

Visistadvaita as a Philosophy of Synthesis

One of the most important *aims* of philosophising in the earliest period of Ancient India was the attainment of a comprehensive synoptic insight into the nature of the multiplicity that confronts the individual in all directions. The sense of unity which is nowhere to be beheld *by* the eye or the senses was found to be the occult secret of reality which defied the *senses* and the mind. Indeed the reason for philosophical enquiry then as now and for ever would hinge round this central realisation of the nature of the unity which relates the many and procures for them a basic sense of reality which they seem to deny. The *several* formulations of the problems of philosophy are but approaches to the unravelling of the secret nature of the unity which holds the multiplicity together and maintains their nature too.

In one word, the word Synthesis or *samanvaya* which may express this intention is the basic need of philosophy.

Undoubtedly the *samanvaya* may start with the critical appreciation of the evidences of experience based on several modes of apprehension. Thus it has been well-known *that* an epistemological enquiry should precede an ontological enquiry. The inspection of our tools of knowledge, *pramāṇas*, occupies quite an important part in any synthesis. It is only after we have inspected the status of each *pramāṇa* and the limitations of each we might be enabled to find the order of importance or even the relative fields of their autonomy and the possibility of their giving us the truth. But even where we have much certitude we are to be warned against a too strict compartmentalisation of the spheres of epistemology and ontology, because the relative ability of these *pramāṇas* to grant truth is finally to be determined by the reality (*tattva*) which discloses itself to that *pramāṇa*.

The *pramāṇas* that are usually accepted are *pratyakṣa anumāna* and *śabda*. *Pratyakṣa* belongs to the sphere of sensory perception usually, *anumāna* belongs to the sphere of reasoning and *śabda* to the sphere of revelation and knowledge got at by transcendent disclosure and transmitted through those who had devotedly preserved them (*āptas*). The relative value of these means to knowledge is one of the profoundest issues between philosophers. The senses give knowledge of the sensory order; reason or intellect gives knowledge of the relational order; where as *śabda* gives knowledge of the suprarelatival or synthetic order or the transcendental order. Each has its appropriate field: senses mainly concern themselves with the empirical or phenomenal order of individual facts and their spatial and temporal location (as distinct from relation): the veridical nature of these facts would depend upon facts of proper observation, which means without committing errors of omission (*akhyātī*) and commission (*anyathākhyātī*). If the senses are in good condition without defects, and if the mind is peaceful and pleasant and alert, then the knowledge that may be got through the senses may be said to be true. There is nothing to, say that any

knowledge is false unless it is sublated by a later experience, but that would lead us to comparison between two sensory experiences separated by time (and possibly space). This would show that no sensory experience can be retained apart from the operation of reason or comparison between it and other experiences. Man is a composite or complex being and his senses and reason are in constant interpenetration and mutual criticism. The growth of knowledge is achieved by this mutual, reciprocal dynamism. They apparently contradict each other, for each looks out for the material which it is capable of getting: senses get facts which are fast moving, changing, perishable and deteriorating; the sensorium gathers and garners these facts in the form of ideas and stores them all as impressions; the reasoning seeks to discover the permanent and the eternal both in the nature and in the relations which could be called permanent or law. Thus most sciences proceed on the basis of integration and discovery of laws of a permanent character in the fleeting perishing impressions. A contradiction however is raised between these two by some philosophers who are seized with the extraordinary disparity between them. And the illusoriness of sensory experiences accentuates their difference into an opposition. This has been one of the earliest causes of philosophising. A Synthesis between these two realms or spheres of experience seemed not only remote but also impossible. There seemed to be no way by which the gulf between them could be bridged.

