

RECONSTRUCTING THE FOUNDATIONS OF VEDĀNTIC METAPHYSICS A Pluriversal Model for Philosophizing

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1. Introduction

1.1. Aim of This Essay

This essay is concerned with a satisfactory method for ontological reconstruction and integration of Hindu thought, bearing in mind the theoretical lacunae that resulted in centuries of controversies on Non-dualism, Dualism, Qualified Non-dualism, etc. For this purpose, I use here the bare minimum of fundamental ontological concepts that are commonly held by both the Upaniṣads and the different Vedāntic Metaphysics like those of the major Upaniṣads and Śāṅkara. Often I generalize them as Hindu Metaphysics from the point of view of the fundamentality of the theological principles I deal with, and for the sake of brevity, although the term is a partial misnomer for a highly variegated corpus of systems. I attempt to show what seems most fundamentally amiss in them and to point a way to bridge these lacunae.

The model proposed signals the need for further reflection, formulation and application. It may be called the Einaic Method from the viewpoint of purely ontological implications involved. By 'Einaic' (Greek, *Einaí*, meaning "to be") I mean a form of philosophizing that allows truth-probabilistic, continuity-imbued thinking that categorizes on (1) the Transcendental, To Be, (2) the Transcendent, Reality-in-total, and (3) the Transcendent-Transcendental, Reality-in-general, and subsumes reality-in-particular under them by implication. To Be is the highest and deepest Transcendental, which is not merely the aletheial Being of Heidegger. It has Reality-in-total for its general ontological locus and Reality-in-general for its epistemological and semantic locus. The study of To Be in terms of

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Reality-in-total and Reality-in-general I call Einaiology; and the study of Reality-in-total in terms of To Be as General Ontology. Reality-in-general is the ultimate, central, conceptual ideal that is ever realized in consciousness in an ontologically realistic and continuous manner.

In this age of postmodern thinking, I hold that whatever is proposed as derivable from any sort of thinking is brought to the fore and closer to the central – albeit also through what is off-centre – and, so, a methodological probabilism of the central, maybe via the central and the off-centre in philosophising, calls for probabilistic continuity and progress towards the central in thought.¹ The central in thought is already very much present in Hindu thought. Now, instead of supplying the off-centre to the existing thinking, I would like to attempt a probabilistic-continuous methodology for Hindu Metaphysics, by presupposing that the central and the off-centre are already the ingredients.

1.2. The Why of This Attempt: Indian and Western Reasons

Although the implications of the Transcendental and Transcendent categorial system will not be discussed here, it is important to mention why such an ontological attempt is undertaken. I would propose to call this model as the Einaic or Transcendental-Transcendent or Pluriversal Model. The reason for it would also explain why such an attempt is made in Vedāntic Metaphysics. Transcendentals are ontological conditions, in consciousness, for the possibility of there being anything and there being cognition – To Be being the highest and deepest condition of them all. The Transcendent should be the highest Entity: Reality-in-total that includes also the Divine. The history of Western and Indian Metaphysics and philosophy of man witness to the merits of bridging the never ending confusion between the concepts of the Divine and Reality-in-total as the theological and cosmological Transcendents, respectively, namely, *Brāhman*² and the world, and secondly also of differentiating between the allegedly Transcendental *Brāhman* and the Transcendental To Be.

¹See, for a detailed argumentation of this position, in my obituary-cum-appraisal article, "Bye, Derrida! Splendid Perseveres Your 'Unsettling Ambiguity'! An Appraisal of Your Influence on the Arts and the Sciences," *Advanced in Arts and Ideas* 1 (2005), 174-99.

²I would strictly adhere to the convention of using (1) the impersonal noun *Brāhman* (with accent on the first 'a') to denote the Impersonal Transcendent, which is the same as the impersonal noun *Ātman* (without accent on the 'a') in mystical

Similar is the situation in the West, too, despite its thrust after clarity of thought. I mention the example of the deep-seated dualism between the world and God in Heidegger. Although, after the example of Kant, Heidegger has famously differentiated between the Transcendent and the Transcendental, it is to be noted that Heidegger fell short of conceiving his aletheial Being as the locus of Reality-in-total. Earlier Heidegger had it as purely anthropologically aletheial. Later Heidegger has it as midway between the anthropologically aletheial Being and the cosmically ontological To Be, thus ending up in his infamous incapacitation of the Divine from being subject to the Being of beings! It is worth noting that Heidegger is blatantly antagonistic to connecting the concept of Being with that of God, for fear of incurring the insoluble problem of substituting Being with God. But, this has, finally, ended up in his disapproval of taking God as instantiating even the particular 'to be' of beings!

To quote Hemming paraphrasing Heidegger in the *Zürcher Seminar* (1951), where the latter was asked if Being and God may be posited as identical, "Heidegger's reply to this question is full of teasing, full of a dry, acridly ambiguous humour that plays with our own mishearings. He says that the answer hangs together with the 'Europeanization of history' and that 'being and God are not identical, and I would never attempt to think the essence of God through being'. He concludes I think very modestly about being with regard to its use to think the essence of God."³ But there remains the one question: When the grounding-question surfs over against the guiding-question of Western metaphysics, namely, the question of Being,⁴ does not Being ground also God, does not God become

experience and (2) the personal noun *Ātmān* (with accent on 'a') to denote the personal subject. *Ātmān* is derived from *aṭ, aṭati*, "to wonder," "go," "walk." Hence, *Ātmān* is "that which moves," "the wind," "the moving spirit." It may also be from *an*, "to breathe," and *vā*, "to blow." This term has reference to the individual principle that "breathes" and, thus, subsists. *Brāhman* is from *bṛh*, "growing," "swelling," "developing." It denotes the principle that is the greatest. This could not be merely a Transcendental, but an actual infinite, namely, the Transcendent. Then the only way in which the Transcendental To Be is active in the Transcendent should be infinite conscious activity, which is absent in *Ātmān*. Hence, even by the origin of the terms, the breathing Self and the Greatest are not to be on par.

³Laurence Paul Hemming, "The Being of God: The Limits of Theological Thinking after Heidegger," *New Blackfriars* 85,995 (April 2004), 17-18.

⁴Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 5.

the eminently Being-thinking being? Heidegger falls short of answering this question, in his ram into the anthropological question of Being:

Metaphysics answers this question always without reference to the being for whom the question arises, for whom the question is its own concern. The question therefore becomes asked in terms of highest being, that which is most stable, most present, most permanent about beings. The being which above all possesses life, is without death and at the same time without movement and which always 'is' in its being is, as early as Aristotle, understood to be God.⁵

As is clear to our imagination, a Divine who is not capable of being is a pure non-entity, a vacuous actuality. This ontological incapacitation of the Divine, on the part of Heidegger, has its roots in his inherited, unquestioned concept of the Divine as pure, unchanging, inactively active (i.e., unmoved mover!), etc. We should bridge this gap created by Heidegger, and our concept of the To Be of the (epistemologically aletheial and ontologically processual-aletheial) process of Reality-in-total is fashioned for this purpose. It happens to be useful also for a methodology for reconstruction of Hindu Metaphysics.

To bear out this position against Heidegger, direct references to Heidegger too may be given, where he badly differentiates between 'exist' ("stand out [in the conscious manner, never in the non-conscious but ontological manner]") and 'is' / 'be'. For example, "The being that exists is the human being. The human being alone exists. Rocks are, but they do not exist. Trees are, but they do not exist. Horses are, but they do not exist. Angels are, but they do not exist. God is, but he does not exist."⁶ In short, the Divine is not conscious like Being-thinking humans (!), and so, does not exist!

