

INTUITION AND THE SPIRIT OF MAN
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF
SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

by

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Thesis presented to the Faculty of
Philosophy of the University of
Ottawa as partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

Ottawa, Canada, 1969

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Reverend Benoit Garceau, O.M.I., B.A., L.Ph., S.T.B., M.A., D.Ph., of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Ottawa. I am specially grateful to him for having agreed to be my director, for his interest and many helpful suggestions.

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INTRODUCTION

It is not possible to speak today of Indian or even Eastern Philosophy without coming across the name of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Why is Radhakrishnan outstanding? Because of his very original version of the ancient Vedanta system in his Idealistic and Intuitive way, with the constant underlying stress on the Spirit in Man. This gives him a claim to be called an original philosopher and one in his own right. In giving his own version to basic ancient thought, he has uniquely brought out a fusion between East and West and, as a sharer of both cultures, he has made clear to the Western mind the intricate Indian way of thinking. This he has achieved by his broad-based theory of mysticism which he calls the highest degree of intuition, a term which absorbs the essence of reason and the metaphysics of religion besides being an epistemology of mysticism.

For Radhakrishnan the main problem is knowledge, or rather, the revelation of the ultimate reality through personal realization. Every aspect of human life, every sphere of human endeavour and every department of human knowledge is brought under sway of intuition and integral experience. He tries to give a satisfying and wholesome vision of life, for no one can be called a philosopher

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who fails to do this.

The message of Radhakrishnan's philosophy is that through his philosophy of religion or of the spirit, man can combat the corrosiveness of the spirit that weakens religion and renders man the victim of nervousness and hopelessness. Radhakrishnan reminds us that the career of religion is far from over in a materialistic world; as a matter of fact it has only begun, leading man to a vision of himself beyond the fortuitous circumstances of his history.

Radhakrishnan's thought has had its growth in unmistakable relation to the main currents of idealism in both India and the West.

A. A VERY BRIEF SURVEY OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Since the fundamentals of Radhakrishnan's philosophy are from ancient Indian Philosophy, it will be very convenient to give a brief outline of ancient Indian thought in order to place him in the correct historical background.

Briefly and in a rather broad outline, Indian Philosophy could be divided into four major periods of

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development, until about the year A.D.1700 when it suffered a serious decline. There is first the Vedic Period, "dimmed by obscurity, but it may be placed approximately between 2,500 and 600 B.C."¹ This was a period when the Aryans, having left their original home in Central Asia, moved in several directions, one wave of which migration having come down to India, settled along the fertile plains of the Indus Valley and from a nomadic race gradually turned farmers and expanded and developed their Aryan culture and civilization. In a strict philosophical sense, however, this can hardly be called a philosophical age since it was an age of groping in which religion, philosophical superstition and thought were on the one hand closely interrelated and on the other in constant conflict. But yet it is from this mixture and opposition that the Upanisads came out, as the philosophical development of the thought of the centuries that formed this period. This is important because the doctrines expounded in the major Upanisads have determined the tone if not the precise pattern of Indian philosophical development ever since.²

1 Charles A. Moore and S. Radhakrishnan, editors, A Source Book of Indian Philosophy, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1957, p.XXI.

2 Ibid., p.XXII.

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The literature of this period consists of the four Vedas: the Rg Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda; each of these further has four parts known as Mantras, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanisads. The Mantras are hymns and in reality constitute the real beginning of Indian Philosophy, especially the latter Mantras of the Rg Veda. These poems and hymns progressed from polytheism of the early Vedas through monotheism to the suggestions of monism which were the origins for the monastic tendencies of the Upanisads.

The Brahmanas are chiefly religious documents, some of which give the rules and regulations for the sacrifices and the sacrificial obligations. The concluding parts of the Brahmanas provide the rules and rituals to be observed by the householder, but when the householder has reached old age, then he is supposed to retire to the forest to prepare his soul away from the cares of the world; the ritual for this period of life is given in the Aranyakas.

The Upanisads are rules and matter for the meditation of philosophers. The Aranyakas form a sort of link between the Brahmanas and the Upanisads. Whereas the Mantras are hymns and works of poets, the Brahmanas and Aranyakas are works of priests, the Upanisads are the

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meditations of philosophers. In the Upanisads we find monism in one form or another and it characterizes much of Indian philosophy. It is also in the Upanisads that intuition rather than reason was first recognized as the true guide to ultimate truth and both monism and intuition have had a very marked influence on Dr. Radhakrishnan.

The next period in the development of Indian philosophy is the Epic Period which dated from about 600 B.C. to 200 A.D. and is characterized by the two great epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Though the presentation of the philosophical ideas of the period are not systematic or technical in the use of epic stories to put them across, yet they clearly have the philosophical ideas of the time. The Bhagavadgita which is a part of the Mahabharata, is among the most authoritative texts in Indian philosophical literature.

Some other important texts on Indian philosophy are the Brahma Sutra and, of course, the Upanisads themselves which are a continuation from the first period. Dr. Radhakrishnan has annotated and commented on each

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of these.³ The force of thought which springs straight from life and experience is found in the Upanisads, and the epic greatness of soul which sees and chants the God-vision as in the Bhagavadgita, gives place to strict philosophizing.⁴ A critical philosophy need not always be in conformity with cherished traditions; but the spirit of the times required that every system of thought based on reason should be recognized as a darsana. All logical attempts to gather the floating conceptions of the world into some general ideas were regarded as darsanas.

The third period is the Sutra Period which runs from the early Christian era to about the seventeenth century.

3 The Principal Upanisads, texts, translation, notes and comments by S. Radhakrishnan, London, Allen and Unwin, 1953, pp.958. The Bhagavadgita, texts, translation, notes and comments by S. Radhakrishnan, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1949, pp.388. The Brahma Sutra or The Philosophy of the Spiritual Life, texts, editorial essay, translation and comments by S. Radhakrishnan, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1960, pp.606.

4 S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy in two volumes, Library of Philosophy, George Allen and Unwin, Vol. I, revised ed. 1929, pp.738, and Vol.II, revised ed. 1931, pp.807, reference to Vol.I p.18.

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When the Vedic literature became unweildy and Vedic thinkers were obliged to systematize their views, the Sutra period arose. The principal tenets of the darsanas are stated in the form of sutras or short aphorisms.⁵

These were supposed to be short and clear, free of doubt, giving without any repetition the correct meaning. But often these aphorisms are so brief and condensed that this conciseness makes it difficult to understand the Sutras without a commentary. At other times these serve as reminders to enable one to recall details of the philosophical system to which they belonged. During this period the critical attitude taken by philosophers became systematic and the Sutras gave rise not only to six main systems presented in Sutra forms but also to keen and comprehensive polemics against opposing systems.

The six systems presented in Sutra form during this period are: The Nyaya or logical pluralism; The Vaishesika or realistic pluralism; The Samkhya or evolutionary dualism; The Yoga of disciplined meditation; The Purva Mimamsa or earlier interpretations of the Vedas relating to conduct; and the Uttara Mimamsa or

5 Ibid., Vol. 1, p.22.

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later interpretative investigations regarding the Vedas in relation to conduct. This is also called the Vedanta, or end of the Vedas, a word that will be referred to constantly in the pages to come.

As will be noted later, Radhakrishnan is the exponent of the Vedanta system as commented upon by Samkara, but even here he has his own interpretations and explanations different from those of Samkara.

The fourth period can be called the Scholastic Period when commentaries were written upon the Sutras to explain them. Chronologically, this period runs parallel to the Sutra Period and extends even today with the revival of Indian philosophy by contemporary scholars. The literature of this period is explanatory to a great extent, but can also be strong and polemic when an exponent's views are exposed and refuted. It is also true that some of the commentaries are more confusing than enlightening. The better commentators, however, are very valuable and in some cases respected as much as the author of the systems themselves. Samkara, for example, the writer of the famous commentary on the Sutra of the Vedanta System, is thought of more highly

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as a philosopher than is Badarayana, the seer who wrote the original Vedanta Sutra.⁶ Two other major and well respected commentators are Ramanuja and Mahadeva.

This period in a certain way still continues even today, though at the end of the sixteenth century, Indian philosophy lost its dynamic spirit and went through a period of 'Dark Ages' first with the Moslem invasion of India and then when the British took control of the country, because these invasions controlled even in the realm of thought. The reform or revival movements of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj took a leading part in the revival of Indian philosophical and religious renaissance, during the latter period of British rule in India. In more recent times India has been influenced by western thought but India has also influenced the West through the writings of contemporary poets, sages and philosophers. The outstanding contemporary philosopher who has done much work to have a synthetic approach between East and West, as has been mentioned, is Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

6 A Source Book of Indian Philosophy, op.cit. p.XXII.

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B. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Circumstances and what one might call chance played an important part in the life of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, but what for others would be called chance, for him was destiny. Radhakrishnan quotes Dilthey as saying that life is a mysterious fabric, woven of chance, fate and character. In an autobiographical sketch, Radhakrishnan says,

That philosophy became the subject of my special study, was it a part of my destiny, was it the result of my character or was it mere chance? ⁷

He says this because when he was seventeen and ready to enter the university, he was not sure as to what branch of studies he could choose from; a cousin of his who took his degree that year, passed on his books to him and with these his text books on philosophy. It was at the stage when he was trying to make a choice between mathematics, physics, biology, philosophy and history, that the coming across the text books on philosophy decided his future

⁷ Fragments of a Confession, p.6, in The Philosophy of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, edited by P.A. Schilpp, New York, Tudor Publishing Co., 1952, pp.883. This volume is made up of essays by different authors on various aspects of Radhakrishnan's thought; the first and last essays are written by Radhakrishnan himself and will hereafter be referred to as Fragments of a Confession and Reply to Critics.

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interest. These are the impressions of his choice.

To all appearances this is a mere accident. But when I look at the series of accidents that have shaped my life, I am persuaded that there is more in this life than meets the eye. If the universe is a living one, if it is spiritually alive, nothing in it is merely accidental. 'The moving finger writes, and having written moves on.'⁸

This quotation stresses the underlying spiritual awareness that is so characteristic of both Radhakrishnan's life and his philosophy.

Though Radhakrishnan's philosophy is basically Idealistic, his aim has always been to solve or to try to find an answer to the actual problem of daily life in an Idealistic fashion which for him is the only way to a satisfactory solution to live meaningful lives.

My conception of a philosopher was in some ways similar to that of Marx who proclaimed in his thesis on Feurbach that philosophy had hitherto been concerned with the interpreting life, but that the time had come for it to change life. Philosophy is committed to a creative task. Although in one sense philosophy is the lonely pilgrimage of the spirit, in another sense it is a function of life. My approach to the problems of philosophy from the angle of religion, as distinct from that of science or of history, was determined by my early training. I was not able to confine philosophy to logic and epistemology.⁹

8 Ibid., p.6

9 Ibid., p.6

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For him, therefore, the purpose of his philosophy is not only to find solutions to man's problems as the centre of the universe, but to enable man to master the situations he finds himself in, rather than to let these situations get the better of him.

Though he was undoubtedly influenced by his vast readings and studies of both Eastern and Western philosophies, his philosophy is ultimately his own, based on his experience and reflection:

For my thinking had another source and proceeded from my own experience, which is not quite the same as what is acquired from mere study and reading. It is born of spiritual experience rather than deduced from logically ascertained premises. Philosophy is produced more by our encounter with reality than by the historical study of such encounters. In my writings I have tried to communicate my insight into the meaning of life to foster the life of the spirit.¹⁰

His, therefore, is a philosophy built more on his internal and intuitive experience and knowledge than one built on a logically constructed skeleton. Could it be said that he is a philosopher more in the platonic rather than in the aristotelean fashion? For rather than be braced in

¹⁰ Ibid., p.10.

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by a system, he prefers to take problems from life and find solutions which he hopes will enable man to live these problems if not profit by them.

His originality consists in his typical but at the same time somewhat distinctive statement or re-statement of institutional absolute idealism. Dasgupta sums up Indian idealism thus,

In addition to the doctrine that reality is spiritual, which I believe, is held in one sense or other by all true idealists, there is another assertion which I think holds good of most forms of idealism, viz, that our perceptions of the external world cannot give us the assurance that nature is ultimately such as revealed by them, i.e., our perceptions are illusory. ¹¹

But Radhakrishnan in a clearer and more forceful way has brought out and developed this idealistic tradition by surpassing the personalists in his philosophy of Spirit and the pragmatists in his philosophy of life.

His philosophy might be considered based on the Vedanta system as interpreted by Samkara, though even here he has his own deviations. He has a re-interpretation of the doctrine of Maya in the Advaita Vedanta of Samkara, as will be explained more in detail later on. It could

¹¹ Surendranath Dasgupta, Indian Idealism, London, The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1962, p.26.

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suffice here to say that Radhakrishnan does not agree with Maya as the world of illusion but holds that it meant to Indian philosophers, even to Samkara,

the most obvious way of treating experience which is to regard it as a world of events, of these events the physical ones seem to exist in their own right without any relation to a perceiving mind.¹²

The world of everyday events and things is not ultimate reality, to be sure, but neither is it unreality. By finding the basis of the empirical world in the Absolute, he has defended its reality. The Absolute is the source of the many transformations in the empirical world, but these transformations in the world here and now do not, in turn, affect the integrity or absoluteness of Brahman. In this way he overcomes the greatest obstacle the western mind found in the most highly developed philosophy in India, like Samkara's Advaita Vedanta and paves the way for much greater understanding between the minds of the East and the West.

Finally, Radhakrishnan stands out as unique among modern oriental thinkers because of his special dual role

¹² S. Radhakrishnan, An Idealist View of Life, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1947, pp.352, p.226.

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of Professor of Philosophy held for many years at Benares and at Oxford; this gave him the singular role of bringing out the fine points of western thought and eastern Idealism in what he himself called the Spirit of Man.

In this connection, Professor J.H. Muirhead says of him,

He has the rare qualification of being equally versed in the great European and the not less great Asiatic tradition which may be said to hold in solution between them the spiritual wisdom of the world, and of thus speaking as a philosophical bilinguist upon it. ¹³

For Radhakrishnan, "Religious Idealism seems to be the most hopeful political instrument for peace which the world has seen." ¹⁴

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was born in September/1888, in a small village some miles from Madras, a town on the south-eastern coast of India. His parents were orthodox and traditional Hindus and he had no advantage of either birth or wealth. Till he was twelve, he spent his years in his native village which is a famous centre for Hindu pilgrimages. Of these years he tells us that he had,

13 J.H. Muirhead, "The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan", in the Hibbert Journal, Vol. XXXI, issue of October 1932, p.150.

14 S. Radhakrishnan, Kalki or the Future of Civilization, London, Kegan Paul & Co., 1929, pp.96, p.69.

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from as early as he could remember, "firm faith in the reality of an unseen world beyond the flux of phenomena, a world we apprehend not with the senses but with the mind."¹⁵ He had his high school and college education in Christian (Protestant) missionary institutions and so, at an impressionable age in his life, he became,

familiar not only with the teachings of the New Testament, but with the criticisms levelled by Christian missionaries on Hindu beliefs and practices.¹⁶

All this deeply hurt his sentiments as a Hindu and it was more surprising to him because of his high regard and esteem for the Christian missionaries.

Bred in such beliefs, I was somewhat annoyed that truly religious people - as the Christian missionaries undoubtedly were - could treat as subjects for derision doctrines that others held in deepest reverence.¹⁷

But this criticism also had its positive side, for

15 S. Radhakrishnan, My Search for Truth, a small autobiography in booklet form, Agra - India, Shiva Lal Agarwai & Co., 1946, pp.42, p.1, also found in Religion in Transition, edited by V. Fern, New York, Books for Library Press, 1969, chapter 1.

16 Ibid., p.6

17 Ibid., p.9

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"a critical study of Hindu ideas was thus forced upon me The need for philosophy arises when faith in tradition is shaken."¹⁸

From his college days as a student of philosophy he set as a norm that a good philosopher does not take in all that the teacher says without questioning, but "the true teacher helps us to think for ourselves in the new situations which arise. We would be unworthy disciples if we did not question and criticize them."¹⁹

He started his professional life as a teacher of philosophy in the Madras Presidency College in April/1909, during which period he wrote philosophical commentaries on the great Indian classics of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. He was, at this time, influenced by the writings of Plato, Plotinus, Kant, Bradley and Bergson and started a friendship with Tagora and Ghandi, a friendship which had a tremendous significance to him; he wrote on both of them.²⁰ In 1918 he was appointed Professor of Philosophy

18 Ibid., p.6.

19 Ibid., p.8.

20 "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagora" in two parts, The Quest, Vol.VIII, No.3, April 1917, pp.457-477, and Vol.VIII, No.4, July 1917, pp.592-612, also found in Introduction to Mahatma Gandhi, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1939, pp.13-40.

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at the University of Mysore and in 1921 to the most important philosophical chair in India, the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science in the University of Calcutta. He was later appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University. It was during this time that he was appointed Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, England. In 1926, he gave the Upton Lectures at the personal invitation of the Principal of Manchester College, Oxford and in that same year presided at the International Congress of Philosophy at Harvard where he later gave a series of lectures. After India gained her Independence, he served as her ambassador to the League of Nations, the UNO and the UNESCO. He was appointed Indian Ambassador to Moscow and later elected as India's Vice-President and then as President. In 1967 he retired from public life and has gone back to writing.

C. PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS

In the philosophical works of Dr. Radhakrishnan, one notices the development of his ideas and the emergence of new trends, with the shift of emphasis from stage to stage and a gradual strengthening of his idealistic view of life.

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The thesis for his M.A. examination was written on the Ethics of Vedanta and it shows how even as a student he was not satisfied with the concept of Advaita philosophy and in his thesis he made an attempt to reply to the criticism that Advaita Vedanta had no firm basis in practical conduct.²¹ During the next few years he contributed a number of essays and articles to: Journal of Ethics; he wrote on 'Karma and Free Will', 'Nature and Convention in Greek Ethics', 'A View of the War for India', 'Morality and Religion in Education', 'Bergson's Idea of God'.

His first book published was that on 'The Philosophy of Rabindernath Tagore';²² he emphasizes the Vedic-Upanisadic element in Tagore's thought and sums up the poet's message by saying that Tagore's Supreme Spirit is not abstract but very concrete, the dynamic life giving rise to all dynamism. He brings out Tagore's wholeness of vision which cannot tolerate any absolute divisions between body and mind, matter and life. When he says that Tagore's

21 V.S. Naravane, Modern Indian Thought, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1967, p.234 ff.

22 S. Radhakrishnan, The Philosophy of Rabindernath Tagore, London, MacMillan and Co., 1918, pp.294, p.ix.

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message is simple - stick to religion, let religions go, he shows us that the poetry of Tagore reveals a profound insight into the 'unity at the root of all things', he finds a kindred thought to his own absolute monism.

The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy²³ was published two years later. This book is in strong contrast to both ideas and tone to the book on Tagore. Here Radhakrishnan is a militant champion of reason and a determined critic of religion. Reviewers praised the author's dialectic skill to bring out his reationalistic standpoint, but found the contents quite debatable and rather weak, Later on Radhakrishnan admitted that his attempt to divorce religion from philosophy was 'over ambitious' and in later works, especially in his Religion of the Spirit, which is the introductory essay he wrote the book by P.A. Schilpp on his philosophy, he shows a sustained faith in the basic unity of Philosophy and Religion.