A new development took place in the history of thought. Systems which owed allegiance to sense were divided from systems which owed allegiance to reason or intellect. Concrete systems or realistic systems arose alongside idealistic systems more or less abstracted from sense. But briefly we find that Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya systems were more inclined to grant reality to sense and its deliverances and built up systems allowing for the claims of sense and reason. They are also pluralistic in so far as they recognise the multiplicity so very patent in experience in every field. They were in one sense nearest to the materialistic view which denied even the operation of reason as merely instinctive and illusory. The extreme opposition to Monism is pluralism; the extreme opposition to spirit is matter; even as the extreme opposition to being is non-being and to change is permanence. The integration of the two opposites has been the perpetual task of philosophy. The Sāṅkhyan system sought to move a little nearer to the discovery of the single principle in respect of matter, with its own peculiar theory of *triguṇas*, whilst maintaining the plurality of souls or selves. It had sought to divest itself from the deism of the Vaiśeṣika - Nyāya which sought to provide a cause who could bring together disparate elements of spirits and matter into some kind of explicable order or architectonic. It sought an occult contact or compresence between matter and each soul thus building up different universes or organisms for different souls.

Yoga almost followed this path with this difference that it saw the necessity for a spiritual superior to the souls, the Īṣvar who would be the inspiration and reason for the struggle for freedom which the soul in fact experiences, for which no reason could be adduced in the earlier systems. A mere psychic or physio- psychic mechanism or process could never give an account of the eternal impulse secret in every soul to seek freedom from its conditions whether physical or psychical or psycho physical; Vedanta, thus was the natural corollary for the explanation of the freedom-impulse in the soul.

The rare search for happiness beyond the terrestrial through rites and sacrifices which was also another important urge within each soul for happiness and freedom in the world and beyond was taken up for consideration by the Pūrva Mimāṃsā of Jaimini. The last two systems were devoted to the systematic clarification of the two portions of the Veda, namely the Samhitas and Brāhmanas on the one hand and the Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad on the other. These show a natural evolution of the schools catering to the explanations of the physical, psychical and spiritual attitudes and factors in man and the cosmos. But this synthesis is too simple in one sense it is a process of growth through criticism of the lower forms of the epistemological and the ontological thinking. Any way the earliest criticisms of their systems which culminated in the formulation of the Advaita theory proceeded on this tarka-pāda mode of the Vedānta Sūtras. The division of the universe into the phenomenal and the noumenal (vyāvahārika and pāramārthika), or empirical and the spiritual standpoints led to a clear-cut analysis of the categories of epistemological and ontological statuses. Every experience is real in one plane whilst being unreal in the other, and by a device of holding that the spiritual is real and the empirical is unreal, these categories could and indeed have been reduced to the level of being relatively true or real in the empirical level. Ultimately the *empirical* is not merely meaningless and worthless but illusion in respect of the transcendental.

Advaita synthesises the several views in a radical critical manner. The plurality of sense experience is true of the empirical, but monism is true of the transcendental: the pariṇama vāda (satkārya-vāda) is true of the empirical, but vivarta-vāda (ārambhavāda) (asat-kārya-vāda) is true of the transcendental. Phenomenally akhyāti-vāda is true in the explanation of illusion but transcendently a variety of anyathā or viparīta, or anirvacanīyakhyāti is the explanation of the error which has need to be transcended or sublated. It uses all the apparatus of Logic of intellect in the empirical but refutes all of it transcendently. This is a synthesis in disjunction but so closely linked up are the two sets of disjunctions that we are not able to shake away any of them

This is a critical synthesis¹.

The other types of synthesis are now briefly to be considered. The Hegelian theory starts indeed with the same type of dualism of the opposites. It does not however consider that either of them is relative to the other unreal. On the contrary both share in the same reality and imply each other. The disjunction of the two is a logical disjunction through implication. Growth of thought moves by means of a dialectic of process. Plato showed how the dialectic is the process of explication of the implied. Every notion, or idea includes or implicates its opposite and as such all determination is negation and conversely all negation is determination□. This synthesis of opposites is the reality. Indeed so true is this concept or discovery that it is inconceivable that one could affirm existence without denying its apposite nonexistence, or affirm God without denying its opposite Non-God, and so on. But this is made more significant by Hegel by introducing the concept of logical evolution from the root beginnings of Being-Non Being and tracing it to the most wide ramifications of our physical, psychical, and spiritual institutions: and this is what he calls the objectification of Spirit in the process. The great discovery of Hegel is this pattern and the possibility of the Spirit, the Absolute, to objectify itself and thus realise itself.