An examination of this clear-cut differentiation would have yielded much fruit for our discussion. But it suffices to mention that this problem is present in later Heidegger, so that we recognize how damaging to thought it can be if we refuse to connect To Be with the Divine and with Reality-in-total (of which the Divine is one of the infinite poles). I hold that the same difficulty is present in the concepts of *Brāhman*, *Ātmán*, and

⁵Hemming, "The Being of God," 23. Here Hemming refers to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, VII (1072b30).

⁶Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, William McNeill ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 284.

the world in Vedāntic Metaphysics. This paper attempts to fill the lacunae in this fundamental Indian problem.⁷

1.3. Clarification of Terms

It is in place here to distinguish between a 'connotative universal' and a 'transcendental'. A connotative universal is more or less an epistemological and semantic entity. A transcendental is an ontological pre-condition that involves a connotative universal. The To Be of Reality-in-total is the only highest Transcendental. It is also important to differentiate a 'transcendental' from a 'transcendent'. A transcendental, an ontological pre-condition involving a connotative universal, is an ontological, non-conscious connotative realized in the many (infinite entities of a kind). A transcendent, however, is any entity that is connotable by correlation with others by the involvement of transcendentals. Any entity is a transcendent. Reality-in-total is the highest Transcendent. The Divine is the Transcendental Transcendent, since it is the highest conscious appearance of the Transcendental in the Transcendent. The Transcendental To Be is instantiated best in Reality-in-total, but it is consciously best instantiated in the Divine.

The method proposed in this essay is so named because (1) the ideal of To Be and universal qualities attached to the highest Being (the Divine) are nothing but the Transcendental and the transcendentals respectively; (2) the highest Being and Reality-in-total are both Transcendents; (3) since the highest Being is in possession of infinite consciousness, it has to be in the highest conscious possession of the Transcendental (To Be), and so, the Divine has to be the Transcendental-Transcendent. So, the highest Transcendent, which may or may not have the highest conscious possession of the Transcendental (To Be), is Reality-in-total, i.e., God and the universe together.

⁷A clearer and more elaborate treatment of the problem in later Heidegger is contemplated. It is also proposed that the answer to it may involve the formation of a slightly different concept of To Be, than in later Heidegger. Then, the possibility of unifying the concepts of Reality-in-total and the Divine under this slightly new concept of To Be would be direct. The fundamental difference this new concept would make is to clarify certain questions of classical metaphysics, misunderstood since the Kantian, Pragmatic, Linguistic, Phenomenological, and Heideggerian revolutions in metaphysics.

This sort of clarity makes it easy for us to distinguish (1) Reality from *Brāhman* and (2) *Brāhman* from the Transcendental, namely, To Be, and the transcendentals, namely, universals / qualities. Now, the rest of the ontological project looks easier than in some of the absolutistic Vedāntic systems of Indian Metaphysics. This paper does not promise a direct deconstruction by applying the off-centre tactic of postmodernism; instead, it attempts what is more desirable, i.e., making reconstruction possible from within the context and arguments of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* Paradigm, by arguing for truth probabilism, which is theoretically derivable from ontology, and not from postmodernism.

Once again, to facilitate further work in this direction in Indian Metaphysics, it is important to take note of the definitional concepts. We have considered qualitative concepts as transcendentals, all entities as transcendentals, human *Ātmāns* as transcendental-transcendentals (due to their consciously To Be-level contemplative nature), the Divine as the Transcendental-Transcendent and Reality-in-total as the Transcendent. In the course of this essay, I hope to be able to show the necessity of these definitions for effecting the proposed reconstruction of Hindu Metaphysics in such a way that praxis-level justice is ensured for human beings on earth.

2. Ontology of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* Paradigm

2.1. The One and the Many

The questions as to why there are things and what they are in their processes have made any culture to think at the interface of (1) 'the many' that either appears to be or actually is, and (2) the One that may or may not be the underlying principle. These questions end up in further questions as to (1) how to overcome the difference between the many and the One, and (2) what is the inner nature or quality at work in the difference between the One and the many. The inner nature of the whole and the part is considered as To Be (of Reality-in-total) and the to be (of reality-in-particular as theoretically justified by To Be, Reality-in-total, and Reality-in-general). To Be is properly to be spoken of its locus, Reality-in-total. It exemplifies both Reality-in-total and Reality-in-general.

To Be, however, is taken as absolute changelessness by the whole Hindu tradition. To Be, naturally, pertains to the whole. The whole is unreflectively identified with *Brāhman*, on the double presupposition that the whole is the real and that the real is unchangeable. But, actually, the

fact of experience that beings change need not imply that the real, here identified with the whole, should not change! This causes confusion as to whether To Be is to be ascribed to the Divine as *Brāhman* or to Reality-in-total as *Brāhman*. This meaning of To Be has even transpired into the concept of *Śūnyatā* in the Buddhist tradition. The history of it is so strong that we need hard Transcendental-Transcendent thinking and learning from contemporary ontologies and anti-metaphysical traditions to overcome the difficulties brought about by the long tradition.⁸

2.2. The *Brāhman-Ātmán* Paradigm

The way the questions are answered in Hindu metaphysics is after the image of adherence to the Upaniṣadic absolutisation of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm, like in every exegetical derivative of inspired scriptures. Everything waters down to this scheme, and the result is identification of the fundamental quality (To Be) of the Whole (One without a second, the *Brāhman*) with the final processual "limit" of the individual (*Ātmán*). This result is beset with methodological difficulties: (1) It presupposes a logic that is at times absolutely deductive, and at other times inductive. The deductively inductive point of view is almost totally lacking in it. It is absolutely deductive when it derives unwarranted conclusions from some presumptions concerning the nature of To Be as Transcendental and also Transcendent! It is absolutely inductive when it tries to compromise the concepts of the world, man, and God using the concept of *māyā*. (2) The quality (in fact, the verbal To Be, but interpreted as the absolute and unchanging existent) that underlies the impersonal *Brāhman* is not supposed to underlie the personal *Ātmán* at all, and so, the individual *Ātmán*'s aspiration to be *absolutely* united to the One, namely, *Brāhman*, is naturally and justifiably postponed to a later date.

But, the nature of and reasons for the *absolute* transfer of the *Ātmán* into the *Brāhman* state (at which the *Ātmán*, who is personal, becomes the impersonal *Ātman* [without the personalizing accent on *a*], which is equivalent to the impersonal *Brāhman*), in accordance with the *Mahāvākya*, "*Tattvamasi*," is treated only practically (morally and

⁸I have attempted a similar but more detailed reconstruction of the Buddha (Mahāyāna) Ontology in "Hermeneutic Ontology of the Integrative Ultimate in Mahāyāna: Yielding a Mystic Ontology for Interreligious Enhancement," *Advances in Arts and Ideas* 1 (2005), 86-114.

mystically), and not metaphysically! This becomes problematic, because how one's uniquely personal status ceases to be and suddenly takes the place of the impersonal *Brāhman* as an enigma. This transfer process, it seems, is not only not accounted for in theory, but also impossible to be accounted for without use of the Transcendental-Transcendent distinction. We will explain this after further discussion. It suffices here to say that logical and ontological dissolution of the *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* process holds the key to reconstruction of Hindu Metaphysics in a manner that makes this process ontologically possible by first making *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* capable of being acceded to by each other.⁹

But, we do not wish to touch upon other traditional solutions like those of *Puruṣa-Prakṛti* and *Īśvara-Jīvāmān*. I presuppose that even in all these cases, the absolute superiority supposed to be the prerogative of *unchangeability* ascribed to *Puruṣa* and *Īśvara*, finally, ended them up in the same background concept as *Brāhman* for their justification, in which case *Puruṣa* and *Īśvara* had to remain anthropomorphic or cosmological relativisations of the concept of *Brāhman* for public consumption. Now, is *Brāhman* so absolute, and *Puruṣa* / *Īśvara* so relative?