23 S. Radhakrishnan, The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, London, MacMillan & Co., 1920, pp.xii+463.

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In his Reign of Religion, he calls religion a 'disturbing factor' in philosophy and says,

A religious system, though the terminus of philosophical study, should not be its growing influence. It does not augur well for the future of either religion or philosophy if religion becomes the starting point and dominating motive in philosophy.²⁴

In the same book he also criticizes religion for harping upon the weakness and imperfections of man. In none of his books has the gulf between the religions and philosophical attitudes been so strongly emphasized. In fact, his effort has been to show that there is no fundamental opposition between the two.

It is interesting to find out why Radhakrishnan switched his position of a rationalist to a religious philosopher. The main reasons for his doing this were that on a deeper study of Ancient Indian philosophy, he saw why the stress on religion was not so much because philosophy was incapable of standing without it, but because religion forms such an important part in the life of man, that any philosophy which claims to answer man's problems and account for man in his present set up, can

24 Ibid., p.63.

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have no meaning without considering the very important role man's spirit has in the process of his life. The moment the purpose of philosophy for him was to change, rather than to interpret life, he found it impossible to do so without bringing into foreground the very close relationship that exists between religion and philosophy, a relationship based not on feeling or myth, but on reason.

Three important works were published during the years between 1923 and 1929. 'Indian Philosophy' in two volumes,²⁵ is considered to be his great work and was the outcome of twenty years of labour and reflection. In this work he combines the exposition, criticism, comparison and interpretation of the various Indian philosophical systems and the author betrays a clear leaning towards Advaita Vedanta. But he does justice to other systems as well and shows a basic unity of Indian thought which is common to all ancient Indian systems. This book was hailed not only for its comprehensiveness but also for its sustained, excellent style which has made Indian Philosophy so much more enjoyable to read. Phrases like: 'to be spiritual is to think so hard that thinking becomes viewing'; 'in liberation, a man becomes

25 op.cit., in reference 4 p.ix.

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his own masterpiece'; 'gorgeous flowers justify the muddy roots from which they spring'; 'the last part of life's road is to be worked in single file'; 'the path to perfection is a slope rather than a staircase'; 'it takes centuries of life to make a little history and it takes centuries of history to make a little tradition'; 'we cannot put our souls in uniform'; 'when the wick is ablaze at the tip, the whole lamp is said to be burning'; 'a millenium is the time when all heads will be hard and all the pillows soft'; are not uncommon among his writings.

The 'Hindu View of Life'²⁶ was published in 1926 and was based on the author's Upton Lectures at Oxford. His main theme is that Hinduism is not a rigid set of doctrines but a way of life, an attitude distinguished by its tolerance, sympathy and breadth of vision. In this book he at times overdoes the role or importance of tradition, but this is corrected in his later writings. It is an attempt to view concepts of Indian thought in

26 S. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, London, George Allen and Unwin, 8th imp., 1950, 133 pp.

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the wider perspective of values and conventions and the positive elements of Hindu thought which came to the author while working on 'Indian Philosophy' are here frequently highlighted. His style here too is catching.

'Kalki',²⁷ is a small volume published three years later, in which Radhakrishnan discusses the implication of technological growth, warning that uniformity goes hand in hand with inward disintegration, and that the concept of progress is itself used in justification of levelling down. One cannot draw a line between light and darkness in a world where all is grey, and for true harmony which he says can only be in the spirit, religious idealism can be best suited to provide the animating power. This is a development over the misgivings expressed in the 'Reign of Religions'.

'An Idealist View of Life',²⁸ is regarded by many as Radhakrishnan's most significant contribution to modern philosophical thought. It is an account of what he describes as his personal faith and his reasoning,

27 op.cit., in reference 14, p.xviii.

28 op. cit., in reference 12, p.xvii.

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supplemented by intuition. He comes forward as a spokesman of the East and tries to show that because of a deep undercurrent of Idealism that runs through the philosophical systems of the East and the West, they are not as divergent as they appear. The author does not claim any originality for the theories he has advanced in this book, but there is much in this book which is refreshingly new. Of this book, Professor Muirhead says:

If originality in philosophy as in poetry, consists not in the novelty of the tale, nor even in the distribution of light and shade in the telling of it, but in the depth with which its significance is grasped and made to dominate over details, 'An Idealist View of Life' certainly does not fail in this quality.²⁹

In this book, many specific problems are taken up and studied, problems concerning reality and knowledge and solutions offered in Indian and Western thought are examined comparatively. But the author's use of the term 'Idealism' is very wide.

An idealist's view of life only contends that the universe has meaning, has value. Ideal values are dynamic forces; they are the driving power of the universe. The world is intelligible only as a system of ends. Such a view has nothing to do with the problem, whether a thing is only a particular image or a general relation.³⁰

29 op.cit., Hibbert Journal, vol.xxi of October, 1932, p.149.

30 An Idealist View of Life, op. cit., p.15.

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This book marks Radhakrishnan's convictions on the fundamental questions of philosophy. In particular spheres of life like educational, social, cultural, political, his attention has shifted from metaphysics to ethics, aesthetics and political thought.

Radhakrishnan's other important works could be grouped topicwise and often the titles themselves are indicative. 'Gautama, the Buddha',³¹ 'Dhammapada',³² and 'The Teachings of the Buddha',³³ show a deep understanding of Buddhism and the realization of the important role of Buddhism in Indian culture. 'Mahatma Gandhi',³⁴ and 'Great Indians'³⁵ point to the growing desire of the spirit of nationalism as an expression of current thought.

31 S. Radhakrishnan, Gautama the Buddha, Oxford, The University Press, 1938, pp.50.

32 S. Radhakrishnan, Dhammapada, Oxford, The University Press, 1950, pp. viii-192.

33 The Teachings of Buddha, Hibbert Journal, by S. Radhakrishnan, vol.xxxii, No.3, April 1934, pp.342-356.

34 S. Radhakrishnan, Mahatma Gandhi, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1949, pp.557. An essay and introduction by the author.

35 S. Radhakrishnan, Great Indians, Bombay, Hind Kitaba, 1949, pp. 108.

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'Education, Politics and War',³⁶ 'Freedom and Culture',³⁷ 'Is This Peace?'³⁸ and 'The Spirit in Man'³⁹ reflect a keen awareness that philosophical speculation must be wedded to the practical problems that face humanity in our complex age. 'East and West in Religion',⁴⁰ 'Eastern Religions and Western Thought',⁴¹ 'Religion and Society',⁴² 'The Religion of the Spirit and the World we Need',⁴³ show a sustained faith in the basic unity of Philosophy and Religion, using Religion in the widest possible connotation.

36 S. Radhakrishnan, Education, Politics and War, Poona, The International Book Service, 1944, pp.208.

37 S. Radhakrishnan, Freedom and Culture, Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., 1946, pp.158.

38 S. Radhakrishnan, Is This Peace?, Bombay, Hind Kitaba, 1945, pp.70.

39 S. Radhakrishnan, The Spirit in Man, Madras, Madras University Press, 1931, The Principal Miller Lectures.

40 S. Radhakrishnan, East and West in Religion, London George Allen and Unwin, 1949, pp.146.

41 S. Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, pp.xiii-396.

42 S. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1959, pp.244.

43. S. Radhakrishnan, The Religion of the Spirit and the World We Need, same as Fragments of a Confession, op.cit.

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Though these books, published after 'An Idealist View of Life', do not advance Radhakrishnan's thought very much, their significance is enormous. It is through these that Radhakrishnan has come to be recognized as a constructive philosopher of the first rank and a humanist whose voice is always raised on the side of accord, unity and integration as against all that is discordant and derisive. These works show an emancipation from national and religious bias; in the political sphere, they indicate a determination to put persuasion above force and freedom above regimentation.

An attempt to structurize Radhakrishnan's philosophy under various philosophical headings though not an easy task, could be rewarding. This is not easy because his writings are so numerous and defused in the sense that he takes problems and looks for practical solutions to them, rather than construct a whole philosophical system, because he considered any structure a straight-jacket that could kill philosophical depth and originality. But on the other hand, to structurize his thought could help towards a better understanding of his

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originality. For him, "philosophy is not so much a conceptual reconstruction as an exhibition of insights".⁴⁴

44 My Search for Truth, op.cit., p.25.

PART I

CHAPTER I

RECONSTRUCTING RADHAKRISHNAN'S PHILOSOPHYA. The World As We Know It

Before going into what Radhakrishnan has to say about the world as we know it through our senses and the phenomena that exist, it is necessary to know what Samkara says about what we call reality. As was said earlier, Radhakrishnan bases his own ideas on Samkara's Vedanta, but gives his own interpretation, among other things, to the doctrine of 'Maya'.

In keeping with the emphatic teaching of there being only One Reality, Samkara explains the empirical world not as a real creation, but as an appearance which God conjures up with his inscrutable power -- Maya. "Brahman and the world are not different"¹, making the relation between the two an inadmissible one. To make this conception of Maya more intelligible to ordinary experience, he interprets it in the light of ordinary illusions that we have in daily life, when a rope appears

1 The Brahma Sutra or Samkara's Bhasya, II, 1.20

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for example, as a snake, or a glittering shell appears as silver. "The world of multiplicity is an aspect which reality takes for us, though not for itself."² "We have 'parinama' or transformation, when the rope appears as a snake."³ These different illustrations used by Samkara of the rope and the snake, the shell and the silver, the desert and the mirage, are intended to indicate the one-sided dependence of the effect on the cause and the maintenance of the integrity of the cause.⁴

In all such cases of illusion there is a substratum or a reality, e.g., a rope, a shell, etc., on which something else, e.g., snake, silver, etc., is imagined or superimposed owing to the ignorance of the substratum, but also makes it appear as something else. Our perception of the world's objects can be similarly explained: we perceive the many objects in the one Brahman on account of our ignorance - 'Avidya' - which conceals the real Brahman from us and makes it appear as the many objects.

2 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.570.

3 The Brahma Sutra, vol.II, 1.28

4 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.570.

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"Since Maya is thus deceptive in character, it is called 'avidya' or false knowledge."⁵ When the juggler produces an illusory show, makes one coin appear as many, the cause of it from his point of view is his magical powers or skill, whereas from our point of view the reason why we perceive the many coins is our ignorance of the one real coin. Applying this analogy to the world appearance, we can say that this appearance is due to the magical power of Maya in God and we can also say that it is due to our ignorance; all depending from which point of view one looks at the problem. "Maya and ignorance are, therefore, two sides of the same fact looked at from two different points of view. Hence, Maya is also said to be the nature of ignorance."⁶

Lest one should think that Samkara's position fails to maintain pure monism, because two realities, God and Maya, are admitted, Samkara points out that Maya as a power of God is no more different from God than the power of burning is from fire. There is then no dualism but pure monism - Advaita -.

5 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.577.

6 S. Chatterjee and Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1968, p.49.

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Maya cannot differ from God which has no second. The universe is not due to any addition to Brahman from some other source of reality, for nothing can be added to that which is already perfect. It is, therefore, due to non-being. The process of the world is due to a gradual depravation of reality.⁷

The point of God's creative power comes next into question. Does God not possess any creative power? Samkara replies that so long as one believes in the world appearance, he looks at God through the world as the creator of it. But when he realizes that the world is only apparent, that nothing is really created, he ceases to think of God as a creator. To one who is not deceived by the magician's art and sees through his trick, the magician fails to be a magician; he is no longer credited with any magical powers. Similarly, to those who see nothing but God in the world, God ceases to have Maya or the power of creating appearances. For the monist, one just cannot talk of God as creator.

To represent God as dependent for self-expression on creation is to represent him as exclusively imminent. Samkara does not accept the view of transformation.⁸

7 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.570.

8 Ibid., p.568.

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Radhakrishnan insists that the philosophy of Samkara, rationally interpreted, cannot be regarded as an outright repudiation of the world's reality. He believes that the doctrine of Maya has been employed by Indian thinkers with a definite purpose, "to denote the distance between time and eternity, between appearance and reality and it signifies the fragility of the universe",⁹ the phenomenal character of the changing self and the world too. It "does mean that the empirical world, with the selves in it, is an illusion, for the whole effort of the cosmos is directed to and sustained by the one Supreme Self."¹⁰ The aim is practical, to transfer attention from that which is transitory, to that which is the real norm of all value.

When Hindu thinkers ask us to free ourselves from Maya, they are asking us to shake off our bondage to the unreal values that are dominating us. They do not ask us to treat life as an illusion or be indifferent to the world's welfare.¹¹

9 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.27.

10 Ibid., p.28.

11 Ibid., p.47.

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There are, no doubt, many scholars who will agree with this interpretation of the texts, but Radhakrishnan does not see why he cannot draw these conclusions to save Samkara's interpretation from the problem of duality.

There is another aspect of the doctrine of Maya to which Radhakrishnan has often drawn attention. This is the aspect of mystery which appeals to the imaginative side of human nature. The Absolute, "is the ideal home of infinite possibilities and the actual source of them".¹² Of these, one concrete possibility has to be the creation of the world; but the reason why this happened is not known to us and, therefore, Maya simply suggests the inability of human nature and of the human mind to fathom this mystery.

Maya does not imply that the world is an illusion or is non-existent absolutely. The world is a delimitation distinct from the unmeasured and the immeasurable. But why is there this delimitation? The question cannot be answered, so long as we are at the empirical level.¹³

12 The Bhagavadgita, p.38.

13 Ibid., p.38.

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Radhakrishnan contends that the entire history of philosophy in India as well as in Europe, has been "one long illustration of the inability of the human mind to solve the problem of creation",¹⁴ and he sometimes gives the impression that he considers speculation about creation to be largely profitless. This would mean that the relations of the Absolute with the empirical world is indefinable.

As to how the primal reality in which the divine light shines everlastingly can yet be the source and fount of all empirical beings, we can only say that it is a mystery, Maya.¹⁵

And this sense of mystery also arouses our wonder for these things.

Radhakrishnan observes:

Samkara who is rightly credited with the systematic formulation of the doctrine of Maya, tells us that the highest reality is unchangeable, and therefore that changing existence, such as human history, has not got ultimate reality. He warns us, however, against the temptation to regard what is not completely real as utterly illusory. The world has empirical being which is quite different from illusory existence. Human experience is neither ultimately real nor completely illusory. The world is not a phantom, though it is not real.¹⁶

14 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.90.

15 Ibid., p.90.

16 Ibid., p.86.

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The problem is that any repudiation of the reality of the world would make all ethical relations meaningless. Therefore, Radhakrishnan examines the whole doctrine of Maya and concludes that it does not make the world an illusion, or a mirage, or a dream, but it simply indicates that the world is relatively real. He states that he has interpreted the doctrine of Maya, "so as to save the world and give it real meaning".¹⁷ Therefore, the implications for the status of the world that Maya has, are, according to Radhakrishnan, the following:

Maya indicates that the world is 'derived being'. The world is an expression of the Absolute, not the Absolute Itself. "To mark the distinction between Absolute Being and dependent being, we call the latter Maya."¹⁸ It is a one-sided dependence by which the world depends on the Brahman, but the Brahman does not depend on the world, and this relationship is such that the world exists without any change in the being of the Absolute. "The world is not essential being like the Brahman; nor is it mere non-being. It cannot be defined as either being or non-being."¹⁹

17 Reply to Critics, p.800.

18 Ibid., p.800.

19 The Bhagavadgita, p.38.

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Maya would, therefore, mean dependent or derived being.

Maya also describes the temporal or transitory character of the world. There was a time when the world was not and there will be a time when the world will cease to be.

History has a beginning and an end, but this does not mean that the interim period between the beginning and the end is an illusion. "To consider history as transitory is not to equate it with non-existence or the illusory."²⁰

Maya also denotes creative power of the Brahman, who as Isvara creates the world. Maya is derived from the root 'ma' which originally meant to build or to make forms.

There is no suggestion that the forms, the events and the objects produced by Maya or the form-building power of God are only illusory The world is not a deception but the occasion for it.²¹

The analogy of lila or play suggests the free, spontaneous overflow of this form-building power or energy into the universe.

20 Reply to Critics, p.801.

21 The Bhagavadgita, pp. 40 ff.

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The world is the profoundest expression of the divine nature the analogy (lila) is not intended to suggest that the universe is a meaningless show made in a jest. The world is created by God out of the abundance of His joy,²²

As seen before, Maya has a sense of mystery. How can Absolute Being be the foundation and source of all empirical existences? Why should the world exist at all? From where we are, we can only say that it is a mystery or the divine will. This does not affect the status of the world because, due to ignorance or avidya, the real nature of the world is hidden from man.

This avidya is different from real and unreal. If it attains either reality or collapses into nothingness, there would be no tension, no process. Because of this the world is said to be different from either real or unreal.²³

One should be careful not to fall into the deceptiveness that would follow were one not to know that Maya is neither,

The view which regards multiplicity as ultimate is deceptive (Maya), for it causes the desire to live separate and independent lives It tempts us to accept as real bubbles which will be broken, cobwebs which will be swept away.²⁴

22 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, pp.92 ff.
Idealist View of Life, p.344. The Hindu View of Life, p.69.

23 Reply to Critics, pp.801-802.

24 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, pp.94 ff.

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This original interpretation of the status of the world by Radhakrishnan is of great importance and significance to a responsible understanding of Maya. This will lead one not to reject the world but to give it that value which is its due and nothing more. It helps to take the world seriously and nothing more; not too seriously as final or ultimate. Brahman alone is ultimate reality, the world is relatively real, though not an illusion or an empty dream. He goes on to remark,

when the Hindu thinkers ask us to free ourselves from Maya, they are asking us to shake off our bondage to the unreal values which dominate us. They do not ask us to treat life as an illusion or be indifferent to the world's welfare.²⁵

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The question of whether Radhakrishnan's interpretation is faithful to the classical views of Hinduism is often brought out and criticized by some scholars who call him to task for deviating from traditional lines; but in Radhakrishnan's favour one could say that even among the

²⁵ Ibid., p.94.

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classical exponents of the Vedanta there are strong differences of opinion on points of interpretation. Radhakrishnan can be credited with giving an interpretation meaningful and relevant to the present time. He works out his whole arguments from the texts themselves and uses as his guidelines the pitfalls into which the old interpretation had fallen and could not come out of its negative passivism. It is, therefore, to his credit that he has gone out of the beaten track and used philosophical argumentation to prove himself.

Now as for the interpretation itself, there are some questions to be asked. Can his explanation sustain a meaningful view of history and a responsible view of ethical values? Can the doctrine of 'aristi', creation, which Radhakrishnan points out as literally meaning, "emanation, letting loose",²⁶ a doctrine which does not involve the wilful purpose of God, but only a spontaneous process, sustain, guard and fulfill the values of history? Admitting that the world is dependent on God, does the conception of the world as 'relatively real' provide an incentive and an opportunity for man to pursue values such

26 The Brahma Sutra, p.135.

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as truth, goodness, justice and beauty in the drama of history? How can God save the world without himself getting involved in both the suffering and the healing process of the world? Is the subtle distinction between the real and the non-real just a question of words in order to save the basis of a monism? The implications of these questions for the nature and destiny of man in history have to be worked out more fully than has been done so far in Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Maya. For this a firmer metaphysical basis is required.

B. MATTER

After having discussed somewhat in detail what Radhakrishnan thinks about the nature of things that surround man in this world of his, a word could be said as to what he thinks is the construction of empirical matter with which we constantly live and with which we have to work in order to keep life and make it productive.