The synthesis of Hegel includes the opposites and is constantly and endlessly, shall we say, positing its opposites so as to ensure a process of continuous synthesis. This process has been characterised by some eminent thinkers as 'ballet of bloodless categories'. The profundity of this dialectical process of opposition lies in its laying its finger on the acute logical analysis in controversy and debate.

The synthesis of opposites however is not the one and only manner. We have seen that the critical synthesis and the dialectical synthesis are in one sense moving in the direction of a dynamic process in opposition and conjunctive dichotomy, as against the disjunctive dichotomy of the dualists and pluralists.

A different but no less true synthesis was attempted by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce. He recognized that not all difference is oppositional or polar and antagonistic unity. He recognised that there are 'distincts' which are in fact implicated in synthesis. Thus feeling and thought are not opposites but one is the need of the other. So also theoretical knowledge (logic) and practical utility and good are not opposites, for there can hardly be any practical life without knowledge, since practical conduct includes and is inspired by the modicum of knowledge. Hegelian thinkers would oppose feeling to thought and thought to practice. But this is belied

¹ The Philosophy of Immanuel Kant is called □ Critical□ and by parity Sankara□s Philosophy could be called and is here called □Critical□

by experience. Feeling or intuition is basic to thought as thought is basic to act. They are not opposites but distincts which imply each other in a distinctive manner. In one sense we would say that feeling is the body of thought even as practice is the body of thought or adopting Indian terminology, sensation and reason are always together. Pratyakṣa needs anumāna and anumāna needs pratyakṣa though not in the sense, even as jñāna needs karma and karma needs jñāna though not in the same sense. This synthetic process gives a clearer though complex account of the double synthesis in process in experience. Thus we have to be careful in evaluating the nature of the synthesis we term 'organic' which includes this double process of synthesis that explains the resistance to its opposite and ensures an integration in the scale of values and emergence of higher forms. This is the best of the logical efforts to explain the integrative process, and the emergence of the higher forms of value.

The organic synthesis explains the unity of all forms of the dialectic. It is some thing more than merely syncretistic. It is an integral conception when taken in the widest sense of embracing all kinds of process. Further the organic view will enable us to emphasize the interrelated character of all elements constituting the totality even when not all of them are compresent at any one time or space. They are ideally present in every time and every space, and every event is the actuality of this ideal presence. The dialectic only presents □an event□ as actual though 'ideally all are present in each occasion□. The Leibnizian view as modified by A.N.Whitehead will furnish the organic unity of the entire reality. Plurality is the condition of the actuality but it does not exclude, in fact it is determined by, the totality of the whole which is dynamically presenting it.

We have thus briefly shown how the synthesis we seek has been sought in diverse ways. The Synthesis which Sri Rāmānuja presents is the Organic in which the relationship of all plurality or manyness whether of things or spirits or souls (monads) to the One is taken to be that of a *śarīra*, a body. The One is the Self the principle which upbears the distinctions and supports them as such without which support and upbearing they literally cease to be or fall to pieces or lose the dynamics of living and existence. In one word they become *asat*. The One Self of all grants them *sattā*, the little unities they have and sustain themselves on. The progress of the soul from *asat* to *sat* is no less due to this Self as it is that that moves from darkness to light and from mortality to immortality. It is because of this double function (in fact we shall be able to speak of. quintuple function of the Self) which makes for the spiritual dialectic so to speak of the Organic or inseparable relationship between the Divine One and the multiple souls and the nature.