2.3. Crux of the Problem and Its Evaporation in the Reconstruction

The *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* movement through realization of Wisdom as encapsulated in the principle "*Tattvamasi*" and other *mahāvākyas* is the ultimate solution proposed by all Hindu systems. In this world, the individual (*Ātmán*) experiences change and decay, but in *Brāhman*, the *Ātmán* experiences no change – a conclusion obtained by exclusive application of deduction or induction. This absolute general ontological difference and lack of mutual approachability between *Ātmán* and *Brāhman* have not been questioned sufficiently well, and so, the ontological consequences of this on the nature of *Brāhman* and the epistemological consequences of it on religious practice are not sufficiently mended. As a result, mystical epistemology is not properly exploited for the purpose of answering the question as to how to contemplatively and ethically overcome the seemingly absolute difference

⁹There is much process-philosophical understanding involved here. I would admit that this essay has a Whiteheadian, Heideggerian, cosmological, and mystical inspiration as well.

between the many and the One, so that socio-mystical practice is, in principle, made possible.

As is well known, *Ātmán* is considered by all Vedāntins as subject to empirical experience (*nāma-rūpa*) and *karma*. In that case it is merely the empirical *jīva*, within the same sense of the term 'empirical'. 'Empirical' has not been connected with the eternal here. One does also insist that the real nature of *Ātmán* is eternal. If so, *Ātmán* can neither change into the 'empirical' *jīva*, nor better itself from the state of being a *jīva* or *jīvātmán* into that of *Ātman* (without the accent on the 'a', and so, not the specific, but the absolute that has realized the proposed ideal state of identity with *Brāhman*). The problem here is double-edged: (1) Ontologically, this identity is not realizable; and mystically, there is a supposed experience of identity. (2) Both when we admit a connection between *Ātmán* and *Brāhman*, and when we separate them absolutely, a complete, ontologically absolute identity is not available. Then, why not admit only a never-ending, asymptotic process of mutual approach?

Instead of ontologically (and, thus, ethically and mystically) connecting the 'empirical' via reality-in-particular to the 'eternal', this problem has been set aside by the traditional, ascetically persuasive generalizations regarding the specific and the fleeting in experience – generalizations like *adhyāsa*, "superimposition," *māyā*, "(cosmic) ignorance," *ajñāna / avidyā*, "(personal) ignorance," etc. But the point of real or unreal connexion between these and the Absolute (where *Brāhman* = *Ātman* in an enigmatic manner) is still not made, and so, the problem continues to pose itself. We need, therefore, a viable concept of being real (in-whole and in-part) to connect *Brāhman* and *Ātman*. My suggestion here is that this problem will dissolve itself, provided *Brāhman* is no more taken as absolutely different from *Ātmán*. The Vedāntins do admit it to be true (*a-dvaita*, *viśiṣṭa-a-dvaita*, etc.), but by simultaneously maintaining that *Brāhman* is absolutely unchanging and unconnected and absolutely different from the specific. These two views are mutually incompatible. A realistic whole-and-part state of affairs, in which the part proceeds to become the whole is not advisable, since the absolute distinction – here of the infinite and the finite – is still present.

We need a theory in which *Ātmán* can ever better go on joining *Brāhman* but cannot become or enter into ontological identity with *Brāhman*, in which case the region of connexity between *Ātman* with entities, and *Brāhman*, is the consequent nature of *Brāhman*. Here, as

Ātmán never becomes *Brāhman*, nor becomes absolutely an organic part of *Brāhman*, we need, ontologically, to posit partial identity by similarity and partial difference by similarity between them – a difference that is not of whole and part, but of the Processual Entity that subordinates processual entities. In such a theory, *Brāhman* ceases to be the whole. It remains the Divine. The pure Transcendent, Reality-in-total, is the whole; *Brāhman* remains the infinitely Transcendental-Transcendent, all-pervading part; and *Ātmán* and other entities remain transcendentals of various, mutually compatible, and concrescent parts of the whole. This alone allows place for other entities in the process of divinisation. A pure whole-and-part theory reduces other entities as unaccountable for in the economy of the *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* process. The concepts of *adhyāsa*, *māyā*, *ajñāna* / *avidyā*, etc., would recur in such a theory!¹⁰

The questions that now remain to be posed are these: (1) How to integrate *Brāhman*, *Ātmán*, and the world into a Whole (Reality-in-total)? (2) How to effect the proposed reconstruction and integration in a way that the natures of both *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* are safeguarded without detriment to both and to other entities? These would naturally yield a pluriversal model, as would be expected by a metaphysician who believes in the final epistemological and ontological fruits, even of postmodern deconstructionism in ontology. Let us apply our principle of “partial identity and partial difference” to the whole paradigm proposed by Vedāntic Metaphysics and witness the solution that possibly emerges. We attempt this in section 3. We prepare the ground by analysing the epistemological background that supports the traditional Paradigm.

3. Epistemology of the *Pāramārthika-Vyāvahārika Jñānas*

3.1. Hermeneutic of Removal of Cosmic and Personal Ignorance

3.1.1. Fact of Ignorance

Wisdom in Vedāntic thought is perception (*vid-*, *veda*) of the essence of the Vedas, i.e., the fact of the ‘Ideally Real in manifestation and ingression in the specific’; whereas in Buddhism it is continuous awareness of the transience of all constructs. The absence of wisdom and the absence of action in accord with wisdom are the results of ignorance (*avidyā*) of the essence of the Vedas. The process of removal of ignorance is discussed in

¹⁰This can very well justify the Christian theological position about the issue, too.

a unique fashion by Sureśvara (a pupil of Śaṅkara) in his *Vārttika* (critical annotations on a group of aphorisms) on Bhartr̥-prapañca's *Puruṣavidya Brāhmaṇa*, which is one of the rare pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntic philosophical works that prescribes worship of the *Ātman* as *Hiraṇyagarbha*¹¹ for attaining liberation. This work is also the beginning of philosophical discussion on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the most famous of the principal *Upaniṣads*. The work says so of the removal of ignorance and the place of the Veda (as *Śabda*) in the process of liberation:

"*Durbalatvādvaidyāyā āmatvādbodharūpiṇaḥ
Śabdaśakteracintyatvādvidmastam mohahānataḥ*" (860).

"On the removal of ignorance, we know that one (viz., the inner self = the *Ātmān*) on the removal of ignorance owing to its weakness, since the *Ātman* in the form of knowledge and (also) thanks to the incomprehensible (potence) of the words (in the Veda)."¹²

The Ideally Real in perception is at the same time considered as an Entity and as an Ideal. Here lies the reason for the insufficiency of effectiveness of the integration that the different Vedānta philosophies have claimed to bring about. That is, from this perspective issues the problem of the integration of the totally real-actual (*Wirklichkeit*) and the ideal-actual (*Realität*, in the sense of ideal-reified) within the *Brāhman-Ātmān* paradigm. As we proceed in this essay, the difficulties involved in the Vedāntic integration would be clearer, and the suggested methodological solution will be explained further.