When he starts speaking of matter, he speaks of it as it is experienced by us in the world of events, and these he divided into physical events, which seem to

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exist in their own right without any relation to the perceiving mind, and mental events or the mental world which is one of continuous movement, perpetually superseding itself with a mobile character that was characterized with the world of life, but matter was held to be immutable. From these we got the various notions of space and time, "the familiar concept of matter being that of an enduring substance moving through a static space in a uniformly flowing time".²⁷ For practical purposes, the physicists are obliged to use the quantum theory for certain purposes and the classical undulatory theory for others, though the two are mutually exclusive.

There is a distinction to be made, in addition, between matter and physical objects. "Matter is a form of energy or action, physical objects are events, happenings, occurrences. Nature is a complex of events, a structure of processes."²⁸ The events are not self-contained, changeless or eternal entities, but only moving points in a continuous passage and are the stuff of concrete existence; that of which existence is made.

27 An Idealist View of Life, p.226.

28 Ibid., p.229.

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They exist not in space separated by time, but in space-time, in which the relation between space and time are altering so constantly that the universe as it changes is characterized by an infinitely varying space-time system.²⁹

Persistent matter has the same reality as cosmic space or cosmic time. Space-time and matter are abstractions from the concrete fact which is a set of events that exist together in concrete reality.

Two aspects can be distinguished in events, the formal and the material. Space-time refers to the formal aspect; each event is limited and not absolute, temporary and not everlasting. Unity to the whole of nature is composed upon it by the space-time relatedness. This relatedness is not a fact in itself but is that which enables us to conceive nature as a process, a passage, single and not multiple and 'events' refer to the parts or aspects of this process.

Nature is an unanalyzable and indivisible process of change in which certain formal attributes called space-time and certain material characteristics called objects, as matter, life, etc., exhibit themselves as standing in many relations to each other and the whole.³⁰

29 Ibid., p.229.

30 Ibid., p.230.

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Mathematical sciences deal with the formal stuff of events with their study of formal abstractions and their logic is a formal one of implications. Pure mathematics having abstracted even from space-time conditions, deals with pure concept of order or structure in the most abstract possible forms. Because the units dealt with in mathematics are characterless and can be shuffled and manipulated with the least interference with their inner nature, mathematics is considered a model science.

For Radhakrishnan, the displacement of hard indivisible matter by electric influences is of greater importance from the philosophical point of view.

Matter is not a thing, but a system of interrelated events. The old view of matter as a permanent substance having certain qualities and standing in various relations and performing different functions is displaced by the conception of matter as a cluster of unstable events.³¹

There is a disappearance of the contrast between matter as inert and life as active, matter as reversible and life as irreversible; the difference now between life and matter is not one of activity or passivity, but between two kinds of activity. As a matter of fact, Newton's first

31 Ibid., p.233.

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law of inertia of matter is based on this internal activity.

There seems to be no impassable gulf between matter and life; atom, molecule, colloid, protoplasm, cell seem to be more or less continuous phases of single process. Matter is concentrated structural energy which makes possible the creation of fresh forms, structures and types. It is as truly creative as living organism or mind. When atoms combine into molecules, they acquire a new status. In virtue of the whole to which they belong, they acquire new qualities which could not be deduced from their nature before the combination.³²

Matter, therefore, cannot be explained by the mind through the mere fact that it is known.

C. BEING AND GOD

The consideration of what is matter and the world in which it is found brings us to the question of there being anything beyond matter and the world with all that is in it. One of the crucial points in philosophy has always been the relation between God and the world, because both the meaning of history and the significance of religious life depend upon it. Radhakrishnan put this in his own way when he said that it raises the enquiry regarding the

32 Ibid., p.233.

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relation between the Absolute which is the ultimate ground and source of all existence, and the personal God, with whom man can enter into warm, personal communion. We could call it a question of theism and absolutism: Is the God of 'bhakti' or cult-worship, with whom man can have joyful communion identical with the Absolute, who is unrelatable?

Another connected question is that of the status of the world of history: Is history, with its joys and sorrows, its ambiguities, perplexities, struggles and achievements of any value in the sight of God? Implied in all this is the basic question of the relationship between metaphysics and ethics in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He upholds the unity of God and the Absolute, and so interprets the doctrine of Maya as to preserve the reality of the world.

There are two forms of the Supreme Reality, 'nirguna and saguna', qualityless and qualified. From observed data, the Supreme is conceived to be the Cosmic Lord, creator, governor and guide of the universe. When we experience the Supreme, it is understood to be transcendent to the world, lifted above all categories and is described only in negative terms. A great deal of zeal, passion and ingenuity has been spent on the attempts to resolve the problems to which silence or adoration would seem to be the most adequate response. The nature of the Absolute is manifested by the comment of silence.³³

33 S. Radhakrishnan, The Indian Approach to the Religious Problem, p.180, essay in the book, The Indian Mind, by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1967, xi+pp.458.

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For Radhakrishnan, philosophy is a quest for truth which underlies existence.

The very name metaphysics characterizes the type of inquiry which goes beyond what is given to us. Whereas science deals with existent objects, philosophy tries to envisage the hidden structure, discover and analyse the guiding concepts of ontological reality.³⁴

Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is there this world rather than another?

Towards this end, the primacy of Being is rightly emphasized, as a basis for all existence. Being is the most universal and most comprehensive concept. The very existence of this world implies the existence of Being from which the world gets its origin, because Being is the foundation of all that exists.

But though Being is the foundation of all existence, it is not itself anything existent. Whenever we say that anything is, we make use of the concept of being. It is, therefore, the most universal and most comprehensive concept.³⁵

The nature of Being is unfolded by the study of its existences, though we cannot prove it; but its nature

34 Fragments of a Confession, p.38.

35 Ibid., p.38

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is self-evident for if Being were not, nothing can possibly exist. Metaphysics goes beyond the sphere of daily life, the objects of science, and rise to the transcendental conception of Being itself. It is not an object of thought or the result of production. "If anything is, then Being is. As this world exists, Being is."³⁶ Here it is important to recall Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Maya and how it means not illusion as it meant to the traditional Indian philosopher, but something positive; because of this interpretation, he is able to come to the knowledge of an absolute, necessary Being. This basic metaphysical concept of his controls his epistemology.

Aseitas means the power of Being to exist absolutely in virtue of itself, requiring no cause, no other justification for its existence except that its very nature is to be. There can be only one such Being and that is the Divine Spirit. To say that God exists 'a se', of and by reason of Himself, is to say that God is Being itself.³⁷

Therefore, following the Upanisads, for Radhakrishnan, there is only one Being. Ultimate Reality is only one, not many; it is Spirit, not matter. He is

36 The Indian Approach to the Religious Problem, p.80,

37 Ibid., p.39.

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an avowed monist who clearly defines God and the Absolute. He goes on to say that "this is the concept of the Brahman formulated in the Upanisads; it is the 'I am that I am' of the Christian Scriptures".³⁸ This notion becomes clear in this passage,

In Him (God) there is no distinction whatever. Even the distinction between the knowing subject and the known object is lost. God knows Himself, not through representations of Himself, but without mediation through His own being. God is absolute as distinct from dependent or conditioned being. As the ground of an ordered multiplicity He is one and not multiple. That which is to make all conditions possible cannot itself be subject to conditions.³⁹

If this is so, then the problem is to relate the conception of Ultimate Reality to the world of becoming. It is to relate the world of changing, time-conditioned history to the permanent and eternal Brahman (God), without sacrificing the reality of history on the one hand and the absoluteness of the Brahman on the other. Recognizing this problem, he tries to work out his answer along the lines of Samkara's interpretation. Brahman is both 'nirguna' i.e. without qualities and 'saguna' i.e. with qualities.

38 Ibid., p.39

39 Ibid., p.39

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As pure Being, Brahman cannot be described. At best one can say what the Brahman is not, not what it is. When asked to define the nature of the Brahman, the seer of the Upanisad sat silent and when pressed for an answer, exclaimed that Brahman is silence.⁴⁰

But from this, Radhakrishnan rightly argues that it is not correct to conclude that Brahman is not a negative concept only because it cannot be described, "a mere indeterminate blank, an uncomfortable night of nothing, Brahman is not a mystery hidden in a cloud of negative phrases".⁴¹ A negative description does not deprive the Brahman of its positive meaning; because a negation is only an affirmation of absence, and the negative has meaning only in relation to the positive. That is why though the Upanisads while talking about the Brahman say 'neti, neti', i.e., not this, not this, describe the Brahman as truth, consciousness and bliss.

However, the 'nirguna' Brahman and the 'saguna' Brahman are not two entities, but one and the same, viewed

40 The Hindu View of Life, p.26.

41 The Brahma Sutra, p.126.

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from different points of view. 'Nirguna' is Being-in-repose, 'saguna' is Being-in-activity. The transition from one to the other is through divine freedom. Pure Being is not locked up in its own transcendence. It is this concept of divine freedom in activity that unites the static and dynamic nature of Being. This also helps Radhakrishnan to understand the conception of creation, as to how or why the world owes its existence to God.

The Supreme has necessary being, or more accurately, it is its own being and it is infinite because it possesses infinite possibilities. The mystery of the world abides in freedom. Freedom is the primordial source and condition of all existence. It precedes all determination.⁴²

From this statement, it is clearly implied that Being is not just static, but dynamic, that repose does not rule out activity. It also means that freedom implies both potentiality and actuality, so that the existence of possibilities within the Godhead and the actualization of one particular possibility are both based on divine freedom. Finally, it also means that creation is the fruit of the divine exercise of freedom and the world

42 Fragments of a Confession, p.40.

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exists because of the sustaining presence and activity of God. Creation, says Radhakrishnan, is "the will of God".

The cosmic side of Being is 'Isvara' who is the Brahman, active in his freedom as Lord and Creator. He is the mediating principle between the Brahman and the world, relating the "timeless calm and peace and the timeful joy of activity".⁴³ In the Brahman there are infinite possibilities because absolute being is also absolute freedom. One of these possibilities is Being translated into the world of time and space through Isvara. Therefore, the world is a manifestation of one specific possibility of the Brahman, "God works and reveals Himself through it".⁴⁴ Radhakrishnan says that it is a mystery why the world came into existence, it is simply an expression of divine freedom. It is the nature of the Brahman to grow into the world; the world is an affirmation of the Absolute. "The universe is the energizing of God. It is free play, like the work of an artist whose creations are the world."⁴⁵

43 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, pp.443 ff.

44 Fragments of a Confession, p.42.

45 Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p.286.

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There is no duality between the Brahman and Isvara,

while the Absolute (Brahman) is the transcendent divine, God (Isvara) is the cosmic divine. While the Absolute is total reality, God is the Absolute from the cosmic end.⁴⁶

Contact with the personal God gives religious experience its meaning and reality:

In religious experience personal encounter is as real as the encounter of subject and object in cognitive experience. We meet a 'thou' whom we can influence by prayer and worship. While Brahman is the transpersonal ground, an abyss of everything, Isvara is the Personal God.⁴⁷

It might be interesting to note there that Radhakrishnan compares the relation between Brahman and Isvara to the relation between God and the 'logos' in the gospel of St. John. The 'world relatedness' of God is brought out through the conception of Isvara or 'logos'. This created world does not in any way affect the Brahman. "All the sources of its being are found within itself. The world of change does not disturb the perfection of the Absolute."⁴⁸

The major points, therefore, in the metaphysics of Radhakrishnan could be summed up thus: Ultimate Reality,

46 Ibid., p.281.

47 The Brahma Sutra, p.126.

48 Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p.285.

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is One, and therefore plurality is only an appearance. This 'appearance' is not a dream nor an illusion as has been shown in his explanation of Maya, and is in perfect keeping with his position of 'advaita' or absolute monism.

Ultimate Reality is spiritual. By upholding this position of absolute idealism, Radhakrishnan rejects all materialistic views of reality as inadequate, partial and misleading. "The ultimate principle of reality is not matter, solid, stubborn, unconscious. It is the very essence of spirit, self-active motion."⁴⁹

Besides consciousness in the animal world (perception and action), and self-consciousness in the human (intelligence and will), we have spiritual consciousness or super-consciousness, a level of experience at which new aspects of reality reveal themselves.⁵⁰

As we are to interpret the unknown by the known, the supreme principle is regarded as the self, not limited and particular, but infinite and universal. The supreme is the self of the universe.⁵¹

49 Religion and Society, p.29.

50 An Idealist View of Life, p.301.

51 S. Radhakrishnan, The Religion we Need, London, Ernest Benn, 1928, pp. 32 ff.

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The Brahman has two aspects; the impersonal, indescribable Absolute and the personal, qualitatively describable God. The impersonality of the Brahman does not mean that it is purely a negative concept. It simply means that it exceeds both mere finite and the infinite.

The why and how of the existence of the empirical world and individuals is a mystery expressed in the doctrine of Maya. This does not mean illusory but that it is non-ultimate or dependent, as has been explained.

Brahman is indescribable in the same sense that human conceptual forms cannot exhaust it, but it is in some way characterized by value. Brahman is not only being and freedom, but also truth, consciousness and bliss. This point is important for its implications for ethics, as Radhakrishnan strongly repudiates any suggestion that the Vedantic view does not make room for moral action. Quoting the Upanisads, he says "God is both truth and virtue."⁵²

Reality is in some way characterized by value, and one gets the impression that even the indescribable

52 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.104.

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Absolute, though free of all other characteristics, and though said to be above even the category of good or value, represents perfection as well as reality.

Although we do not know the exact 'how' of the creation of the universe, we can recognize an intelligible evolutionary process by which the ultimate spiritual reality is ever more progressively expressed in advancing forms,⁵³ such that the world we know is ever more progressively the world of such evolution, for, as he says, "....the beginning and the end are merely ideal...."⁵⁴ or again,

the ultimate reality not only of man but of the universe is spirit, which as it manifests itself in relationship to human beings is a free, a changing, a developing spirit.⁵⁵

But the Real is One. When Radhakrishnan speaks of the two aspects of the Real, he follows the Upanisads;

God who is the creator, sustainer and judge of this world, is not totally unrelated to the Absolute. God is the Absolute from the human end.⁵⁶

53 Religion and Society, p.103.

54 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, p.116.

55 Ibid., p.103.

56 An Idealist View of Life, p.344.

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The impersonality of the Absolute is not its whole significance. The Upanisads support Divine activity and participation in nature and give us a God who exceeds the mere infinite and the mere finite.⁵⁷

The supra-personal and the personal representations of the real are the absolute and the relative ways of expressing the one reality.⁵⁸

When we look at the Absolute from the cosmic end, not as it is in itself, but as it is in relation to the world, the Absolute is envisaged as 'Isvara' or personal God who guides and directs the process by His providence.⁵⁹

While the fullness of spiritual being transcends our categories, we are certain that its nature is akin to the highest kind of being we are aware of in ourselves.⁶⁰

The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view.⁶¹

Fearing that all this interpretation of the aspects of God could go against his basic theory of monism, he keeps on insisting in one or more ways that the Real is but One.

57 The Bhagavadgita, p.22.

58 The Hindu View of Life, p.31.

59 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.92.

60 An Idealist View of Life, p.103.

61 Ibid., p.345.

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When the whole universe reaches its consummation, the liberated individuals lapse into the stillness of the Absolute.⁶²

In this final stage, as in the higher mystic stage, it is the Absolute that man is concerned with. "In the mystic states we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness."⁶³

God though imminent, is not identical with the world until the very end. Throughout the process there is an unrealized residuum in God, but it vanishes when we reach the end.⁶⁴

What is the end of man in this constant movement? Radhakrishnan is not bothered with the individual salvation. He believes in the simultaneous salvation of all 'sarvamukti', but not in the salvation of each separately 'pratyeka-mukti'. He argues thus, as God is the creator of the world, so long as the world lasts, God must continue as God without becoming one with the Absolute. But the individual who is a creature of God, must remain with God till the latter enters the Absolute. And the world cannot disappear if there is a single soul without salvation, so

62 The Hindu View of Life, p.63.

63 An Idealist View of Life, p.105.

64 Ibid., p.340.

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individual salvation can only be incomplete salvation, and souls that realize ultimate Truth will remain with God till final dissolution of the world.⁶⁵

Radhakrishnan rejects the charge of an individual annihilating unity which destroys the individual self and renders is insignificant,

we are not through this process of spiritual self-realization abolishing our individuality, but transforming it into a conscious term of the universal being, an utterance of the transcendent divine.⁶⁶

While the realized soul attains at the very moment of release a universality of spirit, it yet retains its individuality as a centre of action as long as the cosmic process continues. The loss of individuality happens only when the world as a whole is redeemed, when multiple values figured in it are achieved. The world fulfils itself by self-destruction because a state of perfection or spiritual harmony is the end of the world; and since in monism reality is one, the world which has fulfilled its purpose, destroys itself.⁶⁷

65 History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western in 2 vols., S. Radhakrishnan, Chairman, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1967. cf. Article on Radhakrishnan by P.T. Raju, vol.I, p.535.

66 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.37.

67 An Idealist View of Life, p.306.

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He also quotes Samkara as admitting that,

the whole multiplicity of creatures existing under name and form is, insofar as it has the Supreme Being itself for its essence, true; if regarded as self-dependent, it is untrue.⁶⁸

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Two critical observations could be made at this point on what has been said about Being and God. In his discussion on God and the Absolute, Radhakrishnan seems to leave some questions unclarified. Sometimes he speaks of 'saguna and nirguna', Isvara and Brahman, suggesting a twofold distinction in Ultimate Reality. In other places he points out that there is a fourfold distinction of the Supreme Being; Brahman, Isvara, 'Hiranyagarbha' or World Spirit in its subtle form, and 'Viraj' or World Spirit in its gross form.⁶⁹ These are said to bring out the aspects of the Supreme. At other times he maintains that these are logical distinctions only, the Supreme itself being a unity. A further indication of the Brahman's relation to the world

68 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.31.

69 Fragments of a Confession, pp.40 and 41.

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is given by saying that the World Spirit creates, sustains and ultimately resolves the universe. Moreover, the use of the Aristotelian concept of the 'actus primus' and the concept of 'logos' of St. John makes this discussion even more perplexing. One has to raise the question whether Radhakrishnan's Isvara is the equivalent of St. John's 'logos' from the point of view of metaphysics, because for St. John, God is not an impersonal Absolute but a personal God, and so the comparison breaks down at the very point it is supposed to clarify.

The other question, pointed out by C.J. Webb,⁷⁰ raises other difficulties. In spite of Radhakrishnan's efforts to point out that Isvara, the personal God, is equally important, it is unquestionably true that to Radhakrishnan, personality is a transient phenomenon, or at best a concession belonging to the lower level. To him absolutism is intrinsically superior to theism; and as a result of this attitude, Hinduism, though making room for devotion to a personal God, certainly regards the quest for the Brahman as the highest form of piety.

70 P.A. Schilpp, Op.cit., p.385 ff.

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Therefore, in spite of Radhakrishnan's insistence on the need for devotion, the importance of ethics and the reality of the world, the shadow of absolutism seems to hang over all that he says in this respect.