The problem of reality is the problem of permanence and change: matter and souls change but the Spiritual Principle which upholds them continues to be unchanging and permanent and unaffected by their changes. The Multiplicity and Oneness are in firm integral relationship as can be seen in the aggregates of

organisms which form at once a unity or One and comprising parts which are in perfect relationships of interdependence. Multiplicity does not refute the Oneness but only falls apart when the oneness that confers their interdependence and harmony passes or is annulled or subordinated. And it is this feature or pattern or logic of unity that Śrī Venkatanātha calls the chief distinguishing feature of his system: *pradhāna prati-tantra* □ the organic relation of Soul and body to avail between the Brahman and Souls on the one hand and Brahman and Nature on the other 'Yasya cetanasya yad drhvyam sarvāt manā svārthe niyantum dhārayitum ca śakyam, yac-cheṣataika-svarūpam ca tat tasya śarirum" (S.B.II.I.9)²

The above view gives us a clue to the relationship of body and the soul: that the body is incapable of being a body without its connection with the soul: that the soul is incapable of being what it is without its connection with Brahman as its body: and nature is incapable of being Nature without its connection with Brahman as its body. In other words this inseparability is in respect of the dependents on Brahman not in respect of Brahman in respect of those dependent on Him. Change and all process depend on Brahman's will (iccha). All gain their status because of their being what they are in relation to Brahman. In one sense it is compared with the relation of an attribute to the substance: in another sense it is stated to be the relation of a prakāra to the prakāri. But this relationship is not one which dismisses either term as an illusion. Both the Soul and the body are real: but the peculiarity of the relation is that the soul upholds the body: so God upbears the world, Nature and Souls. God is thus not identical with the universe nor apart from the universe. He is immanent as well as transcendent to the universe.

This can metaphysically be represented only in the manner of substance that is more than its attributes and is whilst being expressed in and through them supporting them. Spinoza's exposition of the nature of the substance as that which whilst being itself is the substrate of the attributes and is known through them gives a clear

² śarira is not to be taken in its rudhi or general or common meaning but in its yoga meaning etymological significance: i.e not denotatively but connotatively. This concept of the organic includes the maintenance of the unity in the whole of parts by a principle which pervades all of them. It is different from the concept of the avayavi which is an emerging principle other than an immanent principle which confers and maintains the unity of the parts. Further it is also present in every part and is never separated from it brooding over every movement of it so to speak. It goes beyond the conception of the Vaiśeṣika view of atoms and ātmans. In the logical theory of objective Idealism of Bosanquet we have the force of the organic brought as much nearer as possible to the śarira-śariri concept or pattern or notion of Śrī Rāmānuja.

It is because the organic unity is so very logical and metaphysical that it becomes possible for the identification of one term with the other which cause in one sense ignorance and in other enlightenment and enjoyment.

enough account. But even Spinoza insisted that the sum of attributes does not exhaust it. This is the principle of Self enunciated by Śrī Rāmānuja who has given a clearer idea of the nature of Reality as spiritual essentially for it is spirit which can control and sustain and enjoy the many and the multiplicity uniquely for itself. The harmony of the many is thus essential and inwardly maintained by the Self through its inward law and pervasion and presence.

Then we can see that Śrī Rāmānuja's theory is the realistic but not materialistic appraisal of the principle of Oneness. It also can be seen that his is not a pluralistic world even as Leibniz's would be without the Oneness of God. Leibniz's God almost resembles a deistic being who has arranged the multiplicity in an order of pre-established harmony and inner mirroring waiting on no outer power or principle, even as two perfect watches need no further attention once they have been set up in harmony or synchronous existence. Grace would be the external principle necessary when the harmony in any sense gets disturbed. But it is grace itself for the monads to be set in harmony and appetitively urged to harmonious progress towards the fullest expansion and clearest mirroring of the entire universe within itself and for itself. Śrī Rāmānuja's philosophy goes beyond the pantheistic monism of Spinoza and the pluralistic monadism of Leibniz by rendering the relationship between the Self (God) and the attributes and modes (souls and Nature) organic and also trans organic (pantheistic). This means that the Divine self or God is not bound to the relation, though the (aprathak-siddha) relation inevitably binds the souls and Nature to Him. God is not God because of His relationship to the souls and Nature but they are souls and Nature because of Him.