3.1.2. Power of the Word (*Veda*) and Society in Removal of Ignorance

The power of absolutising – or not – ignorance is such that the individual cannot overcome it. We need others to do that, because an external agency or cause is a must for communication of the Word. Although individuals are themselves unable to do that by reason of their individuality, there is something at the realm of 'the between' of persons, i.e., in society, in the

¹¹*Hiraṇyagarbha* means "Golden Germ." It is a name for Brahmā, who is supposed to be the earliest manifestation of *Brāhman*. It is also understood as "Consciousness associated with the collective subtle body" consisting of the different sheaths that function as the limbs of the Cosmic Soul, the sheaths being: *vijñānamayakośa*, *manomayakośa*, and *prāṇamayakośa*. Thus, derivatively, the term means Cosmic Womb, World Mind, and World Soul.

¹²K. P. Jog and Shoun Hino, eds., *Sureśvara's Vārttika on Puruṣavidya Brāhmaṇa*, Advaita Tradition Series, vol. 5, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993, 270.

world, that empowers individual entities with the power of removal of ignorance. It is argued that this is because the Vedas are given in and through others, not automatically. Hence, we need others at every nook of our existence, for removal of ignorance. That is, we have *mokṣa* and *mukti* from the powers of ignorance only by intervention of the other in our lives. This is clearly enunciated in the following verse from *Puruṣavidha Brāhmaṇa* thus:

“*Agṛhāvaiva sambandhamabhidhānābhidheyayoḥ
Hitvānidrām prabuddhyante suṣupte bodhitāḥ*” (861).

“(Such is the wonderful potency of the words of Veda that), even without their having touched the connection between the expression and what is to be expressed, (the ignorant ones) who are awakened in their sleep (i.e., ignorance) by others, wake up having given up their sleep.”¹³

This verse recognizes the place of the other in the self-process. If there is no other, then there is no removal of ignorance. That is, it is not merely the *Veda*, but the *Veda* in conjunction with humans (and other entities), that remove ignorance. The *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, and also most of the commentators and thinkers, do not seem to emphasize this communal-hermeneutic aspect of the process of removal of ignorance and attainment of *mokṣa*. Famously, the practical subjective instruments for attainment of *mokṣa* are morality and contemplation in most of the Indian systems, and also in other major religions and philosophies in the world.

Now, if we are to follow the suggestion of Bhartr̥-prapañca that the other is causally intermediate to the *Veda* and the *Ātmán*, then we need only to extend the concept of the other for an ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically most integral, logical, coherent, and just means of synthesizing Reality by use of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm. The other can be anyone, even the one who is directly inessential to one’s perception of the highest truth, because, ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically, there is only partial identity and partial difference between them. This aspect integrates into the *Ātmán-to-Brāhman* process what is central in knowledge process and also what is not so central in it, of which deconstructionists seem to favour only the latter! This is potent of bestowing greater adequacy to the theory and its praxis. The question ‘Why so?’ is, thus, being supplemented with the question ‘Why not so?’.

¹³Jog and Hino, eds., *Sureśvara’s Vārtika on Puruṣavidha Brāhmaṇa*, 270.

and the result is elucidation of the problem by filling the lacunae that were considered marginal or insignificant. I believe this has been made possible by the principle of partial identity and partial difference.

3.1.3. What Has Been Done to Solve the Difficulties?

The concepts of *Saguṣṭa Brāhman*, *Jīvānman*, etc., in Rāmānuja, Madhva, etc., have been proposed as partial solutions, against the background of the problem of *Pāramārthika* and *Vyāvahārika Jñānas*. There appear in a chain the *tuccha* ("trifling"), *prātibhāsika* ("existing only in appearance"), *vyāvahārika* ("practical" or "pragmatic"), and *pāramārthika* ("pertaining to the highest of whole meaning / truth") *jñānas* as modifications of *jñāna*. The former three types, however, are not considered to be *jñānas* proper because of the absoluteness ascribed to the *pāramārthika*. So, they can be grouped as pragmatic and the fourth as absolute. This reduces the 'four-truths' theory into a 'double truth' theory. Thus, the question of the fundamentality of the *Ātmán-to-Brāhman* process and the problems involved in the paradigm do not give way, since these thinkers too have reified or idealized *Ātmán* and *Brāhman* beyond redemption, by adhering to the alleged absoluteness (from which there is no return, since in it there is the absolute experience of identity of *Brāhman* and *Ātmán*) of the *pāramārthika jñāna*.

3.1.4. What Is to Be Done to Solve the Difficulties Together?

After we unearth the realized, actual meaning of the concept of metaphysical Transcendentality (idealization at the level of To Be) of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm from the points of view of *Advaita* and other important schools, we may also advance beyond them in search of certain improvements in the understanding of the integral vision. This advance would be to integrate the Transcendentality of *Brāhman* with the Transcendent quality of all beings, i.e., *Brāhman*, individuals, and the universe.

This requires us to look into the nature of the epistemology central to Vedic, Upaniṣadic, and Vedāntic thoughts, namely, the concept of the Double Truth, i.e., the *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika jñānas*. We need to integrate these into a mutually continuous epistemology of higher wisdom and lesser wisdom, and as a result, we should follow a Transcendental-Transcendent ontology, epistemology, and ethics that integrate *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* in a mutually continuous manner. This is nothing but

integration of the phenomenal (inclusive of both the actual and the constructed) in unison with the noumenal, at the level of Reality-in-general, which is the conceptual-processual integration of the specific with the whole at the level of the To Be of Reality-in-total. The system that results will be more adequate for meeting the ontological, liberative, and social needs of humankind, than we have in the above-said systems. Attempting only a deconstruction of all sorts of systems will only continue to bring back the off-centre to the central and make possible an ever more truth probabilistic system. Something similar is the result we project. But, if there is a way of integrating the central with the 'between' in being, knowing and acting, what will be the characteristics of such a system? This question we try to answer in the sections and sub-sections that follow after treating its epistemology. We begin from the very epistemological foundations of the *Brāhman-Ātmān* paradigm. It will now be clear that the paradigm is based on the *naiveté* in the absolutisation of the concepts of *Pāramārthika* and *Vyāvahārika Jñānas*.

3.2. *Pāramārthika* and *Vyāvahārika Jñānas* as Wisdom

3.2.1. What is Wisdom?

Genuine wisdom is the continuously conscious and all-inclusive perception (*veda*) – while one is in contemplation or action – of the infinite and eternal factuality of “That thou art,” and other such *Mahāvākyas*. This state of wisdom is *pāramārthika jñāna*. This alone is real wisdom. Let us now take a look at the context, i.e., of the three states before the highest, the *turīya / caturtha*, “the fourth,” namely, *jāgrat* (“waking”), *svapna* (“dreaming”), and *susupti* (“deep sleep”) – and the way in which *pāramārthika jñāna* is held superior:

“*Jāgratsvapnasusupteṣu ghaṭoḥīyamiti savidah*

Vyavadhānam na cehāsti sadbhavāsākṣitaḥ” (871).

“In the knowledge ‘This is a pot’ (which occurs) in the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, there is some delimitation [note: Namely, this pot exists on such and such a thing for such and such a period]; (but such d[e]limitation) does not exist here (in respect of the knowledge of the *Ātman*), since (the *Ātman* itself) is the seer of the presence and absence of that (thing).”¹⁴

¹⁴Jog and Hino, eds., *Sureśvara's Vārtika on Puruṣavidya Brāhmaṇa*, 273.

Seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis*, therefore, is the wisdom the seer supposedly attains. But one forgets the fact that seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis* is itself not the very ideal, abstract, absolute *pāramārthika jñāna*, but instead, it does only imply such an ideal. It is, in fact, a continuous process in imitation of the transcendently posited abstract state of knowledge, which is termed the highest. This should be so, because the transcendently posited abstract ideal is never ontologically or consciously realized in a finite being, and so, the *Ātmán* never fully transforms into *Ātman*. How is this knowledge to be continuous in a person of human form, however long one is in the *samādhi* of the eternal point of view? Is it an eternal point of view or an eternalising one? How does one jump from being the empirical to the eternal self?