D. ETHICS AND SOCIETY

No idealistic philosopher of our age has insisted more upon the dependence of ethics upon metaphysics more strongly than has Radhakrishnan. He says:

Any ethical theory must be grounded in metaphysics, in a philosophical conception of relation between human conduct and ultimate reality. As we think ultimate reality to be, so we behave. Vision and action go together.⁷¹

Radhakrishnan explains the dependence of ethics upon metaphysics in terms of value. Just because the ethical idea is grounded in value, it cannot be indifferent to the nature of that reality which is the ultimate source of all value.

71 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.80.

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The question is inevitable whether the ethical ideal is a mere dream or has the backing of the universe. Is man ploughing a lonely furrow in the dark, or is there a transcending purpose that is co-operating with him in his quest for ideals securing him against the ultimate defeat of his plans? Are our values mere empirical accidents, creations at best of the human mind or do they reveal to us an order of being which is more than merely human, a spiritual reality which is the source of significance of what happens in the temporal process?⁷²

In two well written chapters of An Idealist View of Life, entitled 'The Spirit in Man' and 'Human Personality and Its Destiny', Radhakrishnan discourses upon the main themes of ethics, duty, right, freedom and immortality. Yet in these chapters, the greater part is devoted to Intuition and Ethical Life. The reason for this is not difficult to see; it is by intuition, enriched by meditation and sharpened by discipline, that we sense these values as aspects of the Being of God, and the values thus realized become dynamic forces. Since God for him is imminent in ourselves, He is the very core and essence of our beings and of our ethics. Since God once apprehended by the spirit, begins to work in and through the spirit that apprehends Him, to realize the values as aspects of God, to realize, in fact, that God is the unity

⁷² An Idealist View of Life, p.69.

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of these values is to realize the divine in ourselves. On this structure he builds his ethics, because without a sound grounding, he is of the opinion that ethics could not have any value, if they could exist at all.

"The religious man lives in a new world which fills his mind with light, his heart with joy and his soul with life. God is seen as light, love and life."⁷³ This, says Radhakrishnan, is what Spinoza meant by the 'amor dei intellectualis'.⁷⁴ But, if the basis of ethics is intuitionist, its object to realize goodness as "the thought of God",⁷⁵ ethics can have little to do with codes and rules. He is clearly against any conformism which is only external as it is imposed from without and so cannot be long lasting.

Radhakrishnan is, therefore, strongly opposed to the morality of convention, the morality which stems from the society to which we belong. C.E.M. Joad puts it thus,

getting his morals and religion, as he gets his clothes and books, ready-made from the social shop, the average man believes in Jehovah, Jesus and monogamy, if he is born in a bedroom in Dalham, as surely as he believes in Allah, Mohamad and polygamy if he is born in a bedroom in Baghdad.⁷⁶

73 An Idealist View of Life, p.201

74 Ibid., p.200.

75 Ibid., p.199.

76 C.E.M.Joad, Counter Attack from the East, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1933, 269 pp. p.155.

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Though questionable, there is quite some truth in the statement. Radhakrishnan has a similar trend of thought when he says,

Society judges all acts according to well-known common standards. It assumes everything is susceptible to scientific or impersonal treatment. It regards men as machines and reduces every personal problem to general terms, and decides the worth of individual acts in the light of typical situations and moral formulas.⁷⁷

For Radhakrishnan, moral intuition is a form of knowledge; it is knowledge of the good which, as we have seen, is conceived as an aspect of God. In daily life, actions are mostly automatic, being derived from respect to convention; every situation, every duty, every task, is nevertheless, capable of engaging the 'whole self' in us. We are capable of responding, in other words, of responding to every situation not merely with the unthinking, superficial, conventional self, which does what it does because others do the same, but with our whole being. It is this whole self, the integration of all our powers and faculties, which is the moral self, as it is also the aesthetic self and the religious self. It is this integrated self, which is also the spiritual self, which knows its duty, with

77 An Idealist View of Life, p.197.

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"a knowledge which springs from the deeper levels of man's being".⁷⁸ By responding to a situation with the whole self integrating in the response our various energies and faculties, realizing in a word our spiritual nature, we become free. To say that we are free means that we are enabled to leave behind the world of claims and counter claims, which constitutes the framework of what is commonly called morality.⁷⁹

One cannot deal with ethics in Indian Philosophy without dealing with 'Moksha', or liberation, and 'Karma', or rebirth; in traditional Hinduism, Karma is looked upon as a punishment whereby one is to make up for past misdeeds or get purified till one is ripe for Moksha. But when Radhakrishnan deals with Karma and Moksha there is a shift of emphasis, rather subtle, from self to personality and Karma is interpreted more as a principle of continuity than as a retributive rule of life. The body is not a hinderance, a downward drag to be discarded, but as an instrument for the fulfilment of 'dharma' or just law. In the social order, according to Radhakrishnan, the principle of cast is

78 An Idealist View of Life, p.198.

79 Ibid., p.199.

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admitted, but is determined not on the basis of birth, but on one's intrinsic quality. This too is different from the traditional beliefs of Hinduism according to which, the people born into a lower cast were making retribution and so had to accept their plight well in order to make amends for the past.

The four ends of the individual are: 'dharma', 'artha', 'kama', 'moksha'; both society and the practice of good ethics depend to a great extent on this fourfold purpose that man is supposed to have in life. 'Dharma' is the principle which gives order, coherence, and direction to the different activities in life.

It is not a religious creed or cult imposing an ethical or social rule. It is the complete rule of life, the harmony of the whole man who finds a right and just law of his living.⁸⁰

An individual performs the law of his being by performing his appointed dharma. 'Artha' stands for wealth or material well-being; although not an end in itself, material welfare has a place in the total life of the individual and of society. 'Kama' literally means desire. It stands for the normal enjoyment of life, not in excess, referring to the emotional being of man, his desires and appetites to

80 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.351 ff.

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which due recognition should be paid. It pre-supposes work, because unless one works, one cannot have the normal enjoyment of life. 'Moksha' means salvation or release; it is the chief goal and destiny of man.

To enquire into his true self, to live in and from it, to determine by its own energy what it shall be inwardly and what it shall make of its outward circumstances, to found the whole life on the power and truth of the spirit, is Moksha or spiritual freedom.⁸¹

For Radhakrishnan, these four ends are destined to satisfy the different sides of human nature - the ethical, the economic, the emotional and the spiritual. He points out, however, that man's true greatness consists in moving on to the universality of spiritual freedom which is Moksha and that the other three are subordinate to this.

Radhakrishnan has certainly departed from classical Hinduism which has often maintained that the flesh is the prison house of the spirit and that, therefore, the body with its desires has to be disciplined and ultimately discarded, so that the spirit may soar to the heights of freedom. For Radhakrishnan, man is essentially spiritual, but while insisting on the spiritual nature of man, he is careful not to ignore the fact that he is a creature of the

⁸¹ Ibid., p.352.

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world as well. Man is a "complex, multi-dimensional being including within him different elements of matter, life, consciousness, intelligence and the divine spirit."⁸²

When considering man as an ethical individual having social responsibility in history, the influence of the classical doctrine of Kama cannot be ignored. In giving a modern interpretation to this doctrine, Radhakrishnan attempts to reconcile the seemingly inexorable operation of the law of Kama on the one hand and the freedom of the individual to choose, to decide and to act on the other. According to him, the law of Kama has two sides; one stresses the deterministic aspect, and the other emphasizes the freewill aspect.

The deterministic side of Kama is seen in the lawfulness of nature and also on the persistent effects of the past actions on the character of the individual. But the kind of necessity to which man is subject is different from the purely mechanical operation of physical laws.

Kama is the impulse out of which life's forms issue. The whole cosmic evolution is called Kama. The Supreme undertakes it and there is no reason why the individual life should not take part in it.⁸³

82 The Bhagavadgita, p.46.

83 Ibid., p.227.

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However, it must be noted that Kama, "Is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity. It is the embodiment of the world and the will of God."⁸⁴ The inexorable justice in the working out of Kama is strongly emphasized by Radhakrishnan when he observes,

If we fall into error no supernatural will come to our rescue. There is no forgiveness for a broken law. No single word can be unspoken, no single step retracted. The past is determined, however free the future may be.⁸⁵

This retributive aspect of the law of Kama simply stresses the principle that whatever a man sows, that he shall reap. But Radhakrishnan is also concerned with the law of continuity. "Kama should be understood not so much as a principle of retribution as one of continuity."⁸⁶

Kama has often been interpreted as fatalistic, inspiring an attitude which resigns itself to the tragedies of life without fighting to change the circumstances. Radhakrishnan does not believe that Kama does not destroy man's freedom of will. According to him, Kama undoubtedly influences man's actions, but does not cancel his freedom to act. "Kama is a condition, not a destiny."⁸⁷

84 The Hindu View of Life, p.72.

85 Kalki or The Future of Civilization, p.58.

86 An Idealist View of Life, p.275.

87 The Bhagavadgita, p.48.

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To recognize the limitations of man, is not to make him a slave to the circumstances of his birth,

"While it (the law of Kama) 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. Man is not a mere machine of instincts. The spirit in him can triumph over the automatic forces that try to enslave him.⁸⁸

Radhakrishnan here wants to emphasize not so much the reality of freedom, as to point out the balance between freedom and necessity in human life. Man should not be a fatalist, because he is,

not a plaything of fate or the driftwood on the tide of controlled events. He can actively mould the future instead of passively suffering for the past.⁸⁹

He summarizes his teaching in the following words, Life is like a game of bridge. The cards in the game are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to the past Kama, but we are free to make any call as we think fit and lead any suit. Only we are limited by the rules of the game.⁹⁰

88 The Hindu View of Life, p.75.

89 An Idealist View of Life, p.279.

90 Ibid., p.279.

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A few points could here be reviewed to bring out the fact of some questions that might not be easily answered. If his ethics are dependent on his metaphysics, and if Radhakrishnan accepts Absolute Idealism, as the most satisfactory metaphysical theory, is he not driven to deny the value of morality in the ultimate sense? If the impersonal Brahman is the sole reality, can we assign any fundamental significance to questions of ethical conduct which, after all, concern only finite beings living in a finite world? Sometimes Radhakrishnan seems to admit the logic of Absolutism and to assert that in the final analysis morality has to be transcended. "Ethics pre-supposes the separatist view of life. When we transcend it, we go beyond ethical laws."⁹¹ The distinction of good and evil is rooted in activity, but activity "is a characteristic of historical process, and perfection is not historical. It lacks nothing and cannot have any activity in it."⁹²

91 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.103.

92 The Hindu View of Life, p.64.

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Yet, taken as a whole, Radhakrishnan's philosophy does not minimize endeavour. He repeatedly asserts that, "the metaphysical truth of the oneness of the Brahman does not in any way prejudice the validity of the ethical distinction on the empirical level."⁹³ He points to the paradox that the ethical life is an indispensable condition for the attainment of perfection, and thus for the transcendence of the ethical process itself.⁹⁴

In a sense, morality survives even after personal salvation is completed. The freed soul "no longer has any object to aim at, since he has achieved all" and yet he works for the welfare of the world.⁹⁵ Here he quotes the example of Buddha who, having attained enlightenment, postponed his deliverance for forty years only to help the world. "Perfection leads to death, not of morality, but of moralistic individualism."⁹⁶

93 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.621.

94 P.A. Schilpp, op.cit., p.288

95 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.620.

96 Ibid., p.621.

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One is struck by the relative absence of emphasis on the evil that is seen so glaringly in the life of man and of society, when one studies Radhakrishnan's thought on the nature and possibilities of man. If both the goal and the resources enabling man to reach that goal are to be found within man himself; that the spirit in man is divine, then the question arises, from where do evil, selfishness, greed and exploitation come? To trace it back to Kama would only be to raise the question at a different level; to identify it with 'avidya' - ignorance, would raise the question whether, if man had the necessary wisdom, he would have the power to act accordingly? Radhakrishnan himself points out that mere knowledge of ideals, however good they may be, has no power to enable man to reject evil and follow good. Therefore, this question of the presence and mystery of evil, both in personal life and in the life of society, needs further clarification.

Then in considering the nature of man, Radhakrishnan lays great stress on man's personality, pointing out that he is a unity of body and spirit. But if Moksha is understood as "spiritual freedom", how is

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this unity to be understood in relation to Moksha? He recognized the relation of body and spirit in the growth of personality, its achievements, its failures. A close examination of Radhakrishnan's conception of Moksha gives the impression that in spite of his emphasis on man as a unity of body and spirit, in the final analysis, the body is to be left behind. Also, unless Moksha is to be interpreted in terms of fulfilment, and not just as spiritual freedom, the other three goals of individual life would be secondary and subservient to the last.

E. THE SPIRIT IN MAN

Broadly speaking, humanism may be defined as that intellectual attitude which aims at manifesting the greatness of man and enjoins upon him the use of all his potentialities and powers for the attainment of his freedom. In other words,

humanism points out that science and philosophy, art and literature, in short everything that man has achieved as a result of his natural thinking and acumen, must aim at the well-being of man.⁹⁷

97 Spiritual Humanism of Dr. Radhakrishnan, p.264 ff., an expose in I.C. Shanna's Ethical Philosophies of India, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1965, pp.374.

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No one will dispute the adoption of humanism as a philosophy of life in the general sense indicated above. But difficulties arise when a narrow view of this ideology is adopted, or when a particular type of it, like positive humanism, communistic humanism, etc., is advocated as a solution to all human problems. One leads to pragmatism and rules out the value of knowledge as an intrinsic value, banishing metaphysics, religion and even speculative thinking, in favour of pure physics and mathematics.

The latter claims to cure all human ailments by reducing the individual to a mere cog in the social machinery, thereby thwarting his freedom of speech, thought and action.⁹⁸

One of the results of the positivistic attitude of the West is the ideology of pragmatism, according to which, the reality of everything is seen in proportion to its practical utility. W.E. Hocking remarks on this,

98 Ibid., p.267

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Generally speaking, the pragmatic and realistic temper of the West takes things of experience at their face value as real. It takes its physical objects and commercial credits as realities in the full sense of the word. It believes that its 'progress' is largely due to realism. It does indeed remind itself occasionally that these things are not final, and that there is a mystery behind these ourvert facts, but having recognized the existence of a mystery, perhaps once a week, it then proceeds to treat the world as though the mystery were of no practical importance.⁹⁹

The same thinker acknowledges the superiority of Oriental philosophy, for unlike Western philosophy, it is not an intellectual pursuit but has practical significance in advocating not merely a theoretical viewpoint but an actual mode of life.

In contrast, Radhakrishnan's view of the spirit in man is that it should actually spur man on in his daily life, not be a thing just for Sunday use only.

Man is subject, not object. This subjectivity gives him inwardness and freedom. If he loses himself in objectivity, he lapses into routine, rigidity and mindlessness. Democracy requires us to respect and develop the free spirit in man, this is responsible for all progress in human history.¹⁰⁰

99 Religion and Spiritual Value in Indian Thought, P.T. Raju, p.266, essay in Philosophy and Culture, East & West, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1951, pp.832.

100 The Concept of Man, S. Radhakrishnan and P.T. Raju, editors, Lincoln-Nebraska, Johnson Publishing Co., 1966, pp.546, p.23.

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This is what can be called spiritual humanism, it is the answer to a pessimistic attitude in life and the grave situation generated by it. It not only proposed an ideal for the development of the individual, leading him to moral heights and infusing in him moral courage, but also advocates a universal standard of human life which would bring about an integrated development of the whole human race, and solve all problems arising out of a narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness born out of ignorance of the powers of spirit.

Gandhi spelt out the moral principles on which civilization rests: truth and love, 'satya and ahimsa'. Civilizations are saved only to the extent to which they respond to these principles and it is for us to work while yet it is day. Evil can be broken only if we respond to it with good; it is no use cursing the darkness. We must have faith in the spirit of man, the spirit capable of suffering and of compassion, of endurance and of sacrifice, the spirit which has inspired human progress all these centuries.¹⁰¹

That what appears in sub-human forms as tendencies or strivings, become in man conscious will which is guided

101 Ibid., pp.26, p.27.

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by the idea of value. Men are active agents, not passive participants in return of all things to God. They can work with God or turn away from Him. The spirit who has direct contact with the Divine in an experience where the distance between the subject and the object, the lover and the beloved, is overcome, identifies itself with the Divine will and participates in the creative work of God.

Radhakrishnan projects this into a world spirit when he says that:

Today we should not be concerned so much with particular religious dogmas as with the central problem of religion. Today our trouble is not so much with the infallability of the Pope or the inaccuracy of the Bible, not even with whether Christ or Krishnan is God, or whether there is a revelation. All these problems have changed their meaning and are dependent on the one and only problem, whether there is not behind the phenomena of nature and the 'dharma' of history an unseen spiritual power, whether the universe is meaningful or meaningless, whether it is God or chance.¹⁰²

Faced with the facts of pragmatism and communism by which the former in its zeal to dignify man and magnify his rights, turns out to be an extreme individual-

102 The Spirit in Man, p.266.

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ism, and the other with its communistic idealism, tending to be a totalitarianism, Radhakrishnan suggests a possible solution of the human race. He has remarked that one of the chief causes of the confusion and one-sidedness in Western thinkers is that "the soul is the actuality of the organic body in man, even as the vision is the actuality of the eyes".¹⁰³ The correctness of this comparison can be questioned, so too the confusion of the use of the term soul as synonymous with what he refers to as spirit in man.

When he speaks of spirit, it is not anthropomorphic or supernatural which would not be tolerated either by the pragmatist or the Marxist; it is not abstract like the Hegelian notion of spirit, but its presence is asserted on the basis of unity in diversity, similarity in difference, harmony in discord. He does not regard the spirit as substance but identifies it with life, it is something in itself and by itself, and cannot be compared to any substance, subjective or objective.

For him, the 'spirit in man' is the central reality, the basis of his physical existence, biological growth, mental development and intellectual evolution. He defines

103 An Idealist View of Life, p.226.

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'spirit of man' thus:

It is not the physical body or the vital organism, the mind or the will, but something which underlies them all and sustains them. It is the basis and the background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula.¹⁰⁴

His criticism of the positive attitude is not destructive but constructive, in the sense that it aims at irradicating selfishness and radical individualism which are the correlatives of a sceptical attitude. He sums up modern society thus:

We have a world of rationalist prophets, of selfish individualists, of a monstrous economic system compounded out of industrialists and capitalism, of vast technical achievements and external conquests, of continual craving for creative comforts and love of luxury; of unbridled and endless covetousness in public life, of dictatorship in blood and brutality, anxious to make the world a shambles dripping with human blood, of atheism and disdain for soul, a world in which nothing is certain and men have lost assurance.¹⁰⁵

For Radhakrishnan, the idealist tradition has asserted the supremacy of the 'spirit in man'. Mere physical desire and passion, impulse and instinct, even intellect and will do not exhaust his nature. The spiritual status is the essential dignity of man and the

104 Ibid., p.205.

105 The Spirit in Man, p.264.

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origin of his freedom. It is the state anterior to divisions between intellect, feeling and will, where consciousness forms a unity which cannot be analyzed. It is the presupposition, the limit and goal of our divided consciousness.

When the spirit, which is the mind in its integrity, is at work, man has an immediate intuition of his unity with the external, though, in the divided intellectual consciousness, he remains apart and works into the grounds of his own being and discerns his relation to and dependence upon the presence behind the trembling veil of phenomena.¹⁰⁶

When talking about the spirit, there is the image of God in man, a longing in man for all that is great and divine. The values of the human soul are not earthbound but belong to the eternal world to which man can arise through discipline and disinterestedness.

