references to the spiritual body see I Cor. 1:29, 6:15, 6:19, 15:53-4.
15. T. Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 338.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 231.
18. For purposes of explaining the process of rebirth it is best to combine the subtle and causal bodies into one and simply refer to it as the subtle body.
19. See C. D. Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1929), pp. 536, 549-51, 651-52, where he refers to the psychic factor.
20. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 234.
21. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, p. 205. See also *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 254.
22. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 234.
23. See Harold Noonan, *Personal Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 13.
24. This is an important question, not just from the standpoint of logical coherence, but from a moral perspective as well. As Roy Perret notes: "Firstly, if there is no sense of strong personal identity across lives, then surely the theory is entirely void of any genuine personal significance? Secondly, if my rebirth is not the same person as me, then why should I concern myself with his fate? Thirdly, if he is not the same person as me, then how can he justly incur the karmic consequences of *my* actions (as the doctrine of karma maintains)?" ("Rebirth," *Religious Studies*, Vol. XXIII, {1987}, p. 52).
25. See his *Death and Eternal Life*, pp. 307-8.

26. Symmetry is one of the three logical properties of identity, the other two being reflexivity ($x = x$) and transitivity [$(x = y) + (x = z) > (y = z)$].
27. J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, p. 308.
28. *Ibid.*
29. See his "Personal Identity and Individuation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. LVII, (1956-7), pp. 229-52.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 238-39.
31. For a further description of the closest continuer theory see, S. Shoemaker, "Persons and their Pasts," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VII, 1970, pp. 269-85; R. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), Chapter 1; and H. Noonan, "The Possibility of Reincarnation," *Religious Studies*, Vol. XXVI, (1990), pp. 483-91.
32. H. Noonan, "The Possibility of Reincarnation," p. 486. Also refer to his *Personal Identity*, p. 17.
33. D. Parfit, "Personal Identity," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. VIII, (1971), p. 13. The "q" in q-memory stands for "quasi."
34. R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 113.
35. For example: If 'x' is identical with 'y' and if 'x' is also identical with 'z,' then 'y' is identical with 'z.' Refer to the symbolic formulation of the property of transitivity in note 26 above.
36. R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*, p. 113.
37. R. Martin, "Memory, Connecting and What Matters in Survival," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXV, No. 1, (March 1987), p. 85.

NOTES

CONCLUSION

1. J. Griffin, *Well Being*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 56.
2. See his "Two Theories of the Good," in *The Good Life and the Human Good*, pp. 1-14.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 14. Italics mine.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
7. See T. Hurka, *Perfectionism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
8. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedāntic Approach to Reality," p. 225.
9. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 265.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
12. L. W. Sumner, "Two Theories of the Good," p. 9.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
14. In his "Two theories of Goodness," Sumner notes: "Because it is subjective rather than objective, welfare is in many ways the mirror image of perfection. The weaknesses of the latter are therefore the strenghts of the former (and vice versa?)." P. 11.
15. See L. W. Sumner, "Two Theories of Goodness," p. 13.

16. *Ibid.*

17. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 263, 264.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

This thesis encompasses the areas of normative ethics and the philosophy of religion. More specifically, it attempts to both carefully examine Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) and critically analyse the notion of *karmic* rebirth (or reincarnation), which he believes is central to realizing the ideal of *mokṣa*. The primary objective is to systematically present Radhakrishnan's soteriological theory to show how it conforms to, or is an example of, a perfectionist version of the highest good (*summum bonum*), namely, self-realization. The thesis also reveals how Radhakrishnan's conception of self-realization, though generally part of the *Vedānta* tradition of Hindu philosophy, leans more towards Sankara's *Advaita Vedānta* (unqualified non-dualism), while at the same time incorporating some religious ideas from Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism). In general, Radhakrishnan's conception of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) consists of a freedom from finitude (*māyā*), ignorance (*avidyā*), and suffering (*duḥkha*), and a corresponding freedom towards pure being (*sat-Brahman*), pure consciousness (*cit-Atman*), and pure bliss (*ānanda*).

The first section, which consists of three chapters, describes in detail Radhakrishnan's negative sense of *mokṣa* as a freedom from what I term metaphysical, epistemological, and affective limitations. The first chapter analyzes metaphysical limitation in terms of matter (*prakṛti*), time (*samsāra*), and causality (*karma*). The second chapter examines epistemological limitation in regards to ignorance (*avidyā*), defined both as an absence of knowledge and a mistaken knowledge about the truth of our real identity. And the third chapter describes affective limitation in terms of suffering (*duḥkha*), in the forms of deep insecurity, overwhelming anxiety, and inner discord.

The second section, also consisting of three chapters, meticulously describes Radhakrishnan's positive sense of *mokṣa* as consisting of the penultimate goal of individual liberation (the *jīvanmukti* ideal) and the final goal of universal liberation (the *sarvamukti* ideal). The fourth chapter examines the *jīvanmukti* ideal in terms of a realization of pure consciousness and how this can be realized through self-effort, in the forms of moral discipline, (*karma-yoga*), love and devotion (*bhakti-yoga*), and especially direct spiritual knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*), and from a religious perspective through God's merciful grace. The fifth chapter describes freedom as a realization of pure bliss as expressed in the *jīvanmukta's* characteristics of inner peace and outward love. And the sixth chapter examines the ultimate goal of *sarvamukti* as a realization of pure being in the form of *brahmāloka* or the Kingdom of God or Spirit. This is defined by Radhakrishnan first in the negative sense as not involving a heavenly abode, earthly paradise, personal immortality, or liberation after death (*videhamukti*), and then in the more positive sense as the end-point of the cosmic process, the furthest manifestation of the World Spirit (*Hiranyagarbha*), eternal life, a revolutionary change of consciousness, and a spiritual community.

The third and final section, consisting of two chapters, takes a more critical approach and carefully scrutinizes Radhakrishnan's notion of spiritual liberation by focusing on the idea of *karmic* rebirth or reincarnation. The seventh chapter demonstrates that although the hypothesis of *karmic* rebirth cannot be

empirically verified at this time because of certain problems with the supposed evidence — observed patterns in nature (i.e., continual renewal) and unique facts about particular human beings (i.e., past-life recall, special skills and talents, falling in love, human inequalities) — it and the whole ideal of *mokṣa* are still valuable since they can contribute to an individual's psychological and moral development. The eighth chapter discloses how Radhakrishnan's idea of *karmic* rebirth is logically coherent — and thus intelligible — because it establishes, through the notion of the subtle body as a matrix of mental dispositions, a sense of personal, psychological continuity across different incarnations.

The thesis concludes by summing up what was accomplished in the study as well as addresses two major criticisms of perfection (e.g. spiritual liberation), as opposed to welfare (e.g. happiness), being the only intrinsic value and highest good in human life.