3.2.2. *Pāramārthika* and *Vyāvahārika Jñānas*

According to Sureśvara, since the experience "I am *Brāhman*" in the more perfect state of deep sleep is inferred only after deep sleep, there is no way of establishing the existence of the experiencer at the earlier (deep sleep) moment by usual means of perception.¹⁵ What, then, about the fourth state? One important thing that is forgotten here is the simple logic of supplementing every conclusion of one person with those of others – at the level of the To Be of Reality-in-total and at the realm of Reality-in-general – for ever-greater truth probability. Just as all specific logical formulations are susceptible to error, so also is every experience of the individual, however deeply one is immersed in the fourth state. The point of view had in Reality-in-general is never the absolute, but it is ever better than the empirical. We do not find this sort of an epistemology in Vedāntic Metaphysics.

Now, according to the Vedāntas, whatever be the experience and resultant logically formulated knowledge we have had in the first three states (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep), they are susceptible to error. Different authors call this variety of truth as *vyāvahārika jñāna*. It may also be called *parokṣa* (indirect) *jñāna*.

But, the sort of *jñāna* had in *turīya* is considered to be absolute: since this state is the ultimate, the *jñāna* in that state should also be such. This is called *pāramārthika jñāna*, also called *aparokṣa* (direct) *jñāna*. Directness and absoluteness of truth are to be found only in such knowledge. Now,

¹⁵Jog and Hino, eds., *Sureśvara's Vārtika on Puruṣavidya Brāhmaṇa*, 274.

suppose we can establish that even *pāramārthika* is not absolute, then we know also that *turīya* is not absolute. This would show that the only possible fact about the two types of knowledge, namely, that there is only partial identity between the two, is the source of confusion and of possible integration between absolute wisdom and finite knowledge.

4. Integration by Ontological and Epistemological Pluriversality

4.1. Key to Reconstruction: The Transcendental, the Specific Transcendentals, the Transcendent, the Transcendent Divine and the Specific Transcendents

4.1.1. Nature of the Confusion in the Concept of *Brāhman*

As we have already begun to see at different stages of our inquiry, the confusion in the case of the concept of *Brāhman* is due to a threefold interpretation prejudiced at times by the need to idealize, and at times by the need to reify:

(1) At times, *Brāhman* is taken to mean what is ultimately true in the final interpretation of everything – especially in the interpretation of *Ātmán* – i.e., the Transcendental aspect of *Brāhman*. This is the concept of *Brāhman* as the ultimate Transcendental (not Transcendent) Ground implied in all beings: as To Be. In fact, the Transcendental Ground should not be the same as the Transcendent Divine, which is possibly the final Entity in Process – the ultimate end especially of *Ātmán* – by reason of which all beings are in process. This sort of the concept of *Brāhman* should have been as the Transcendental-Transcendent, i.e., as the Transcendent in whom the Transcendental is realized in Consciousness / Conscious Process. But, the concept of *Brāhman* as the Ultimate Transcendental Ground is contrary to such an understanding.

(2) At other times, the ultimate *Brāhman* is taken only as the Transcendent Divine mentioned above. The Divine, in fact, should not be the *māyic* universe, or should not include it. Hence, the Divine, as distinct from the universe, is taken as the *Brāhman*, and is properly termed *Īśvara*, which need not necessarily be unchanging. As an Entity, but the highest at that, *Īśvara* is infinitely personal. This concept is close to the concept of the personal God in Rāmānuja and others. This is not the Transcendental Ground, but a sort of Transcendent Ground for the process of the universe, because it does not include the universe. This is contrary to the rendering of the concept of *Brāhman* as the ultimate Transcendental Ground, To Be.

(3) The Ultimate Entity to which everything belongs and into which everything returns is the whole of Reality. But, in Vedāntic Metaphysics, *Brāhman* is that ultimate into which everything returns. That is, it is the most inclusive Transcendent Entity, which includes both the universe and the Divine. In short, this view presents the Vedāntic concept of *Brāhman* as that of the totality of whatever is. Properly speaking, this ultimate Entity, Reality-in-total, should have been seen as the Transcendent Ground of both the Universe and the Divine – the Ground in which To Be is infinitely consciously realized, and only partially Transcendentally (ontologically) realized (because To Be is purely Transcendentally realized only in Reality-in-total). But, according to the third view presented here, *Brāhman* is considered to be Reality-in-total. This is contrary to the concepts of To Be, Reality-in-total, and Reality-in-general.

Thus, these three fallacious positions have caused much confusion concerning the concept of *Brāhman*. We shall, therefore, analyse the epistemological reasons behind them.

4.1.2. Connexion between the *Brāhman-Ātmán* Confusion and the Double Truth

It should also be kept in mind that the confusion regarding the concept of *Brāhman* is the direct theoretical fallout of non-recognition of the continuity between *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika jñānas*. If the two *jñānas* were absolutely different, the kernel of the *Ātmán*, which is actually proceeding from *vyāvahārika jñāna*, can never be led to the allegedly absolute *pāramārthika jñāna* by any agency.

Moreover, if the common expression, “In the *turīya*, I reach the state of mind in which I don’t perceive myself as having or being *Ātmán*, nor as being a soul, but merely become *Brāhman*” were true, then the concept of *Brāhman* is that of a purely idealized thing, namely, Being-as-such, taken to be an unchanging Thing! Then, there cannot be a temporal experience standing in lieu of what is called the transition point. But, it is a fact that the *mumukṣu* still lives, and even thinks in space and time. This shows that there is continuity between the two poles, namely, *Ātmán* and *Brāhman*, and so, the absolutisation of this epistemological transition is the reason behind the absolutisation of the experience of identity between *Brāhman* and *Ātmán*. The alleged experience of Being here is, therefore, a conceptual-ideal experience through the semantic act of ‘naming’ of the content of the experience as identity! Hence, there is parallelism between

this epistemology and the ontology of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm, and this semantics and epistemology are the sources of the ontological muddle.

4.1.3. What Needs to Be Done?

We do not find in Vedāntic Metaphysics much logical application of the mystical realization of the fact that terms are extremely relativised agents of linguistically fixating the partially fluent aspect of actuality. Let alone the case of ordinary philosophical terms, but not even regarding foundational philosophical and mystical terms has any orthodox system made the effort to relativize the linguistically meaning-fixing and fixating terms, which, otherwise, stand for the fluent aspect of actuality, and still safeguard the reality of beings as partially fluent and partially static processes! This has caused semantic muddle in all the fundamental conclusions of the Vedāntic philosophies.¹⁶ This confusion in the concept of *Brāhman* (and other concepts like *Ātmán*, world, *Māyā*, entities, etc.), which we find in the *Upaniṣads*, Vedantic philosophies and other Hindu systems, has to be bridged in order to bring about an effective integration of metaphysical thinking in Hindu philosophy. The manner of such a reconstruction and its anticipated results may be treated in a cursory and perfunctory manner here.