When, in response to the imperative voice of conscience, he renounces everything and dies, he touches infinitude, lays hold on the eternal order and shares his kinship with the divine. At the centre of the soul, there is a something, a spark so akin to God, that it is one with God, and not merely united to Him.¹⁰⁷

106 Ibid., p.267.

107 Ibid., p.267.

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Could this be a sort of resemblance to pantheism?

There is a big difference or gap between worldly wisdom and the wisdom of the spirit. To illustrate this, Radhakrishnan gives the examples of Socrates who could escape death but did not; so too with Jesus before Pilate, who could have been brought to the point of freeing Jesus, but Jesus chose otherwise. This attitude he attributes to the ways of the spirit which are different from the ways of the world:

Common sense and worldly wisdom tell us that if a doorway opens for a man who is in prison, he is a fool if he does not make use of it. Holiness, however, is different from vulgar prudence. It is an inner grace of nature by which the spirit purifies itself of worldly passions and appetites, and dwells in patient, confident communion with the universal spirit. Those who have this chastity of mind and spirit which lies at the very heart and is the parent of all other good, see at once what is good and hold to that and for its sake humble themselves even unto death.¹⁰⁸

The experience of the spirit is different from most other experiences like scientific genius, artistic creation or moral heroism;

108 Ibid., p.273.

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The spirit is at home with itself in religion and its life satisfies every side of our being. The peace which we obtain through it is not mere emotional satisfaction. In it the mind becomes irradiated with the divine light obstinate questions of reason find the answer. The will looses its irresoluteness as it becomes one with the divine will. Spiritual geniuses possess the highest that man can possess, constant contact with the creative principle of which life is the manifestation, coincide with the divine will, serene, calm, inward peace which no passion can disturb, no persecution can dismay.¹⁰⁹

This passage could lead one to think that Radhakrishnan is trying to advocate religion as we commonly understand it as the fulfilment for the spirit of man, but quite the opposite is the case. When he speaks of religion, it is anything but traditional religion or religious practices. It is quite interesting to see in the next chapter what he means by religion, that religion which for him really gives the spirit in man a chance not only to breath its proper life, but to grow and develop in it.

109 Ibid., p.275.

CHAPTER IIRELIGIO PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONA. Religion, Not Religions

The absence of faith and conviction in the spiritual power that man possesses is responsible for religious doubts. But the vacuum created by this doubt, has not been filled in spite of man's efforts to substitute religion by other creeds and convictions like atheism, socialism, pragmatism, etc. Referring to these substitutes for religion, Radhakrishnan says;

Their own lesson is that, notwithstanding the transformation of life, the shifting moral values and pre-occupations of the time, the primal craving for the eternal and abiding, remains inextinguishable, unbelief is impossible. Along with a deep discontent with a standard form of religion, there is a growing seriousness about it. The forms are dissolving, but the needs persist. The millions who neither dare to have a religion nor do without one, are rushing hither and thither seeking for direction.¹

An overwhelming majority of people today feel the absence of any purpose in life. They seek an aim or an ideal for the achievement of which they would strive with zeal and fervour to extinguish the monotony and barrenness that has entered their lives.

1 The Hindu View of Life, p.82.

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For Radhakrishnan, religious experience is the beginning of all religion. "All the religions owe their inspiration to the personal insights of their prophet founders."² This religious experience also provides the raw material for religion just as experimental data is for the physicist. "If the philosophy of religion is to become scientific, it must become empirical and found itself on religious experience."³

As a matter of fact, the existence of this raw material of religion is a continuous, somewhat common experience, with most it is only intermittent.

The direct apprehension of God seems to be as real to some men as the consciousness of personality or the perception of the external world is to others. The sense of communion with the divine, the awe and worship it evokes, which to us are only moments of vision or insight, seem to be normal and all-pervading with the saints.⁴

What are the characteristics of this experience? First, it is an experience of something; in other words, it is not purely subjective, in the sense that it is worked up by our own imagination. We have no more reason

2 An Idealist View of Life, p.89

3 Ibid., p.84

4 Ibid., p.84

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to doubt this than we have to doubt the existence of a molecule or a rose. Certainly the person enjoying it has no doubts. "In the experience itself no question is raised whether the object is real or not."⁵ Secondly, it is not an experience on the part of any single sense or faculty but of the whole being or personality; in this religious experience we become whole men, and not just a unified bundle of faculties and desires. "We reach the religious object by the totality of our faculties and energies."⁶ It is the functioning of this whole that men have to convey by the phrase 'spiritual life'. Man is more truly spirit than he is mind or body, because it is only when all his faculties and energies are integrated into a whole which transcends any one of them, only when by virtue of such integration he realizes all that he has in him to be, that he functions spiritually.

Thirdly, religious experience effects this integration of parts into a whole because it is a response or reaction to a whole. Aesthetic enjoyment is our reaction

⁵ Ibid., p.85.

⁶ Ibid., p.88.

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or response to the beauty of the universe, moral experience to its goodness, science to its natural facts; but religious experience is at once our awareness of and response to the whole, of which beauty, goodness and fact are aspects or manifestations. And just as the response, "unifies all values and organizes all experiences"⁷, in the spirit responding, so does that for which the response is felt unify all the different aspects of being which are studied in the various aspects of being, which are studied in various departments of man's thought and enjoyed in the various aspects of his multiform activity.

Fourthly, not only are the ideas, feelings and faculties of the individual fused into a unity of experience, but that unity is extended to embrace the embrace of experience. Radhakrishnan fully endorses the almost great testimony of the great Christian mystics, that in mystical experience the boundary between self and the not self is crossed and the self, transcending the limitations of its own finitude, passes beyond itself to merge with its object.

7 Ibid., p.88.

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Consciousness and being are not there different from each other Thought and reality coalesce and a creative merging of subject and object results In this fullness of felt life and freedom, the distinction of the knower and the known disappears.⁸

The best way, perhaps, to sum up the characteristics of this religious experience referred to by Radhakrishnan, is to quote a passage from his 'An Idealist View of Life':

It does not come in a fragmentary or truncated form, demanding completion by something else. It does not look beyond itself for meaning or validity. It does not appeal to external standards of logic or metaphysics. It is its own cause and explanation. It is sovereign in its own rights and carries its own credentials. It is self-established, self-evidencing, self-luminous. It does not argue and explain but it knows and is. It is beyond the bounds of proof and so touches completeness. It comes with a restraint that brooks no denial. It is pure comprehension, entire significance, complete validity.⁹

To command this experience and to retain it at will would be heavenly. It is, indeed, the continuance of the experience which constitutes dwelling in heaven,¹⁰

which is not a place where God lives, but a mode of being which is fully and completely real.

8 Ibid., p.92.

9 Ibid., pp. 92 and 93.

10 C.E.M. Joad, op.cit., p.84

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Even gifted human souls are unable to command their moments of spiritual revelation and enjoyment. "We do not know how or why they occur, they sometimes occur even against our will."¹¹ And as this religious experience cannot be summoned, it cannot be retained;

so long as the experience lasts, the individual remains rapt in concentration, but no man can rest in that state for all time. Life is a restless surge. Scarcely is the seer assured of the unique character of the experience than he is caught in the whirl of desire and temptation, discord and struggle.¹²

Radhakrishnan makes a clear distinction of the personal, religious experience and then the interpretation of the fact. The fact is in the nature of an instinctive flash, rarely of a prolonged vision. The knowledge this flash conveys cannot be directly communicated, but we may say it conveys the assurance of three things:

that the soul is in contact with a mighty spiritual power other than its normal self, that this power is also at the same time within itself and that the contact means the beginning of the creation of a new self.¹³

11 An Idealist View of Life, p.94.

12 Ibid., p.94.

13 Ibid., p.99.

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Following upon the fact, there is the interpretation of the fact. In trying to explain the fact, there is always a tincture of interpretation, even in the experience itself, and Radhakrishnan notes that "there is no such thing as pure experience, raw and undigested. It is always mixed up with layers of interpretation."¹⁴ This form which the interpretation takes depends not only upon the nature of the experience but also, and for most of its characteristic features, upon the temperament, education, training and outlook of the one who has the experience. Then he goes on to say that the interpretation suffers more when it has to filter through the minds of followers and that therefore:

the identification of spiritual reality of the universe with the historical figures of Buddha or Christ, the confusion of the simple realization of the universal self in us with a catastrophic revelation from without, is an interpretation, a personal confession and not necessarily an objective truth.¹⁵

Spiritual experience, therefore is at once the basis and starting point of religion and it is also its end;

14 Ibid., p.99.

15 Ibid., p.99.

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and in saying that it is the end of religion, we may say also that to achieve it is the end of religion; we may say also that to achieve it is the object of living. If we use the word mysticism in its widest sense to denote the enjoyment of spiritual experience, we may say that mysticism is the end of life. The object of conduct may thus be defined as a continuous "discipline of human nature leading to a realization of the spiritual".¹⁶ A way of life which Radhakrishnan expressly defines as mysticism. The religious life is nothing but "a spiritual certainty offering us strength and solace in the hour of the universe, that the spirit which gave rise to man will further his perfection".¹⁷

If, as Radhakrishnan points out,

Kant's fundamental aim was to lead philosophy into the safe road of science, his own aim seems to lead philosophy of religion into the relatively safe road of metaphysics. He defines philosophy of religion as 'religion come to an understanding with itself'.¹⁸

He makes an effort to vindicate religious experience as the plains where the realms of essence and existence meet, and as such, at the most indispensable subject matter for

16 Indian Philosophy, vol.I, p.41.

17 The Religion We Need, p.27.

18 An Idealist View of Life, p.84.

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metaphysics, if metaphysics is to be nothing short of a complete theory of reality. And Radhakrishnan claims that reality in its fullness can be known through religion.

Religion for him is not like an artist's vision with no claim to any objective and ultimate reality behind it. Religion which is the bearer of such vision can be interpreted in such a way as not necessarily to imply reality, although it may be shown as an authentic and useful experience. The differential of Radhakrishnan's thought is expressed as follows:

Religion is, in essence, experience of or living contact with ultimate reality. It is not a subjective phenomenon, nor a mere cultivation of the inner life, but the apprehension of something that stands over against the individual.¹⁹

Religious experience bears testimony to the reality of something behind the visible.²⁰

Radhakrishnan always distinguishes the religion of the spirit, as he calls it, from or against the religion of dogma or authority. A considerable part of his writings bear directly on this question. There is a detailed discussion of it in A Fragment of a Confession.²¹ It also

19 The Spirit in Man, p.492.

20 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.85.

21 op. cit., pp.60 ff.

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deals with the cognate question of religion as distinguished from religion, meaning universal religion as different from particular religious traditions.

He makes a significant distinction between the inner essence of religion and the outward, formal structure of religion, which consists in beliefs, creeds, practices, rituals and codes. The distinction made here pervades all his thinking, not only in religion, but in science, art and ethics.

In opposition to this, he makes a distinction between 'Sruti' or the Vedas and 'Smrti' or tradition; the former is independent of any purely human mode of thought, while the latter is based on reasoning and interpretation.²² The idea is that Sruti expresses the inner essence of religion, while Smrti stands for the formal development of theology, cult, codes and the symbols of religious faith.

This reasoned faith has to be sustained by metaphysical knowledge. We have to think out metaphysical presuppositions and attain personal experience of the religious 'a priori' from which all living faith starts. We need intellectual effort and spiritual apprehension. Only reasoned faith can give coherence to life and thought.

22 Recovery of Faith, p.151.

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The worlds of reason and religion do not turn in different directions or orbits. He insists on this as some have the impression that Indian thought is grounded only on tradition and not so much on reason.²³

One of the reasons why Radhakrishnan is so opposed to any formal religion is because it goes against his idea of universal religion. In order to reach universal religion which is the same as religion of the spirit, we have to cross the formal structures of religious faiths.

However perfect and final the revelation may be when once it enters the realm of human apprehension, it is subject to all imperfections of the human mind. The variety of symbolism is due, not to the nature of the experience, but to the prevailing theological or metaphysical conceptions of time and place.²⁴

And, "these colour the expectation of the seer and forms the background through which he interprets his illumination."²⁵ However,

it is wrong to exaggerate the doctrinal differences, overlooking the common basis, the universal fact underlying the historical formulations. Symbols and dogmas are not definitions.²⁶

23 The Indian Approach to the Religious Problem, essay in the book by Charles A. Moore, The Indian Mind, op.cit., p.176.

24 Recovery of Faith, p.154.

25 Ibid., p.155.

26 Ibid., p.154.

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Radhakrishnan brings to bear upon the problem the wisdom of Eastern forms of religion which,

hold that the differences of interpretation do not affect the one, universal truth any more than differences of colours affect the uncoloured light which is transmitted.²⁷

To claim finality or infallability for human pictures of reality is to claim for man what belongs to God.²⁸

However, "the diversity of dogmatic interpretation tends to diminish as we climb the ladder of spiritual perfection".²⁹

In spite of his insistence on the role of reason in religious experience, Radhakrishnan holds that any effort to make religion absolutely rational would be to misconceive its essential character. Plato in his seventh epistle declares his intention of publishing nothing on his 'Idea of the Good'. In a similar strain, Radhakrishnan writes,

27 Ibid., p.155.

28 Ibid., p.154.

29 Ibid., p.155.

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There is no writing of mine on the subject nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study but as the result of long intercourse and common life spent upon the thing, a light is suddenly kindled as from a leaping spark, and when it has reached the soul, it thenceforward finds nourishment for itself. The mystics appeal to us to build the ideal society, the universal republic where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian, where all men as men are of equal worth. Religious geniuses are devotees of the ideal of the universal brotherhood, based on the sanctity of the human person.³⁰

The highest vehicle of any religious experience is, according to Radhakrishnan, mysticism; it furnishes us with the means of knowing God. He writes,

Human arguments are not at their best logical proofs and the most valuable part of our heritage comes from the prophetic souls who announce their deepest convictions, not as their discoveries or inventions, but as self-revelation of God in their own souls. Mysticism is intuition turned to the deepest of all realities, God. God as the Ideal for Reason, springs from the work of mysticism.³¹

Is there such a thing as the mystical faculty? One that functions as an independent and autonomous means to the knowledge of God? Radhakrishnan expresses himself in the affirmative:

30 Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p.278.

31 An Idealist View of Life, pp.219, 220.

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There is in the very self of man at the very centre of his being something deeper than the intellect, which is akin to the Supreme The spiritual glimpses are prophetic indications of an undeveloped power of apprehension in the human mind as well as of undying reality with which it is unable to establish permanent contact without adequate development of that power.³²

In one place he seems to give a rather literal interpretation of this faculty. Perhaps through it he intends to emphasise his point very strongly:

The man with fine senses knows more than the blind man. May not the real exceed the empirical conceptions of it even as the world known to sight exceeds that known to touch? May not a state like that what Tennyson has called a 'last and largest sense' enlarge our knowledge of reality, as the gift of sight would enlarge that of a race of blind men.³³

Without the use of the mystical faculty complete metaphysics is not possible, as otherwise complete knowledge of complete reality cannot be obtained.

"Religion is in essence, experience or living contact with the ultimate reality."³⁴

32 Ibid., p.103

33 Indian Philosophy, vol.II, p.504.

34 The Spirit in Man, p.492.

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In religion there is "an apprehension of the real and an enjoyment of it for its own sake".³⁵ Radhakrishnan calls this faculty, "the spiritual sense, the instinct for the real, which is not satisfied with anything less than the absolute and eternal".³⁶

What is the relation, then, of this mystical faculty to other faculties? It is clear that Radhakrishnan considers the faculty of mystical apprehension to be something special, unique and autonomous. Yet he would maintain that it is not discontinuous with the rest of our mental life. It is a special faculty, but it is not out of touch with the neutral powers of the mind. It has to be located in the comprehensive whole of personality. Radhakrishnan advances several reasons for so doing.

Firstly, while he does not deny that a completely non-meditated knowledge is possible, he would maintain that in actual fact we cannot properly call anything knowledge, unless it is set within the entire cognitive

35 An Idealist View of Life, p.88.

36 Ibid., p.89.

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structure of the mind.

If all our experiences were adequately intuited at once, such immediate intuitions could not be doubted in any circumstances; but as it is, we are compelled to relate our intuitative experiences with others and here we are obliged to employ formulas.³⁷

Then for the purpose of communication and verification and for storing such experiences as part of our accumulated or remembered knowledge, that is, "to impart our experiences to others and to elucidate their implications for the rest of our life".³⁸ It is necessary that the mystical faculty works in close co-operation with other faculties. Further, all knowledge is, in one way of speaking, propositional and as such must be amenable to verification.

When we test the claim of the experience to truth, we are really discussing the claims of the forms of the propositions in which the nature of the experience is unfolded.³⁹

Thirdly, pure mystical experience by which we see the light as it is in its white radiance is only an ideal rarely realized. The rest of our mental apparatus is always at work even in the relatively discreet and

37 Ibid., p.98.

38 Ibid., p.98.

39 Ibid., p.98.

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and exclusive mystical experiences, for "there is no such thing as pure experience, raw and undigested. It is always mixed up with layers of interpretation."⁴⁰

At other times, however, another reason is given, which seems to be just the opposite of the one mentioned immediately above. He says "that in the experience itself, the self is wholly integrated".⁴¹ The idea seems to be that the whole personality, with its rational and intuitive powers, has been redeemed and elevated by the mystical experience, to its own level, so that a person is automatically rendered capable of reasoning the truth and intuiting it as in mystical experience, perceives it face to face. This is not as contradictory as it might appear at first sight, when one sees what Radhakrishnan visualized by ultimate reality.

As a corollary to the great superiority of the Spirit in man, Radhakrishnan has the theory of 'avatara' or the possibility of man's divine descent. Speaking of

40 Ibid., p.99.

41 Ibid., p.96.

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Krishna, as an example of Avatara, he says:

The teacher who is interested in the spiritual illumination of the race, speaks from the depths of the divine law. Krishna's Avatara is an illustration of the revelation of the spirit in us, the divine hidden in gloom.⁴²

Again,

The Lord abides in the heart of every creature and as the veil of that secret sanctuary is withdrawn, we hear the divine voice, receive the divine light, act in divine power. The embodied human consciousness is lifted into the unborn eternal.⁴³

Since, for Radhakrishnan, the world is not an illusion, but relatively real, the struggle between good and evil is not an illusion either. God himself is concerned with this struggle and so the significance of the doctrine of Avatara has to be seen in this context. In his commentary of the 'Gita', Radhakrishnan expounds two stands in the doctrine of Avatara: On the one hand, an Avatara is a divine intervention in history on the side of the good, to offer deliverance, comfort and hope to men caught up in the mesh of gigantic evil forces. On the other

42 The Bhagavadgita, p.35.

43 Ibid., p.36.

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hand, the Avatara is also a demonstration of the divine possibilities of man, showing that through his own self effort, man can achieve divinity here and now. These two emphasis are held together in balance.

For the Gita, the world is the scene of an active struggle between good and evil in which God is deeply interested. He pours out his wealth of love in helping man to resist all that makes for error, ugliness and evil. As God is completely good and His love is boundless, He is concerned about the suffering in the world.⁴⁴

This is in keeping with the classical views which accept the plurality of the Avataras in accordance with the needs of man at different times in history. If God is looked upon as the saviour of men, He must manifest Himself, whenever the forces of evil threaten to destroy human values. This is the divine descent of God in the realm of history.

On the other hand, in the Avataras, there is also an ascent of man into the divine status. Elaborating this point, Radhakrishnan says that the Avatara is the demonstration of man's spiritual resources and latent divinity. It is not so much the concentration of divine majesty into

44 Ibid., p.25

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the limits of the human frame, as the exaltation of human nature to the level of Godhead. Whenever an individual develops special qualities and starts a spiritual and social revolution in the lives of people around him, one can say that in such a person, "God is born".⁴⁵

Combining these two aspects, that is, the divine descent and the human ascent to achieve a common purpose in history, Radhakrishnan writes:

Avatara means descent, one who has descended. The divine comes to the earthly plane to raise it to a higher status. God descends when man rises. The purpose of the Avatara is to inaugurate a new 'dharma' or law. By His teaching an example, He shows how a human being can raise himself to a higher grade of life. The issue between right and wrong is a decisive one. God works on the side of right. Love and mercy are ultimately more powerful than hatred and cruelty. Dharma will conquer 'adharma' or falsehood, truth will conquer error; the power behind death, disease and sin will be overthrown by the reality which is Being, Intelligence and Bliss.⁴⁶

45 Ibid., p.34.

46 Ibid., p.28.

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. . .

It has already been made clear that Radhakrishnan's view of perfection is not fully attainable in the world of time and space; this is clearly implied from the high standard he expects for full contact of the spirit with Reality. True Being cannot be revealed in the realm of the secondary plane of reality which is history. Moreover, Radhakrishnan has consistently upheld that it is the personal God alone who incarnates and, therefore, this reference to "the reality which is Being, Intelligence and Bliss, overthrowing death, disease and sin",⁴⁷ seems inconsistent. This seems to go against his original purpose of philosophy, that it answer's man's problems in this life, that it helps man to live a full life here in this world first; against this, his only defence could be that he sets before man his own limitations in the world of spirit in body.

In answer to the relativists accusation of religion, Radhakrishnan answers that there are different religions, but this circumstance only proves that there are different interpretations of a fundamentally unitary experience. The feature which different religions display

47 Ibid., p.155.

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to the world are local, even parochial and relative to circumstances of time and place which, he says only show that deliverances of religious insights have to be interpreted through the partial, relative and faulty minds of men.

There are a few questions still to be answered in Radhakrishnan's interpretation: How far can the implications of these deliverances be reconciled with the facets of experience and the demands of reason? How far, in fact, do they require a view of the universe and of the function and status of human life within it, which is on other grounds acceptable? Or, to put the question in another way, what sort of universe must this universe be in order that these deliverances may be accepted as significant in the present and vindicated in the future? And is this the sort of universe which from other points of view it does in fact seem to be?

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B. Intuition, the Ways of Knowledge

Radhakrishnan's approach to philosophy, as has already been insisted upon, is not that of a specialist, in the narrow sense of the word, but one of a practical nature. "Philosophy is not so much a conceptual reconstruction as an exhibition of insights."⁴⁸ Philosophy therefore, is not a perpetual discussion of isolated concepts, but should be intimately bound with life. Since one of the more striking characteristics of human life is that it is permeated with values, philosophy must be an endeavour to understand and conserve value. Because of this attitude of his, he is not concerned with the controversies in epistemology. He is not, however, indifferent to Epistemology as will be seen from his view of Intuition, and is aware that philosophical differences are ultimately reducible to differences in "ways of knowing". He also feels that when Epistemology becomes over specialized, it tends to swallow up the cultural relevance of philosophy. C.E.M. Joad makes this point thus:

48 My Search for Truth, p.152.

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Philosophers make a merit of their aloofness, and preoccupied with a barren controversy over epistemology, devote themselves to the elaboration of a logical technique. The remoteness of this technique from practical issues, gives point to the jibe that the problems of philosophy are less a substitute than an escape from those of life.⁴⁹

What does Radhakrishnan mean by the word Intuition, the important way of knowing, as far as he is concerned? When trying to work out the analysis of knowledge in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan, or any eastern philosopher, for that matter, it is important to understand from the start the meaning of the terminology used. This is important because they do not have the clear cut distinction between sense perception, apprehension, intellection, intuition, as are understood in most western thinkers; rather than have a clear cut distinction between these various spiritual powers of man, they have a more mixed up or various processes of knowledge and often the same word could signify totally different steps in the process of knowledge. Intuition, for example, in Hinduism is more a transforming experience than a notion of God. Radhakrishnan says, "In Hinduism intellect is subordinate to intuition, dogma to experience, outer experience to inner realization."⁵⁰ Moreover, as he

49 C.E.M. Joad, op. cit., p.16.

50 Hindu View of Life, p.15.

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himself admits, the word intuition is used in different senses in different contexts. It is used to represent scientific genius, poetic insight, ethical conscience as well as religious faith. He uses the word 'intuition' sometimes to describe the process of knowledge, sometimes it refers to the product of knowledge, as when the sum total of one's conception of God is derived through a process of intuition; at other times it means a faculty which enables us to get knowledge which we could not get otherwise.

The deepest convictions by which we live and think, the root principles of all thought and life are not derived from perpetual experience or logical knowledge, but from intuition. Intuitions abide, while interpretations change.⁵¹

It must be admitted that it is very difficult to get a clear picture of Radhakrishnan's view on the matter of intuition. There are statements where he maintains that intuition is infallible, it is direct, immediate and complete. In other places he says that intuition or intuitive experience needs the philosophic criticism of reason to justify its validity.

Simply because the deliverances of intuition appear incontestable to the seer or happen to be shared by many, it does not follow that they are true. Subjective certitude, where validity consists in mere inability to doubt, is different from logical certitude.⁵²

⁵¹ An Idealist View of Life, pp. 150 and 90.

⁵² The Spirit in Man, p.270.

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Then he goes on to describe how intuitive experience has certitude, but lacks conceptual clarity. Intellectual knowledge is not unreliable, but it is partial and inadequate. Intellect itself cannot give knowledge of reality, but it can only clarify it and help to value the religious experience; though the religious view of reality should be in harmony with the scientific account, religion should not be subordinate to science. What about the relativity of religious experiences? This is one of the questions not fully answered by Radhakrishnan.

Radhakrishnan refers to the experience of mystics in different countries who profess different religions; the content of the religious values apprehended is also different. Then how is one to determine the truth of one experience against that of another? The criterion of judgment is there in any case and the individual should use reason to evaluate them. Then finally there is intuitive knowledge of the Absolute.

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Intuition is not independent but emphatically dependent on thought and is imminent in the very nature of our thinking. It is dynamically continuous with thought and pierces through the conceptual concept of knowledge to the living reality under it. It is the result of the long and arduous process of study and analysis and is therefore higher from the discursive process from which it issues and on which it supervenes. But it stands to intellect as whole to a part, as the creative source of thought to the categories which work more or less automatically.⁵³

In Radhakrishnan's own classification, there are three types of intuition:

While all varieties of cognitive knowledge result in the experience of the real, it is produced in three ways which are sense experience, discursive knowledge or reasoning and intuitive apprehension.⁵⁴

Though one notes that each of these is productive of knowledge of the real, some deep insufficiency is connected with the first two. Sense experience and logical knowledge are "recognized as inadequate to the real which they attempt to apprehend".⁵⁵ At least we have intuitive apprehension distinguished from logical or conceptual knowledge.

We have to distinguish between the immediacy which appears at the sub-intellectual level before practical necessities and intellectual analysis break up the unity and the immediacy which appear at the supra-intellectual level, at the end and to some extent as the result of discursive thinking.⁵⁶

53 Ibid., p.270.

54 An Idealist View of Life, p.134.

55 Ibid., p.135.

56 Ibid., p.149.

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We also have it distinguished from sense experience and it is not to be confused with instinct. Within the region of intuitive knowledge, we find the need to recognize aesthetic insight into individual structures, scientific penetration into complex relations, moral intuition and that of religious faith.

When referring to the mystery that surrounds the manifestation of the Absolute in the finite world, Radhakrishnan uses his theory of 'Intuition'. "The rationality of the world", he says, "is transparent to the intellect, but its mysteriousness can be grasped only by intuition."⁵⁷ This brings us to the old question in epistemology regarding the contrast between intellectual knowledge of reality and immediate awareness of it. For Radhakrishnan, intuition is not something to be regarded as an alternative to reason, nor is it a way of knowledge adopted in mystical experience as against philosophical endeavour.

By establishing the relationship between intuition and reason, Radhakrishnan has well tried to remove a serious limitation in orthodox Advaita Vedanta.

57 My Search for Truth, p.35.

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The vedantins, following Samkara, came to the conclusion that the spirit and Brahman were beyond intellect and could only be directly experienced through intuition. But they did not take the trouble to show clearly that this direct experience is a form of knowledge involved in and pre-supposed by the discursive knowledge of the intellect and that the intellect is not necessarily opposed to this higher experience but is absorbed in it and completed by it.⁵⁸

A philosopher's loyalty to reason does not commit him to the proposition that the nature of the ultimate reality can be apprehended only as an object of reason.

All philosophy starts from experience and returns to experience. Religion is not the mere affirmation of propositions. It is not simply an exercise of intelligence. It is the response of the whole man. It claims total allegiance though it may not always command it. The real is not an idea or a hypothesis. It should become an experienced fact. A non-discursive immediate cognition of the real is possible. This is not a mere glimpse into reality, but a steady communion with it. Though reason may not be adequate as an organ for the apprehension of the divine, it is useful as a critic of claims to such apprehensions.

58 P.A. Schilpp, op. cit., (article by P.T. Raju, Radhakrishnan and Indian Thought), p.536.

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In spiritual experience we pass from time to eternity. This does not mean an extinction of the limited ego, it is liberation into the cosmic and transcendent consciousness.⁵⁹

Intuition, therefore, is a form of knowledge, and so has an important place in philosophy. He rarely uses the word intuition to refer only to mystical experience, as for the latter, he has the term 'integral experience', as will be seen later. Radhakrishnan is aware of the ambiguity caused by his use of the term intuition; he says,

It is unfortunate that we are obliged to employ the single term 'intuition' to represent scientific genius, political insight, ethical conscience as well as religious faith. Though these diverse movements represent the integrated activity of the mind, the activity oriented towards in some cases, enjoyment or creation in others.⁶⁰

Intuition must be accepted not only as one of the ways of knowledge, but it must also be regarded as a form of thought.

Intuition is not independent but emphatically dependent upon thought and is imminent in the very nature of our thinking. It is dynamically continuous with thought and pierces through the conceptual content of knowledge to the living reality under it.⁶¹

59 I.C. Sharma, op. cit., p.178.

60 An Idealist View of Life, p.200, footnote.

61 The Spirit in Man, p.272.

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Yet intuition is qualitatively different from logical thought though not discontinuous with it.

Both logical and intuitive kinds of knowledge are justified and have their own rights. Each is useful and has its own specific purpose. Logical thought enables us to know the condition of the world in which we live, and to control them for our ends. Without knowing properly, we cannot act successively. But if we want to know things in their uniqueness, in their indefeasible reality, we must transcend discursive thinking.⁶²

Here it is clear that discursive thought is not abandoned, but transcended.

Between Intuition and other kinds of knowledge, Radhakrishnan sees no great hiatus.

Man's awareness is, broadly speaking of three kinds: the perceptual, the logical and the intuitive; 'manas' or sense mind, 'vijñana' or logical intelligence and 'ananda' which for our purposes we may define as spiritual intuition. All three belong to the human consciousness.⁶³

Those who exalt Intuition at the expense of other modes of knowledge, often begin with the mistaken notion that the mind is a conglomeration of separate 'faculties'. But,

the human mind does not function in fractions. We need not assume that at the sense level there is no work for intuition or at the level of intuition there is no work for the intellect. When intuition is defined as integral insight, the suggestion is that the whole mind is at work in it.⁶⁴

62 Ibid., p.276.

63 Reply to Critics, p.790.

64 Ibid., p.791.

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Radhakrishnan insists on the all-inclusive nature of the act perception, using the word perception in the widest sense. He says;

All dynamic acts of thinking, whether in a game of chess or in a mathematical problem, are controlled by an intuitive grasp of the situation as a whole.⁶⁵

This, for him, is true at all levels of life, beginning with the simple thinking involved in the ordinary process of life and ending in the most complex processes of logical reasoning.

In every logical proof, there is a grasping of the intellectual togetherness as a whole, an intuition as a whole as sustained by the different steps. Not only creative insight but ordinary understanding of anything implies this process.⁶⁶

It, therefore, becomes necessary,

for any coherent philosophy to take into account observed data, rational reflection and intuitive insight. All these should be articulated in a systematic way.⁶⁷

If all thought is then grasped as a whole by intuition, where is the place for reason? Radhakrishnan sees no conflict and often uses the phrase 'rational intuition' to bring out his point. Reason has a fundamental role in philosophy, and philosophy stands out among

65 An Idealist View of Life, p.149.

66 Ibid., p.181.

67 Reply to Critics, p.791.

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other sciences precisely because of its capacity to use reason in a more comprehensive fashion. "The method of philosophy is just the method of science. But philosophy adopts a scientific attitude towards the positive facts extracted from mechanical sciences."⁶⁸ It is in this way how "the postulates of science become the problems of philosophy".⁶⁹ The intellect does not stand discredited "simply because it does not give us all that we want".⁷⁰

The insistence on intuition should not become confused with anti-intellectualism. "Intuition which ignores intellect is useless. The two are not incompatible but virtually united."⁷¹ Here Radhakrishnan points out how Plato is a classical example on this question; in the Symposium (line 211), the philosopher knows the essence of beauty in a supreme beatific vision, which, as it were, is the consumation of his searching enquiry. Similarly, in the Republic (bks. VII & VIII) we are told that the world of forms is apprehended by us through the exercise of reason and yet for the final step for a real knowledge of

68 Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, p.4.

69 Ibid., p.3.

70 Ibid., p.4.

71 Ibid., p.5.

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them, something more than reason is required. Intuition is beyond reason, though it is not against it.

Intuition is dynamically continuous with thought and pierces through the conceptual context of knowledge to the living reality under it. It is the result of a long and arduous process of study and analysis, and is therefore, higher than the discursive process from which it issues and on which it supervenes.⁷²

In the name of intuition, logic is often made little of, but according to Radhakrishnan, this is done by those who declare philosophy to be a matter of feeling and passion, rather than of deduction and clarification. Against the former, Radhakrishnan says that "Philosophy rises out of logical demands and aims at theoretical satisfaction".⁷³ The minimum philosophy can do is reasoned explanation. Intuition is not supported by logic, will "lapse into self-satisfied obscuratism".⁷⁴ The content of intuition must be deepened by its being made intellectual and should never be used as a sort of apology for doctrines which could not and would not be justified on intellectual grounds.

72 The Spirit in Man, p.269.

73 Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, p.5.

74 My Search for Truth, p.38.

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This was why, some of the ancient Indian thinkers, knowing the dangers which accompany excessive dependence on intuition, insisted on a minimum of intellectual development together with an adequate moral preparation before the intuitive method could yield the highest results. Intuition is "mostly the result of a long and arduous process of study and analysis".⁷⁵

Imagination, unvivified by intuition, imagination which is day dreaming, reverie or guess work, cannot help us to light upon truth except by accident.⁷⁶

Intuition requires cultivation quite as much as the powers of observation and thought. We can realize the potentialities of spirit only by a process of moral ascesis which gradually shapes the soul into harmony with the invisible realities. Plotinus tells us that the path to the goal is long and arduous, traversing first the field of civic virtues, then the discipline of purification and then the contemplation which leads to illumination. Indian thought requires us to abstract from sense of life and discursive thinking in order to surrender to the deepest self where we get into immediate contact

75 An Idealist View of Life, p.177.

76 Ibid., p.179.

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with reality. To know better, we must become different, our thoughts and feelings must be deeply harmonized. Intuition is not only perfect knowledge but also perfect living. The consecration of self and the knowledge of reality grow together. The fully real can be known only by one who is himself fully real.⁷⁷

Intuition is subjective. This, according to Radhakrishnan, could be considered as a weakness, but he says that sharpness and subtlety of thought is bound up with individuality and, "if individuality is lost, all is lost".⁷⁸ The fact that intuition is unverifiable in the scientific sense, and that it is incommunicable to others, does not deprive intuition of its validity.

The experience intself is felt to be sufficient, and complete; it does not look beyond itself for meaning or validity. It is sovereign in its own right and carries its own credentials, and is self-establishing, self-evidencing, self-luminous.⁷⁹

Far from being of doubtful authenticity, intuition can offer "pure comprehension, entire significance, complete reality".⁸⁰ In some cases it can work with incredible swiftness; in genuine intuitive experience, "the whole mind is said to leap forward in a single quivering instant."⁸¹

77 The Spirit in Man, p.270.

78 Religion and Society, p.77.

79 An Idealist View of Life, p.92.

80 Ibid., p.93.

81 Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.229,

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But to the question as to what proof we can offer for the validity of intuition, Radhakrishnan replies that the impossibility of denying it is itself a proof of its authenticity.

The proof and validity of the intuitive principle is somewhat similar to Kant's proof of 'a priori' elements. We cannot think them away. We cannot disbelieve them and remain intellectual. They belong to the very structure of our mind.⁸²

To strengthen his views on intuition, or more by way of confirmation, Radhakrishnan refers to other philosophers who have had similar ways of knowledge.

Our age is the age which is justly proud of its rationalism and enlightenment, but any sound rationalism will recognize the need for intuition.⁸³

Here he quotes St. Thomas Aquinas as saying that:

The article of faith cannot be proved demonstratively. The ultimate truth which is the criterion by which we measure all relative truths is only to be experienced, not to be demonstrated.⁸⁴

Decartes, though a thorough going rationalist and admirer of geometrical method, uses the intuitive principle.⁸⁵

Logical proof is not self-sufficient, certain 'a priori' principles constitute limits to it. The unproved first principles are, for Radhakrishnan, known by intuition:

82 An Idealist View of Life, p.156.

83 The Spirit in Man, p.267.

84 Summa Theologiae, q.46 no.2.

85 The Spirit in Man, p.267.

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Thus we have a sense of organic wholeness of things whole intellectual knowledge is abstract and symbolic. And again, the higher the reality, the less adequate is our knowledge of it. Analytical intellect cannot give us a full understanding of the ecstasy of love or the beauty of holiness.⁸⁶

Bergson describes intuition as:

the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and, therefore, inexpressible.⁸⁷

This being within the object, is slightly different from what Radhakrishnan actually means for:

The experience of intuition, is felt as of the nature of a discovery or a revelation, not a mere conjecture or creation. The real was there actually confronting us, the knowledge of which brings us an immediate and intuitive certainty transcending any which mere reason can reach.⁸⁸

To sum up, therefore, for Radhakrishnan, Intuition is: (a) a genuine revelation of truth and reality; in fact, intuitional activity is the primary, if not the sole mode of our approach to the real. (b) Insofar as philosophy is the study of the real, intuition will be the instrument of the philosopher, as well as the activity of the mystic. (c) Intuition is direct and gives immediate certitude;

86 Ibid., p.268.

87 Bergson Henri, Introduction to Metaphysics, New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1955, pp 61, p.6.

88 An Idealist View of Life, p.95.

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it is built on ratiocination, but it involves a jump to a new level of apprehension. On the other hand, logical reasoning enables it to be communicated. (d) There is no definite gap between intuition and intellectual activity; intuition and intellect are not separate and distinct faculties. Intuitional knowledge is not so much non-rational as non-conceptual; it dispenses with meditation of concepts not of reason.