4.2. First Characteristic of the Reconstruction: Pluriversality by *Brāhman-Ātmán* and *Pāramārthika-Vyāvahārika* Continuity

4.2.1. What is Wrong with the *Brāhman-Ātmán* Paradigm?

¹⁶Even contemporary Western and Indian semantics, logic, epistemology, and metaphysics have been getting logically muddled mainly due to lack of know-how as how to practically infuse the relative, probabilistic content of terms and words into discursive processes. Semantics needs to grow beyond the discovery of multi-valued logics, with the help of probabilistic epistemologies and ontologies, so as to make this much-awaited effect felt. I believe this can be had when postmodern, process, and scientific epistemologies and ontologies meet seriously with contributions of logicians like Łukasiewicz (many-valued logics) and Gödel (incompleteness theorem), on the one hand, and with contemporary scientific ontologies, on the other, that interpret the scientific realism involved in the origins of quantum mechanics. Ordinary language may not be able to circumvent two-valued logic, but the effects of multi-valued logic may be brought about by ontology and its systemic logic that probabilise logical procedures and results. This is indicated even in mystical experience of a variety that tends not to absolutize, and ontology should join hands with such a mysticism.

The major debility of the solution put forth in the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm – the supposed actuality of the idealized *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* movement – is without the possibility of a contrariwise relation, i.e., the relation *Brāhman*-into-*Ātmán*. There is no mutuality in the whole. So, the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm is clearly one-sided. That is, *Brāhman* has no realized ideal identity-relation with *Ātmán*. So, there is no way of *Ātmán*'s being affected by *Brāhman* for a haul towards It. But, as we have seen, *Ātmán*'s relationship with *Brāhman* is such that the whole process is purely the result of the individual *jīvātmán*'s bringing oneself to awareness or the result of the Eternal Veda's being communicated to the individual through other individuals. This insulates *Brāhman* from pluriversal relationship from the part of *Ātmán*. This does also contradict the dictum, *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat* (Īśa Up. 2.1), which seems to be more in keeping with the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and other *Bhakti* traditions, but never in unison with the idealizing identity-relation *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman*, or vice versa.

4.2.2. What is Wrong with the *Pāramārthika-Vyāvahārika Jñānas*?

We have already said that if we can establish that even *pāramārthika* is not absolute, then we know also that *turīya* is not absolute. This may be accomplished in the following manner. On the basis of the continuity between *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* it may be said that *pāramārthika* is an idealization of an infinitely impossible state of wisdom, and so, even in *turīya* we do not have an absolute knowledge. Since *Brāhman* is the infinitely actively Transcendental (conscious, contemplative) Transcendent Entity, It is only partially and ever finitely approachable by *Ātmāns* that are in *vyāvahārika* knowledge.

However great is the miracle that carries the one in *turīya* up unto *pāramārthika*, it requires infinity, and the whole ontological status of *Brāhman* will have to be bestowed on *Ātmán* for one to achieve the *pāramārthika* level of *jñāna*. Hence, we human *Ātmāns* can have only ever closer acceleration and ontological (and conscious) approximation to *pāramārthika jñāna*. That is, the process of attainment of liberation is only a being accelerated unto *pāramārthika jñāna* with the least possibility to any deceleration that might annul the acceleration into zero. The probabilistic zigzag in acceleration could be the effect of *vyāvahārika jñāna*. That is, there is always a measure of the *pāramārthika* in the *vyāvahārika*, in which dwells the *Ātmán*. There is no absolute *vyāvahārika*

for *Ātmán* to dwell in, for it is already partially occupied by *pāramārthika jñāna*. This shows that both the types of knowledge are mutually continuous. The Vedas and the Vedāntas never recognized this possibility; nor did they possess a semantics and logic that can put such recognition into discourse. They knew only to make pure deductions and inductions, or, even when the inference is realized to be a mixture of both induction and deduction, they preferred to call it by either of the names.

4.2.3. Semantic and Logical Aspect of the Reconstruction

The whole logical method behind derivation of the meanings of the concepts of *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* and the twofold *jñānas* should, therefore, be questioned. This would allow us to suggest a sufficiently radical overhaul and renovation of the procedure in creating a metaphysical understanding of Reality-in-total under the point of view of the relativistic and probabilistic, Transcendental and Transcendent categorial system. The actual nature of logical thought is never purely deductive, nor purely inductive. I would call it, instead, the inductive-deductive method. Induction and deduction are to be integrated in such a way that the concepts of the Transcendental and the Transcendent are properly discovered and clarified in the context of the paradigm. So, we can never accept inferring first an absolute and unchanging thing called *Brāhman* and then *Ātmán*'s actually impossible and conceptually unnatural mystical leap into the allegedly absolute *Brāhman*. This will be both empirically and ontologically impossible if we admit a possibility of there being an absolute state.

Hence, the absolute state called *Brāhman* as the very To Be, an inactive state (inactive because To Be is not a thing, but an ontological concept) which is the condition for the possibility of there being anything at all, is an impossibility. Else, we would have an actual, infinite fact in this empirical impossibility. The logical conclusion that one has attained the state of identity with the absolute, and the semantic nature of the conceptual objects involved in it, are not to be equated with actuality. Such equation is the semantic and logical mistake in Vedāntic Metaphysics. Inductively deductive thought would yield that the actuality of the specific is not equivalent to the actuality of the experience and the thought. Just as this thought yields only truth probability, so also, the result of the specific *Ātmán*'s experience effects only a partial difference and partial identity in the *Ātmán* with the no-more-absolutely-inactive *Brāhman*.

4.2.4. Nature of Immortality Inducted from Nature of *Pāramārthika Jñāna*

The nature of *pāramārthika jñāna*, too, is, therefore, no more an absolute state. It is the epistemologically ever-bettering state of approach to conscious immersion in *Brāhman*. This would hold the key to understanding the nature of immortality. Since *pāramārthika jñāna* is always induced, first of all, by contact with others (who communicate the Veda to individuals) and the consequent experiential communication of the Word, and secondly, by means of moral action and contemplation, individual immortality is simultaneously also a community affair. Now, how is immortality to be understood? No one communicates the 'infinite' *pāramārthika jñāna* infinitely, nor attains it infinitely, for otherwise one would already have been *Brāhman*. Instead, perhaps there always is continuous asymptotical approach to *Brāhman* and *pāramārthika jñāna*. This continuous ontic approach is itself a state, and let us call it the beginning of *mokṣa*. Hence, immortality may now be interpreted only in this manner, since *Brāhman* and *pāramārthika jñāna* are no more absolute states.

4.2.5. Pluriversality in *Brāhman-Ātmán* Thinking

As a result of the reconstructive integration (by mutual continuity) of *Brāhman* and *Ātmán*, the *pāramārthika-vyāvahārika jñānas* and the simultaneously deductive and inductive ways of logic, we have an ontology with the greatest possible range, by partial identity and partial difference between entities, both God and entities in the world. This is what we aim at in the name of pluriversality in *Brāhman-Ātmán Thinking*. This allows not merely humans to be imbued with the Divine. The whole universe is imbued with the Divine. The difference between entities and humans rests in that humans approach *Brāhman* consciously, through thinking, loving, and acting at the realm of the awareness of To Be. As we have already seen, *Brāhman* could no more be conceived as a wholly other, but as the Entity that thinks, loves, and acts in favour of Himself, the world and humans at the level of the To Be of Reality-in-total.

To all individual *Ātmáns* instrumental in communicating Wisdom (Veda, which is the Word) to other *Ātmáns* should be posed the question, How has true knowledge been aroused in them? This involves an infinite regress. This is supposed to end up in *Brāhman* as the cause of it, but

Brāhman is absolutely unchanging for all the *Vedāntins*, and so, does not initiate anything specific and does not contain anything! This is a paradox. Any paradox has to be solved not from within the system, but from its very roots. All possible presuppositions of the system – especially the concepts of the allegedly absolute *Brāhman*-to-*Ātmán* identity, the uncaused *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* process and the absolute jump from the *vyāvahārika* into the *pāramārthika jñāna* in Vedāntic systems – are to be questioned. If *Brāhman* is no more absolute in the sense of To Be, It is only the highest conscious realization of the ontological foundation To Be of Reality-in-total. This allows *Brāhman* to be active in favour of *Ātmāns* and the world! This is the basis of genuine pluriversality in ontology.