Both intellect and intuition belong to the same self, but while the former involves a specialized part, the latter employs the whole self. The two are synthesized in the self, and the latter employs the whole self. The two are synthesized in the self and their activities are interdependent.⁸⁹

(e) Intuition is not to be confused with what is commonly called instinct. Intuition succeeds and crowns discursive thought; instinctive activity preceeds it. Continuous instinctive activity is that form which man has evolved; "continuous intuitive activity is that to which he may hope to aspire."⁹⁰

89 Ibid., p.153

90 C.E.M. Joad, op. cit., pp. 107 and 108.

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After understanding how sensitive a mind has to be in order to benefit wholly by intuition, one begins to wonder if it could ever be the answer to philosophy as a practical or day-to-day way of living, as Radhakrishnan has so often mentioned should be the aim of philosophy. But even if it be a height to which man can aspire if he so wishes it and is ready to make the corresponding effort, the point of a subjective criteria remains a rather strong point against the fact as to when is one able to know if intuition leads to real truth which is One? Simply because the deliverances of intuition appear incontestable to the seer, or happen to be shared by many, it need not be objective, as is admitted by Radhakrishnan; but then what is the objective norm against error? Here one sees the pitfall of absolute Idealism. Subjective certitude, whose validity consists in mere inability to doubt, is different from logical certainty. The sense of assurance is present,

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even when the object is imaginary and even such objects, so long as they are believed to be actual, evoke feelings and attitudes quite as intense and effective as those excited by real ones. While religion may be satisfied with the sense of convincedness, which is enough to foster spiritual life, philosophy is interested in finding out whether the object believed is well grounded or not.

Sometimes, Radhakrishnan also says that intuitive knowledge is "effortless and spontaneous",⁹¹ and this might seem to contradict what he said about genuine intuition demanding preparation and resting upon certain prerequisites. He tries to explain this by saying that the prerequisites are necessary to develop intuition as an effective tool of knowledge, but the actual process of wielding the tool is characterized by an ease and facility that are lacking in other types of knowledge, "the saints' certainty is simple and strange".⁹² And just as the deepest feelings of a great poet are sometimes conveyed in words of disarming simplicity, so also does the philosopher sometimes announce momentous spiritual discoveries through

91 An Idealist View of Life, p.152.

92 S. Radhakrishnan, The Heart of Hindustan, Madras C.A.Natesan & Co., 1936, pp. 151, p.59.

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simple and effortless intuition. "We invent by intuition, though we may prove by logic."⁹³

After having clarified the misconception that might go with the idea of intuition, the fact remains that for Radhakrishnan, intuition is a superior way of knowledge as compared with other ways of knowledge. But though it might be the best method on the whole, it might not be suitable on every occasion. But at the highest reaches of knowledge, intuition offers advantages which neither perception nor reason can offer. In fact, it makes possible an "extension of perception to regions beyond sense",⁹⁴ and leads to an "awareness of real values which are neither objects in space and time nor universals of thought".⁹⁵

93 An Idealist View of Life, p.177

94 Ibid., p.111.

95 The Spirit in Man, p.266.

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C. Integral Experience

As has already been explained, Radhakrishnan accepts the basic presupposition of the Advaita Vedanta system, specially the necessity of self-evidence for metaphysics. But Radhakrishnan's expansion or explanation of the self-evidence is different from that of the Advaita. He explains the scope of self-evidence in such a way as to comprehend reason, intuition and mystical experience. He interprets each of these in terms of the others and then to combine them into an integral unity and to demonstrate the combination to be the same as self-evidence.

The theory of Integral Experience is not developed from the primary datum of the 'I am' alone, as is done in the Advaita; but in addition he has data supplied from reason, intuition and religious experience. The 'advaita vedantins' conceive of the data of reason, intuition and religious experience as steps leading to the absolute knowledge which is based on the subject alone, and not, as for Radhakrishnan, as integral elements constituting the absolute knowledge. According to Radhakrishnan, all these elements merge into one another

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and finally become an integral, individual whole which has the marks of certainty and individuality.

At the root, reason and intuition are not sundered into two. He speaks of the pristine nature of the human mind which can be found in "a state anterior to the divisions between intellect, feeling and will, where consciousness forms a unity which cannot be analyzed".⁹⁶

Integral Experience is the fullness of mystical intuition, reason and feeling. It is visualized as the completion of all of them, in their togetherness and integrity. As such it is religious experience in the highest and most complete sense. It is the fulfillment of mysticism. Mystical intuition by definition is autonomous and is not necessarily in touch with the other powers of the mind. Integral insight, which is mystical apprehension in the largest possible sense, on the other hand, "brings into activity not merely a portion of our conscious being, but the whole".⁹⁷ Mystical experience has to become Integral Experience.

96 The Spirit in Man, p.484.

97 Fragments of a Confession, p.60.

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Mystical experience, truly defined, must imply a break with the normal experiences of man; but if it implies a break, it is difficult to see how it can be meaningful to man, how we can even talk about it, how it can really contribute to knowledge. This is a problem to all who wish to consider mystical experience as one of the data of philosophy; and it is for this reason that mystical experience has to be related to reason and the normal faculties of man. Again, mystics themselves have to face the question of how mystical experience, which by definition is supranormal, can be attained by training.

"The leap of mysticism from normal to supranormal, has to be seen as a growth".⁹⁸

The differentia of integral experience is to be perceived not only in the process of attainment but also in the state of attainment. "Pure mystical experience will disregard the finite and the temporal altogether, but not so integral experience".⁹⁹ In this sense, integral experience represents:

98 Ibid., p.61

99 J.G.Arapura, Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience, London, Asia Publishing Co., pp.209, pp.97 and 98.

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man as a being who is straining towards infinity, in quest of eternity, but the condition of his existence, finite and limited, causes suffering. When he attains integrality, there is a harmony in his life and the expression is joy.¹⁰⁰

What is Integral Experience as an epistemological theory?

We have discussed it as a theory of complete knowledge of complete reality and so it is presented as a fuller mysticism. Does it stand for an actual, positive experience we can attain or for an ideal of experience which even though not attainable, is valuable as a standard of criticism? It is to be regarded as a critique of mystic experience and of religion as such. Kant and Radhakrishnan were moved by identical purposes with regard to their respective subject matters: Kant to lead metaphysics, as he claimed, to the safe road of science, and Radhakrishnan to lead religion to the safe road of metaphysics. But there is one difference to be noted; while Kant was impressed by the limits of reason for the subject matter of metaphysics, Radhakrishnan is impressed by the unlimited power of mysticism for the knowledge of reality. Only he

100 Fragments of a Confession, pp.61 and 62.

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says, we have a much fuller ideal of mysticism than that available in standard configurations of mysticism.

Integral Experience is to be considered as a new metaphysics of religion. The question as to whether it is to be taken purely as intellectual construction or as a method of experience, of attainment, will remain to be answered. For traditional Vedanta, integral experience is the elaboration of the self as the centre of evidence of the subject and logically this is a better way of looking at it. But as Radhakrishnan's position looks at self-evidence from a religious and not a logical point of view, it is less vulnerable. Radhakrishnan has raised the question of self-evidence in a fresh manner. He bids us all reconsider the negative dogmatism which insists that the unconditioned reality is unknowable. He shows us that the question is not settled once and for all; that it cannot be settled.

Integral Experience may not be accepted by us exactly as positive epistemology, but still it must be accepted as a new problematic of the knowledge of reality. As to acceptance or non-acceptance of this position as positive epistemology, we may perhaps bear in mind

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Schelling's opinion that "philosophy after all cannot demonstrate idealism any more than it can prove dogmatism or materialism, for man's world view is his free choice".¹⁰¹

Radhakrishnan advances Integral Experience as a new and original version in his philosophy, and as such it is visualized as an adequate and energetic answer to sceptical philosophies that deny to man the power to know reality.

Kant, who shaped scepticism into a powerful system, was not unaware of the role of intuition in knowledge. But he largely confined it to self-perception, now and then conceding it grudgingly, although very suggestively, to reason. In any case he altogether ruled out supersense intuitions that might be adequate to the knowledge of the unconditioned.¹⁰²

Radhakrishnan would argue that not only are there supra-sense intuitions, but the very sense and rational themselves are in essence suprasensible intuitions. Nothing can be truly regarded as intuition unless there is an element of mystical immediacy in it.

Integral experience refers to "absolute knowledge which at the same time is knowledge of the real".¹⁰³

101 J.G. Arapura, op. cit., p. 107.

102 Ibid., p. 134.

103 Indian Philosophy, vol. II, p. 511.

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Integral Experience is also used to refer to that special knowledge which brings about release or 'moksha'.¹⁰⁴

Now in this sense, integral experience is self-evident knowledge. As in all Indian philosophy, knowledge is the middle term that connects two metaphysical concepts, the knower and the known, and as a true vedantist, Radhakrishnan accepts this concept of knowledge. But he undertakes a new and original way of elaborating this identity. The traditional school explains it as an identity of three, but Radhakrishnan treats integral experience as an ontological theory as well as an epistemological one; for he says that integral experience "is not only a mode of knowing, but a mode of being".¹⁰⁵ 'Being' here is taken in the sense of both the knower and the known. Knower and known are the self and reality respectively.

To discover and enter into unity with the Real is the aim of the human being. This union is not to be interpreted in extremis terms. It is not contemplating, or living, or serving God as an object external to ourselves. It is an activity which can be described only as possessing God and being possessed by Him. Human intellect is quite incapable of making reliable statements of a sphere which is beyond its scope. But the human heart is quite capable of responding to the Spirit.¹⁰⁶

104 An Idealist View of Life, p. 138.

105 Ibid., p. 138.

106 Saurendarnath Dasgupta, op. cit., p.22.

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The highest state is said to be one of 'jnana' or wisdom. This word indicates the intrinsic intelligibility of the Supreme, which exceeds the finite powers of understanding. The highest state is above reason, but not without reason. Intuitive insight is a total awareness attained through the dedication of all our powers. It is not a question of merely entertaining ideas. It is a transforming knowledge, a reshaping of personality, a renewal of being. It is a vision, an awareness, a release into boundless freedom. Here, to know and to be, to possess and to enjoy are one. He who has this awareness, can no more question the truth than he can doubt the shining of the sun when he stands in its glare. This awareness is what is called 'vidya', its opposite being 'a-vidya' which is confinement within the narrow bounds set by the mind and the senses. This union is not achieved by reason alone but by the whole personality. This requires self-discipline, a conquest of self-seeking desire with its fears, hatreds and anxieties.

The sage whose passions are at rest sees within himself the majesty of the inward self. Only by a life of complete self-renunciation, an emptying of self can we attain higher knowledge. Without it, reason itself is distorted by unstable emotions.¹⁰⁷

107 Katha Upanisad, II, 20 (found also in the above quote).

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Even in 'Sruti' or revealed religion, the beginnings of formal expression are to be noted, although integral experience is its basis. As an expression of integral experience it:

communicates what is self-evident and certain through symbolic means, which awaken in the reader or hearer the latent knowledge which he bears unconsciously and eternally within him.¹⁰⁸

Integral experience is one and undifferentiated. It cannot be expressed in any one symbolic formula. "The real has been conceived in many ways through religious symbolism."¹⁰⁹ According to him, the different symbolisms bring out different aspects of the immensity of the Supreme. It is interesting to note here, that for him, the idea of the Supreme Truth is that which is undifferentiated and indescribable and must be regarded as identical with that which is described in an infinite variety of ways.

Integral experience is needed for the direct participation of God. Direct experience, active participation in the eternal truth, is distinguished from the indirect and passive participation in religious knowledge

108 Charles A. Moore, op. cit., p. 151.

109 Ibid., p. 152.

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by belief. In an integral experience, the individual does not possess knowledge as an individual but participates in his innermost essence, which is not distinct from the divine principle. The metaphysical certitude is absolute because the knower and the known are identical. This is the most perfect union between God and man.¹¹⁰

Integral Experience, therefore, for Radhakrishnan is the consummatory experience of self-evidence. It is not subject to any other criteria; it is self-certifying. It is not something that one possesses before passing through the perfect mystical experience. It is also the culmination point to which all our knowledge seeking enterprises must move. For Radhakrishnan, self knowledge is not the beginning of wisdom but its final consummation, and is the first fruit of intuitive realization. Radhakrishnan arrives at self knowledge through integral experience. Self knowledge has the ethical-spiritual sense suggested by the principle, 'know thyself'. He is inclined to the view that ultimate, dependable and self-evident knowledge of reality is something which is always

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

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present to us as a possibility which we shall achieve by adopting certain processes. These processes include aspiring for supranormal experiences, deepening our imaginative powers, sharpening our wits and wielding the various faculties and potentialities of our personality into an integral unity. There is, however, something questionable with the idea of achieving self-evident knowledge by means of some techniques. Either self-evident knowledge is innately with us or it will never be achieved.

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Radhakrishnan's whole effort in this direction, springs from a strong desire to substitute a realizable truth, an actualizable experience, in the place of a dogmatic axiom. The effort surely is in keeping with the felt need to make self evidence conform to standards of testable and verifiable truth, although thereby the door is opened to empiricist challenge, rendering the position somewhat more vulnerable.

CHAPTER IIICRITICAL STUDYA. Radhakrishnan's Reconstruction of the Vedanta?

Before trying to criticize, or rather evaluate the main trends in the philosophy of Dr. Radhakrishnan, it is necessary to recall a fact that was mentioned at the beginning, in the Introduction, that in Oriental and chiefly in Indian Philosophy, it is very difficult to draw a clear cut distinction between philosophy and theology, and rather than make philosophy the basis for one's theology, one gets the impression that theology comes first, and then a philosophy is built out of it. Radhakrishnan makes it plain that man's life has meaning only when the life of the spirit is taken into consideration, and so very little is mentioned about that part of man that so often makes war on the spirit, which cannot be overlooked if the philosophy one proposes is meant to be a philosophy of life, a practical philosophy which is to help man to solve his day-to-day problems.

In defence of this union of philosophy and theology, Radhakrishnan in his book on the Brahma Sutra¹

1 The Brahma Sutra, p.9.

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quoting Professor Gilbert Ryle to back him, says how for fifty years the dominant schools of philosophy were connected with religion, faith and doubt, the relation of philosophy to theology. Today, however, new interests have arisen, philosophy is no more "a science of things transcendental", but has become scientific and secular in its outlook. It has become an aid to professionalism made only for the philosophers. "We know too much and are convinced of too little." The majority of people do not see any reason why religion should play any part in their lives; many of them are not actually atheists, fewer still have qualified by sober reflection to be called agnostics. For them the creative fire has departed from religion. We live in an age of hectic hurry, of deafening noise, where we have no time or inclination for anything beyond the passing hour. True life grows from inside. The unrest of the people is due to the thwarted desire for religion. One should note that religion here refers to the religion of the spirit, not any form of traditional or established religion.

The impression one gets from the philosophy of Radhakrishnan is that it is meant for the chosen few, very much like the idea Plato had in his 'Republic'. But

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whereas Plato leaves ways and means for the ordinary man to reach the heights of a philosopher, Radhakrishnan leaves the individual to travel the journey of life on his own, till, after having subdued the lower man on his own initiative, he reaches the point where he is interested in the 'Spirit in Man'.

How far is Radhakrishnan justified in mixing philosophy and theology? To confuse issues in his theory of Intuition and the Religion of the Spirit? Radhakrishnan defends himself by saying that it was an unpractical and sophisticated philosophy that divorced itself from theology, and that it is a restricted definition of philosophy which claims that there are problems beyond understanding, but that once these problems are chalked out, it avoids dealing with them as beyond its ken. He says it is a Kantian method by which philosophy works at safely determining what cannot be understood, and then looses no further word about it. Radhakrishnan holds that that is a restricted view by which the philosopher wants to know what he can know and keep a proper respect towards the unknowable; thus leading the theologian to describe what he cannot know by any discursive means and has to have recourse to dogma

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and revelation in order to affirm the premises that were already established for him. Here it is where he affirms that Intuition, as properly understood, could prove as much a means of knowledge as any other human knowing faculty. He says that:

his endeavour has been to expound a philosophy, not to state a dogmatic theology, a philosophy which offers an interpretation of the universe which is at once rational and spiritual, which depends on logical reflection and not on acts of faith.²

Radhakrishnan has openly claimed in all his writings that he follows the traditional fundamentals of Hinduism, giving his own interpretations; but since fundamentals and interpretations are closely connected, the question can be raised as to how far can he move away from the old doctrines and still claim to belong to the same school. His concepts of the Brahman, karma, maya and others give the impression that although the forms are the same, the concepts put into these words are full of new religious meaning, so that Devanandan is justified in observing that the Hinduism of Radhakrishnan is:

2 Reply to Critics, p. 820.

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Hinduism reborn - a new creation, not merely revived and reconstructed It is prophetic of a religious theory yet unborn to justify the practice of today.³

In the same book, he raises the question whether it will be possible for Hinduism to produce from the depths of its own religious sources, "an articulate, reasoned system, an adequate creed as the basis of belief, which will provide the needed intellectual justification and spiritual drive for the new Hindu Way of Life."⁴

Even if Radhakrishnan's claim to something new, some vitality "to produce both intellectual categories in which a new understanding of life can be expressed, and the spiritual power through which the exciting vision can be realized",⁵ the fact that he ties himself down to an existing system, puts him in a vulnerable position to be questioned and attacked, because one calls into question the adequacy of the ancient fundamentals even in the interpretations are acceptable.

3 P. Devanandan, The Concept of Maya, London Lutterworth Press, 1950. pp.227-228.

4 Ibid., p.8.

5 Stephen Neill, Christian Faith and Other Faiths, London Oxford University Press, 1962, p.81.

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Radhakrishnan was aware of the fact that many of the traditional interpretations of classical Hindu doctrines, could not be accepted, so he gave them a more acceptable interpretation, but not without first taking them out from the basic structures on which they were founded. He was aware of the fact that if Maya means that the world is a world of illusions, if Karma is only deterministic, if the caste system is a rigid structure based on birth only, human life would have little meaning. So he interpreted Maya as to save the reality of the world, Karma as a condition and not as a destiny, and the caste system as the need of a growing community, stressing not so much the rigidity of it, but the principle on which it was necessary for society. But can this be warranted, when Indian philosophy is based on these fundamentals like the world being illusory in order to explain so many of the situations we find ourselves in life, and the fact of absolute monism leading to a total denial of reality, which leads to the dissolution of individuality in the Absolute who is all important and stressed, in contrast to the important place given to Isvara in the reconstruction of Radhakrishnan? In sharp contrast to the Absolute Brahman of the Vedanta, Radhakrishnan stresses more the

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concept of Isvara, which is the personal aspect of God. If the world is to be understood as a real of more meaningful purpose, and man is a free and worthy individual, then this doctrine cannot be shaped without a corresponding working out of a doctrine of God as Creator, Lord and Saviour. This is why for Radhakrishnan, though philosophically Brahman is the ultimate concept, pragmatically Isvara is Creator, Lord and Saviour; this only means that an effort is being made to a practical realization of God's involvement and not that the Hindu concept of God has totally been solved in this way.