A set of concepts, available even in ontological synthesis, would work as the almost absolutely necessary categories for integration. We have them in categorial concepts formulated so as to effect a Transcendental and Transcendent clarity in all the presuppositions of the fundamental ontological and epistemological concepts involved. First of all, as we saw, this sort of an understanding allows for great ontological pluriversality in the context of the vertical *Brāhman-Ātmán* relationship. This is vertical, downward into *Ātmán*, and secondly also upward, from the latter into *Brāhman*. Secondly, it is also horizontal, because *Ātmán* has its ontological principle of continuity in partial identity to and partial difference from other such *Ātmāns*. For this reason, any entity is an instrument of acceleration of *Ātmán* into the mystic-epistemological *pāramārthika* process and the ontological *Brāhman* process. This is possible because there is epistemological continuity between *pāramārthika-vyāvahārika jñānas* and ontological continuity between *Brāhman* and *Ātmán*. This is most similar to the contemporary Process philosophical and also Christian philosophical understanding of God, World, and Man, wherein God is infinitely active, loving, and aware.

This has allowed a clear and adequate understanding of the genuinely horizontal aspect of human existence. Its ramifications in religious, social, moral, cultural, organizational, literary, and aesthetical fields of action and expression remain to be elaborated. However, it suffices to assert that this model is capable of creating pluriversality into a reality in the philosophies and sciences of religion, society, morality, culture, organization, literature, and aesthetical experience.

Another important problem that has vexed the whole history of Eastern and Western thought, and seems to possess a systematic answer

here, is the *problem of the constitution of the relation between the Divine and the entities in the world, especially humans*. That is, *Brāhman* is no more to be taken as a vacuous but infinitely actual entity. If *Brāhman* is not vacuous, He is infinitely conscious, infinitely active, hence infinitely changing, and, thus, also infinitely loving. Thus, we have a concept of a *Brāhman*, who is capable of getting in infinite specific relations, and simultaneously capable of being entered into a relation by conscious beings by their acting, loving, and thinking at the level of the To Be of Reality-in-total.

The Divine in this process is an actual Divine. In that case, *Brāhman* should pervade all, but be distinct from entities. The manner / way of this mutuality – of this awareness, consciousness and love, in short, this infinite change – is naturally the To Be of Reality-in-total. This *Brāhman* is not the Transcendental To Be, not is it Reality-in-total, but the Transcendental-Transcendent, because the Transcendental is had in *Brāhman* at the level of Its infinitely active consciousness! Such a *Brāhman* alone is capable of being *Saccidānandam* – the concrete basis of pluriversality in Reality-in-total.

4.2.6. Theoretical Basis of a New Vedāntic Ontological System

Hereafter, the distinction involved in *Brāhman-Ātmán* mutuality need not be mutually exclusive (meaning, absolute distinction), mutually inclusive (meaning, identity), or unilaterally inclusive (meaning, one totally subsuming the other). If there is unilateral inclusion, *Brāhman* not only pervades, but also includes entities. In this case it is *mere inclusion, wherewith Brāhman alone exists*, and entities are only limbs. This is nothing but Rāmānuja's Qualified Non-dualism in which *Īśvara*, human soul, and the world form an organic, dependent whole. But, one fact that should be known clearly is this: even in Rāmānuja God does not depend on man or the world to any extent. That is, there is only a unilateral relationship: that from man and the conscious world towards God, insofar as the theoretical foundation of God is *Brāhman*.

If *Brāhman* were the whole and *Ātmáns* were parts, then we may also think of the theoretically immediate possibility of a distinction of a double nature in all entities: (1) the primordial and consequent natures¹⁷ of

¹⁷The concept of God as endowed with primordial and consequent natures is not new in Western philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead has made a strong case for it

Brāhman and (2) the partially primordial and partially consequent natures of *Ātmán* and other entities. Although the part does not have the highest potentialities of the Whole, and *will never have them*, still, in Rāmānuja the *Ātmán* would have to be eternal, and, therefore, also infinite. If *Ātmán* were primordial and consequent, then, the same problem as in Śāṅkara (i.e., the question of equiprimordiality of *Ātmán*) continues to exist, and we will have to overcome the absolute distinction or identity that this state of affairs allows us to infer! Hence, we will have to be satisfied with *Brāhman* who is both primordial and consequent, and *Ātmán* that is only consequent. This implies a state of affairs in which *Ātmán* is the result of productivity of the consequent nature of *Brāhman*, *Ātmán* contributes to the consequent nature of *Brāhman* by being ever closer to it, and *Ātmán* is incapable of ever fully being identical with *Brāhman* in Its primordial nature or even in Its consequent nature. *Ātmán*, then, has only one way out to attain *mokṣa*: to continuously evolve unto *Brāhman*, never becoming the 'That' of "That thou art." Therefore, *mokṣa* is no more a final state, but a continuous growth in attaining the qualities of *Brāhman*.

We have two conclusions metaphysically and cosmologically explosive of Vedāntic Metaphysics: that *Brāhman* is infinitely primordial and consequent, and *Ātmán* is exclusively finitely consequent. This would ward off any possibility of monism and pantheism. If we favour monism, the possibilities of differentiation between *Ātmán* and *Brāhman*, and between *Ātmán* and beings, will be out of the question. If we favour pantheism, (1) the above-said possibility of difference would naturally be a block, (2) the question of *Brāhman-Ātmán* identity will be meaningless, and (3) *Ātmán* being part of *Brāhman* would also be pointless.

We would have to create an ontological system in which there arises matter and relatively individualized spirit (both with consequent nature), from within the primordial-consequent matrix of Reality-in-total, that ever proceeds to grow upwards into the ever higher realms of the consequent nature, though never reaching the heights of the infinitely primordial and consequent natures of the Divine. The only viable solution (i.e., continuous creation) will, then, have to be answered by positing nothing other than

mainly in his *Process and Reality*, especially in pages 343-51. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927-28*, Corrected Edition, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, eds., New York: The Free Press, 1978.

continuous creation out of nothing, since, in the case of creation out of the Divine Himself, we would have to face the question of the absence of the infinite primordial nature in the creature created thus!

4.3. Second Characteristic of the Reconstruction: Pluriversality in Wise Ethical Action and Contemplation

4.3.1. Wisdom of Positing Simultaneity of Contemplation and Duties

The *āśramas* are a graded journey in perfection of the *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* movement. It is interesting to note that the *Upaniṣads* have stressed the need for the renouncer to mix performance of duties throughout the contemplative journey. For example, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* prescribes duties for the *āśramas* and calls it *trayo dharmaskandhāḥ* (Ch. Up. 2.23.1).¹⁸ Similarly, contemplation does not start merely in *sannyāsa*. It is already present in the very stages of *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastya*, and *vānaprastha*, and culminates in *sannyāsa*. But, the ways in which these are to be mixed lacks one important preconditional component, without which genuine *pāramārthika jñāna* would be continuously stifled and *vyāvahārika jñāna* alone would reign. This lacuna may be conceived and solved in the following manner.

Pāramārthika is the ultimate knowledge. In actual practice, as we have seen, this is never the ultimate in the full sense of the term 'absolute'. Even as, in the earlier *āśramas*, one is told to practise one's duties wholeheartedly and perform worship of *Brāhman* as *Īśvara* or any of the *Saguṇa*-Triṇity, namely, *Brahma*, *Viṣṇu*, or *Śiva*, efforts should have been on from the part of the renouncer (*sannyāsi*) to give to the *brahmacāri*, *gṛhastha* and *vānaprastha* foretastes of the ideal contemplative experience proper to *sannyāsa*. This must have been taking place automatically within the context of the worshipful and active experiences of these earlier *āśramas*; the epistemological and ontological foundation for it is, however, absent in that the experience in the *turīya* state of contemplation is considered to be absolute and proper only to the final state, though it is not

¹⁸“The same *Upaniṣad*-text speaks of men in the three earlier stages of Student, Householder and Hermit as going to 'pure regions' and of the remaining one, 'Renouncer' as becoming immortal. The reason given for this is that the Renouncer incurs no sin by renouncing Action, while people in the other three stages incur great sin by neglecting the duties laid down in scripture.” Ganganath Jha, *Sankara Vedanta*, Darbhanga Lectures Series 1, Darbhanga: Darbhanga University Press, 1940, 54.

the case in actuality. In short, we should theoretically and consciously allow the *turīya* state to happen in the earlier *āśramas*.

Insofar as the possibility of simultaneity of the effort for and the foretaste of both the highest contemplation and the most virtuous performance of duties is not recognized, there is something amiss in their possible realization. This is theoretically made impossible in the existing Vedāntic theory, since *turīya*, the height of 'identity' experience in *sannyāsa*, is absolute, and resists foretastes. This has to be done away with, since the contemplative experience had in earlier *āśramas* is similar – although not equal – to the non-absolute experience in the *turīya*. The state of affairs in which we absolutize *turīya* is the result of the absolutisation of *Brāhman* and *pāramārthika jñāna*.

Since we have already relativised them by use of the paradoxes that the concepts of *Brāhman-Ātmán* and *pāramārthika-vyāvahārika* incur, we may safely conclude that it is possible to have foretastes of the highest in morality and contemplation in any and every stage of spiritual development. This facilitates realization of the fact that although the distances from *Brāhman* to *Ātmán* and *pāramārthika* to *vyāvahārika* are supposedly infinite and absolute, they are still bridgeable in experience because the firsts of both the pairs are absolutisations of actuals that render their distances to the seconds infinite but non-absolute. That is, the concept of *Brāhman* hereunto has been a Transcendental absolutisation of the Transcendental-Transcendent, which is, in fact, not a pure, absolute being. *Pāramārthika* is a Transcendental absolutisation of the never-fully-to-occur in experience, due to the partial identity and partial difference between *Brāhman* and *Ātmán*. Even in (the renewed concept of) *Brāhman*, *pāramārthika jñāna* is infinite, but not absolute.

Pāramārthika is not the To Be, and instead the derivative, but ideal, generality of experience of the To Be of Reality-in-total in everything, in thinking, and especially in the mystical *turīya*. Let us call it Reality-in-general, the generalized but possible 'Transcendently' Transcendental category of all thought. This category is actual only in *Brāhman*. Its ideality is not as absolute as in the Vedāntic concept of *pāramārthika*. In *Brāhman* this is expressed not merely as the highest, infinite contemplation, but also as infinite activity – call it creation, love, providence, etc. This is the highest Wisdom, and human wisdom is a finite rendering of it with an ever-higher approach to the infinite (but not absolute [like in the pure, wholly other Being]) Wisdom of *Brāhman*.

4.3.2. Result: Ethical Action from Pluriversality in *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* Process

If there is the possibility of the *Ātmán*-into-*Brāhman* process, then 'process' should also be the nature of *Brāhman*. In that case, *Ātmán*, which is the processual self, can get ever closer to *Brāhman*, the processual Divine. But, *Brāhman*, as the Divine, should then be the Transcendental-Transcendent, i.e., Transcendentally, infinitely and eternally conscious and active Transcendent. The Divine is not to be taken merely as the Transcendent, because in that case, either it will be equal to the whole of Reality, or it will be a pure, unchanging, timeless, simple, non-spatial, and in short, vacuous entity incapable of relationship.

The moment we allow non-vacuous but infinite and eternal actuality to *Brāhman*, It can be conceived to be something similar in nature to, but infinitely higher than, human *Ātmán*. Although the process of absolute attainment to *Brāhman*-hood is impossible (even as one entity never becomes another), the process of conscious *Ātmán*-level universalization becomes an active affair, just as *Brāhman*, by nature, is infinitely consciously active. But this process takes place at the level of the To Be of Reality-in-total. *Brāhman* is not active merely finitely, but infinitely, at every finite space-time, and hence also finitely by exemplification of the infinite activity. The verisimilitude of this process becomes, thus, the activity leading human *Ātmán* to *Brāhman*-hood. *It includes all sorts of more and more all-inclusive activities in human life, of which the basis is love of Brāhman and love of Ātmáns in the broad sense. This, naturally, is the essence of both contemplation and action. In this process, all entities have their own place. The metaphysics of it is, therefore, genuinely pluriversal: many against all. The ontological foundation of ethical action is, therefore, not merely Brāhman, but the mutuality of Brāhman and Ātmán.*

Ethical action as such has not so far been made pluriversal after the manner of what we have done for theory, contemplation, and action, so that effort could be made to give this foretaste to humans belonging to all the *āśramas*, castes, and countries. This lack in the Vedāntas, I hold, is resulting from the lack of recognition of the actual continuity between the *āśramas*. Practical action for realizing the theoretically feasible realization of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* relationship and continuity holds the answer to the ills of society.

5. Conclusion

We have considered here qualitative concepts as transcendentals, all entities as transcendentals, humans as transcendental-transcendentals, the Divine as the Transcendental-Transcendent and Reality-in-total as the Transcendent. This, in the final analysis, is what has facilitated the proposed reconstruction in Vedāntic Metaphysics. The project remains to be worked out elaborately, but is presented herein in an elementary fashion.

We have not considered alternative cosmological concepts of *Brāhman*, like those of *Īśvara*, *Puruṣa*, etc., which are, from the Vedāntic perspective, generally meant for *vyāvahārika* consumption. Their conceptual coordination with the concepts of *Brāhman* and *Ātmán* and the process of *Ātmán* into *Brāhman*-hood is, therefore, not effected. It suffices here to say that even in the rush to elaborate on all these *ad hoc* concepts, the question of the nature of the alleged absoluteness of *Brāhman* has not sufficiently been dwelt upon, and so, has been left almost untouched as established from the viewpoint of conceptual feasibility. As *ad hoc*, these concepts have remained popular or pragmatic elaborations for adequations of the *Brāhman-Ātmán* paradigm, without actually explaining the dichotomies involved. Hence, these concepts are merely subsidiary to the paradigm as far as the Vedānta Metaphysics is concerned. This allows us not to be premature in this theoretical context in elaborating on the possible reconstruction of these concepts without incurring much incompleteness to the nature of this essay.

There has not been much *deconstruction* of Vedāntic Metaphysics in this essay because it has not proposed merely to posit the question of "Why not?" with the exclusive aim of unearthing the hidden psychological, sociological, and cultural-religious elements as the off-centre facts behind Vedāntic Metaphysics. Instead, it has attempted to posit the question of "Why?" and work with the possible effects of posing the epistemological, ontological, and theological question of "Why not?" Thus, this essay has remained a plea for reconstruction of Vedāntic Metaphysics along some contemporary epistemological, ontological, and theological lines, but with an independent stance.