When Radhakrishnan has put himself into the straight jacket of monism, it becomes very difficult for him to explain the reality of so many facts of life.

B. Intuition, as a fundamental basis?

Are all religions the same? This doctrine has recently been advocated by many; Ghandi was an upholder of it, and Radhakrishnan voiced the minds of many when he said that in the Gita, Krishnan declares that he is in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Even earlier than that, the Rg Veda states that Reality

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is One, though sages call it Many.

Now, according to Radhakrishnan, the Vedanta should be the basis of a World Faith. This is possible, he says, if we know the difference between Religion and Religions, and for this, Intuition and Integral Experience as explained by him, can be of fundamental value. But should not such a religion which claims to offer a foundation to a world faith, necessarily have a basis for community? But the great emphasis laid on Intuition as being so very individualistic and subjective, cannot provide for such a basis. The unity it offers is more a negative unity of tolerance than a positive one of love. This could at most, be a unity leading to a cessation of strife, rather than the creation of a new community.

When Radhakrishnan stresses so much that truth transcends historic particulars, he declares war upon all religious creeds which were based upon a historic revelation, and so rather than bridge a unity, he draws a dividing line between religions. At the same time the indirect claim that the Vedanta is the truth transcending all religions, as it is to form the basis for world faith, makes a flat denial of the central truth of the biblical

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religion and is a cause of dissention rather than of unity. The reality of mystical experience need not and cannot be denied, but to say that it is the clue to reality, is an affirmation of faith which must be judged again by the criteria that are proper in the field of religious beliefs. In this connection, it might be better to consider Radhakrishnan not so much as an exponent of world faith as what he himself calls a 'fellowship of faiths'. The structure and basis for a fellowship of faiths need not be the same as that of a world faith and with this interpretation, one could go a long way with Radhakrishnan because at no time in the encounter among world religions is a sympathetic understanding of other faiths more necessary than today, when religions come under constant attack of the powerful forces of materialism. This is well expressed in Kraemer's observations that:

What we need in the present time of world encounter of religions is not to be as sweet as possible with each other, but to learn the art of being as true as possible with each other.⁶

Radhakrishnan's rise to fame has been because of his theory and exposé of the various facets of Intuition and Integral Experience which is one form of Intuition. But as his philosophy is one of Absolute Idealism, it

⁶ Hendrick Kraemer, Religion and Christian Faith, London, Lutterworth Press, 1956, p.134

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labours heavily under the lack of giving any objective criteria. It might be fine in an Idealism where no objective criteria is even asked for, but if as in the rest of life, one demands some way of knowing right from wrong, other than oneself, then one is up against a dead end in the use of Intuition and Integral Experience as put forward by Radhakrishnan.

There seems to be a glaring gap between mystical experience and historic faith. Though the reality of mystical experience is not questioned, the assertion that it can be a clue to reality can be rejected on the mere ground of its being so subjective that it is almost impossible to distinguish true mystical experience from a semblance of it; moreover it is so rare that it is claimed by only a few. On the other hand, though history might manifest relative forms of truth and in some cases make the claim to the whole truth, to a Hindu philosopher this fact can never become the vehicle of final revelation. This is so because then the lack of a strict fundamental basis on which the Hindu philosopher bases his universality, meaning room for everything, would be seriously challenged.

Perhaps, Radhakrishnan has not considered the fact that mystic religion need not contradict, but possibly

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does intensify prophetic religion. But the fact does remain that mystical experience which is individualistic by its very nature, cannot provide the basis for world community or even for a fellowship of faiths, as is claimed. One thing is 'to live and let live', but it is altogether another thing to live together and chiefly to share the same religious experience or to belong to the same school of thought or beliefs. It could generate tolerance towards similar experiences of others, but could it ever lead to co-operative expression? On the other hand, a historic fact, because it has become meaningful to a group, a community or a nation, inevitably leads to corporate loyalty and experience. History proves this with more than one example. Without at all minimizing the reality and importance of mystical experience, one has to express doubts about its possibility to provide the basis and inspiration to any community experience.

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C. Religion, Religions and Truth

It cannot but strike the student of Radhakrishnan's philosophy, that he does not miss a chance to praise and prefer, beyond any comparison, personal or religious experience to any historical religion. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the relation he puts between religion and truth, and on the other hand between the various religions. The fact that there are differences in the matter of the definition of truth and the essence of religion, makes the point all the more difficult. There is also no universal agreement as to whether it is possible at all to extract and define the essence of religion apart from its historic expression.

This also means that the possibility of inter-religious co-operation on a deeper level can be raised only when there is deeper recognition of the relation between religion and truth. In this connection, two questions could be asked: What is the special characteristic of religious truth? And what is the relation between religious truth and religions? There is no doubt that there is a similarity between religious truth and religious experience, but it cannot be said that religious

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truth is the result of religious experience. Religious experience already implies the existence of religious truth, but unlike scientific truth, its communicability is one of its major problems. Because science deals with tangible and sensible truth, a precise definition in exact terms, makes it universally verifiable and demonstrative, and subjective certitude coincides with object truth. But with religious experience, one could have subjective certitude but one's belief may lack objective validity, and yet merely because of this, one cannot dismiss religious beliefs as false. This difficulty of communicability makes the dilemma of all religious knowledge more problematic, and yet this is of the very essence of many a religious truth.

Religious truths are not immediately relevant to man's physical existence, in the sensible way, and so man may not recognize that they are necessary to his daily living. It is quite possible to live without the recognition of the realities of religion. Then religious truths, to be accepted, need a prior preparation and unless one has a spiritual sensitivity, a sense of the moral quality of loyalty to truth at all costs, a person might remain unaware of and insensitive to truth. Religious

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truths cannot be forced upon others, and like all spiritual gifts have to be voluntarily accepted. All this makes religious and scientific truths so very different and should not easily be lost sight of.

Radhakrishnan's conception of religious truth and the relation among religions is stated in the chapter entitled, The Meeting of Religions, in his book, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, and also in later works entitled, Reply to Critics and Recovery of Faith, all of which have already been referred to. His main arguments may be thus summarized: Truth is One, fathomless and all-inclusive; all religions are only approximations to the truth, therefore no single religion can claim finality to its possession of Truth. Because of this, the claim to uniqueness or exclusiveness by any particular religion should be given up; the relation among religions should be one of understanding and co-operation, rather than one of competition and strife.

The first point that he, therefore, makes is that truth is One, and that all religions are only approximations to it.

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The different creeds are historical formulations of the formless truth. The absoluteness of truth implies the relativity of all forms of truth.⁷

Yet there is the common element which is the foundation of all religions, but the buildings erected on these foundations are different. The point to be raised here is the 'all-inclusiveness', and also why should it be considered as the supreme characteristic of reality? If 'Sat = Truth' were mere Being, then it would be boundless and characterless. Can 'Sat' be all-inclusive that it includes within itself even demoniac forces, considered gods by some religions? Then to speak of the absoluteness and relativity of truth, Truth as it is, and approximations to Truth, seems to be self-contradictory, because it could imply that it has two kinds of knowledge -- one that is real and one that is an approximation to the real; if it is one, how can it be divided? How can one talk of approximations unless one also knows the Absolute, with reference to which, they can be called approximations?

Radhakrishnan makes the affirmation that Reality is the fullness of truth or fathomless or absolute, that historic religions have to be content with symbols and no one symbol can claim superiority over another. This would imply that Reality cannot be known in conceptual terms.

7 The Recovery of Faith, p.188. Reply to Critics, p.806 ff.

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Now Radhakrishnan calls upon mankind "to rise to the conception of a God above gods, who is beyond image and concept".⁸ It could be true that one can acknowledge that God is beyond image and concept, that truth is greater than man's reach and that the human mind cannot comprehend the fullness of God. But whereas such an attitude should make man humble before the ultimate mystery of God, it should not overlook the fundamental assumption that Reality is knowable, without which assumption it would be useless to speak of knowledge at all. The relationship among religions on the basis of a unity of quest leading to the familiar statement that all religions are equal useful pathways to God is liable to be mislead. All paths need not necessarily lead to the top, some could be blind allies, and others could lead away from the top. To give all the same status would be unreasonable. Therefore, even if one might concede that no religion is devoid of some truth, it does not mean that all religions have the same degree of truth.

Then there is the question of finality which, Radhakrishnan argues, no particular religion can claim. He says that this claim to the possession of a unique revealed truth leads to aggression and is ruinous for

⁸ The Recovery of Faith, p.188.

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co-operation among religions. In itself, it must be recognized that the attitude of aggressive superiority could go against the spirit itself. But the claim to finality, meaning that which is elemental or that which is absolutely essential, should be possible for even a historic religion to claim finality. This way of looking at finality is not compatible with the finitude of man nor does it exclude further progress and it need not lead to the exclusiveness of arrogant possession. It is like the finality of a basic music cord, without which no harmony can ever be worked out and which serves as the basis for further musical compositions.

A word could be said concerning the notion of Truth. As has been mentioned before, for Radhakrishnan, Truth is more a state of being than an experience of cognition. Brahman, 'Sat' is equal to Truth which is also 'Sat'. Being at the same time is also 'Satyam', which is another word for Truth. This identification of being and truth, leads to a difference both in one's mode of thinking and of one's conception of 'Mukti', which is not just freedom from untruth, but it is true Being. Are there perhaps two modes of knowing, one in East and one in the West? Is one preoccupied with the less determinate factors

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of existence and the other with the more determinate factors of essence? Radhakrishnan himself, recognizes this possibility, but believes that it should not be difficult to establish a world community in which the two sets of values form derived two modes of knowing are to be reconciled.

CONCLUSION

When all is said and done, in conclusion one cannot but be aware of the great contribution Radhakrishnan has made to philosophy, chiefly to Indian philosophy. Caught between two cultures, he was one of the first ones to try and make a synthesis of the western and Eastern ways of thinking, and has succeeded in making a great deal of Indian philosophy understandable to the western reader. Picking out the best from both, he has tried to reassert the traditions of Indian Philosophy, made it intelligible to the western mind by clarifying and re-interpreting certain essential concepts, and clearly setting the superiority of man's spirit over matter, showing how this philosophy enables man to live a real and a full human life.

In his early life as a philosopher, he was wrongly influenced by the rationalists of the West, as he himself admitted. But when he studied more profoundly the ancient philosophies of India, and clearly outlined that the aim

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of philosophy is not so much idle speculation or even with the mere interpreting of life but with the changing of life with the accent on man as he is in this world, he could not, but admit the great role the spirit in man plays and has to play. Because of this, he was convinced that rather than philosophy having to oppose religion, both had to work together towards the common goal of helping man to change and achieve mastery of life.

The vision of man that Radhakrishnan gives, will not be complete unless man knows his unlimited possibilities with the knowledge that, to achieve anything, he must try constantly. When one considers man in time and in history, one could be too preoccupied with earth-life and material things, forgetting that history for man stretches beyond this earth. One of the great merits of Radhakrishnan's Integral Experience is that it breaks through all barriers and crosses all bounds of determinism. This is seen by his explanation of Karma or rebirth. Karma for him, is a doctrine not of determinism, but of freedom, something which loosens us from the determinism of the past. It is not a principle so much of retribution as of continuity. Good produces good, evil produces evil. Love increases our power of love, hatred of hatred. It emphasizes the great

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importance of right action. Man is continually shaping his own self.¹ We get a picture of a mighty ongoing stream which rushes from the infinite past to the infinite future, carrying conscious and self-determining man to his ultimate destiny. For Radhakrishnan, Man is not penalized for eternity because of loosing chance one given; sin is not the end and tragedy the finale.² The spirit in man cannot be suppressed till it reaches the appointed goal. Then there is the vision of the greatness and the adequacy of the human spirit for all its needs - a theme which Radhakrishnan never tires of repeating. No events are such that man cannot be freed from their consequence.

The philosophy of Radhakrishnan answers the questions that have always been put to traditional Indian philosophy. Is the drama of human life a meaningless story, an illusion, or is it significant history? Are the struggles and travels of man of no avail or do human achievements have eternal value? Is the destiny of conscious life a mere return to where it came from, or is it a consummation, a fulfilment that adds a new design to

1 Fragments of a Confession, p.66.

2 An Idealist View of Life, p.276.

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being? Is history such that it would make no difference if it had not been? Radhakrishnan answers all these questions positively and as far as possible within the framework of his interpretation of the Vedanta. The way he has done this is no small achievement as it adds a new depth of thought.

One could best close with the words which Radhakrishnan himself quotes from the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, to illustrate the glory and the freedom of the human spirit:

As is his desire, such is his purpose; as is his purpose, such is the action he performs; what action he performs, that, he procures for himself.³

³ An Idealist View of Life, p.276. (Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, IV, 4.5).

ABSTRACT

Contemporary Indian Philosophy would be incomplete without the philosophy of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. He has not only tried to make Indian philosophy understandable to the western mind and the world at large, but by disentangling its complex maze of thought, in a form that is not wholly structured, he has tried to answer the questions Indian philosophy has always been accused of evading. He has done this by a very original epistemological theory based fundamentally on a metaphysics of Absolute Idealism of Shankara's Vedanta.

It is, therefore, necessary to locate him in the texture of Indian philosophy. Though he claims to the school of Shankara's interpretation of the Vedas, Shankara's interpretation forms only the very broad backbone, because some of the important basic doctrines are so differently interpreted by Radhakrishnan, that he has merited the honour of an original thinker.

His interpretations have been guided by his aim of philosophy, which is not so much the interpretation of life, as the changing of it.

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His biography shows how the change of life he advocates is very intimately oriented towards the supra-natural, with whom he says he had contact at a very early age. This contact with a power, or the realization of it, a power beyond and above matter, led him to insist on the superior part of composite man, what he calls the Spirit in Man.

His search for the Absolute, can be followed up in his philosophical writings, leading up to Intuition and Integral Experience. Except in his book, The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, where he complains of the intrusion of religion into the realm of philosophy, he holds that philosophy would have no meaning if it did not lead man to Reality which is One.

Indian philosophy has often been accused of escaping from problems rather than answering them; Radhakrishnan answers all these accusations in a satisfying way. Maya, or the interpretation of the flux of daily life is not just an illusion, but only relative reality. Something which means only derived being, as Reality is One and not divisible, but it is not nothing, on the other hand.

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Absolute Idealism leads to the problem of God's relation to man, and man's destiny; this he solves by stressing the two aspects of the Brahman, the Absolute and the more practical Isvara. These two aspects make the Absolute more tangible. It also forms the basis of his ethics, by which, he says that man's ultimate goal is not just to save himself, but to work to save mankind as a whole. The nearer one is to the Real, the more he wants to wait to enjoy it, because he is so detached that he wants others to have the same delight which is man's aim in life. Karma or Rebirth, therefore, in this context, is not so much a fatalistic endless process, but a chance given to man to make something of his life; the human race has to be saved as a whole. Moksa is more salvation or release than mere liberation; and man's salvation comes when the Spirit in Man achieves its goal or purpose, being completely satisfied with its contemplation of the Absolute, which cannot be done except by union which can be got only by Intuition and Integral Experience. Intuition here is used in a very special and extremely broad range, and comprises a very vast range of epistemological experiences, culminating in Integral Experience which is Intuition used for its highest purpose, the

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knowledge of the Real.

Towards this knowledge of the Absolute, Radhakrishnan finds tradition, and chiefly dogmatic religion, a primary obstacle, so he has a strong criticism of it. He protests against its suffocating the Spirit in Man which can be expressed by Intuition, leading up to Integral Experience.

In the critical study, one thing stands out, the norm for Intuition and Integral Experience which, in an Idealistic system, remains wholly subjective. Good, perhaps, in itself and for the individual, but not practical for man living in Society. If for Radhakrishnan, philosophy is the changing of life for man, how can he do this, in a system which fails him in the situation he is in, in society? Radhakrishnan has an original definition of Truth, which may be the reason why he is so hostile to religions, for after all, do not religions claim to lead towards the truth? Therefore, his Intuition might be good for the individual, but could be very questionable for a basis for man as a universal religion.

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APPENDIX I

RADHAKRISHNAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

APPENDIX IRADHAKRISHNAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

It might be interesting to say a few words about Radhakrishnan's attitude towards the Christian religion. There is no doubt that Radhakrishnan has a wary attitude towards any form of traditional religion, but his wariest words are reserved for Christianity. This could be because there is no religion that makes the claim that Christianity makes, or it could be that he just does not grasp the fact that Jesus was not just another prophet, but God Incarnate. There was also that fact of his feelings towards his early educators, christian missionaries, feelings of mixed admiration and resentment.

Hinduism has reacted in different ways to the acids of modernity. There were some people in India who did recognize the values of western culture, but were also responsibly critical both of its content and of its form of expression. There were reactions of refusal, more emotional than intellectual; Gandhi belonged mildly to this type; a more rigorous representative was Dayananda Saraswati, who sought to preserve the old at all costs. There was that reaction which might be called

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a reaction of warm welcome, who tried to make a deliberate attempt to work out a syncretistic faith; Raja Ram Mohan Roy was highly appreciative and strongly critical of western values. A third reaction, more difficult to define, but nonetheless perhaps, more significant is the deliberate attempt to re-attempt Hinduism and justify its ancient values in the context of modern needs; of this attitude, Radhakrishnan is the best example and one could say the most important creator of modern Hinduism. Could one interpret his more than thorough dislike for Christianity, in this context of his having become conscious, in his opinion, of its superiority? The him, the Eastern wisdom as communicated in the Hindu Vedanta is not merely superior to any other, but will be found to be of universal significance, a claim to be found only in Christianity.

Perhaps, Radhakrishnan has misunderstood Christianity completely, because he looks at Christianity not into Christianity. Is his concern not so much with the problem of truth as with the cultural and social eminence of Hinduism? His call for co-operation and tolerance among religions, is based on the assumption that truth is essentially unknowable and that all

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religions can only approximate to the truth and so are relative. This being one way of interpreting what he gets at when he speaks of truth as One; in which case, the root principle in the matter of possible relation among religions ought, therefore, to be the truth and authority of all religions.

Could it be that in contrast to Christianity, for Hinduism, the sense of mystery, which to a large extent has been lost in the pragmatic western world and corresponding religions; the call too of quest in place of dogma, the broad, genial tolerance which is prepared to find a place for everything, the respect for the freedom of individual views which encourage him to find his own spiritual way, could appeal to Radhakrishnan, a modern Hindu revivalist? A Hinduism that was forced to face a revival or death in face of a challenging and well grounded Christianity?

Pushing the point further, one might question about the adequacy of Hindu fundamentals even as proposed by Radhakrishnan, sufficient to meet the demands of the modern age? Has Hinduism itself the vitality to produce the spiritual power and intellectual categories to realise the glorious vision that Radhakrishnan has set for it? The

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answer could be similar, no doubt, to the one a thoughtful Christian in the West would be hesitant to give if he were asked about the adequacy of Christian fundamentals to meet modern needs.

Now when one speaks of adequacy, one speaks of something which can only be determined with reference to specific human needs. In the realm of religion, it should take into account man's spiritual needs and his commitment to a faith or no faith. Now if the modern Hindu claims that the present re-statement of his ancestral beliefs is, as far as he is concerned, fully adequate to justify his practices, how can someone standing outside the circle of his faith question the adequacy or inadequacy of his faith?

By giving his own interpretations to the original postulates of Hindu Upanisadic orthodoxy, which he retains, he is merely using them as containers to serve new purposes rather than as generators.