This is the metaphysical meaning of the term 'śarīra', though its variant meanings may metaphysically include the organic biologically. Śrī Rāmānuja's use of the term śarīra in respect of the souls and Nature is but the biological but the metaphysical in so far as it includes conscient souls and their inconscient bodies and not merely Nature, the inconscient. Thus we are the bodies of God in so far as we cannot be even units without His presence and controlling and directing power within: we would fall to pieces even as the body of ours falls to pieces and disintegrates when the soul has from its tenement fled. This is the experience recorded by Mystics (as well as lovers of God) to whom the dread of separation from the Divine or Self is very real. (This is known as parama-bhakti, which includes not merely the ardent love of the self but also the dread of separation from Him).

The Unity of the Divine Self is the most central fact in the 'Organic' Theory understood in its metaphysical form than the biological form. It must however be

pointed out that the metaphysical grants meaning and significance and extension to the biological unity and does not refute it.

Modern evolutionary theories are in one sense organic theories, for evolution is organismal implication of the higher levels and lines of Mind and life on the base of Matter. We may assure ourselves that the mind and life are emergents in Matter due to several factors of reciprocal interaction of the parts of Matter: or that they are already implicit in Matter but evolve due to their nature, *svabhāva*, or that Matter in fact is but concealed or congealed Spirit which is gradually evolving so to speak from its homogeneity to heterogeneity or that Matter is the formation of Spirit which is really its memory acting as the condition of its forward impulse. In any case Matter is a category which we have to accept, and evolution is the process of a double synthesis of the diversification which take place in it in respect of functions and purposes which bring out higher and higher forms of activity of the Spirit. Matter and Spirit (whether polar opposite; or inseparable terms both in immanent and oppositional format are the minimum requirements and are in organic relation: they are not however of equal worth and function: Spirit is the active transmuting and organising power and Matter is the organised world and organism. An occult relation (called transcendental relation *Sāmkhya*) exists between them which Śrī Rāmānuja calls '*sarīratva*', or '*śeṣatva*'. Doctrines of *Māyā* and *Avidya* try to explain this relationship but unless the categories are held to be real, the development of the Organic and its Evolution can never be adequately explained. Thus Spirit requires the Ignorance and Matter for the deployment of its own occult process, the building in of the eternal and the immortal in the temporal and transitory forms of being. The eternal is real: no less real is the temporal: the Immortal is real: no less real is the mortal. But the eternal is the meaning of the temporal, even as the Immortal is the meaning of the transitory and the mortal forms revealed in History.

Thus it becomes clear that Śrī Rāmānuja gave a living generating' insight into the process of the evolution by means of his concept of '*śarīra*'. Even the supra-organic, which does not refute the organic, will metaphysically be an organic unity.

It is clear that the greatest contribution to constructive philosophic thought made by Śrī Rāmānuja is the 'Organic' in its metaphysical and not the metaphorical form to which alone his critics have paid attention.

The problem of Matter and Spirit has been resolved but the problem of multiplicity of the souls would yet remain. This is not merely a problem of multiplicity but the problem of finites also. The Infinite is the unity of the finites and the multiplicity, not again due to the principle of summation but due to the 'organic' conception. This has been already intimated in the earlier Upaniṣads. The infinite is

not either the sum of the finites (for it could yet be commensurable number) or the negation of the finites (for it is not a polar opposite eternally implicated but never becoming it in any sense including the organic). Even the possibility of relationship between one finite and another or between the elements and the finite soul is due to this inner principle of Infinity which is the meaning of the finites. In this sense then the phrase "enjoyment" existing for the Divine or Infinite solely and exclusively becomes significant in the definition of Śrī Rāmānuja (śeṣataika-svarūpam).

Thus the Upaniṣad passages *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam; na vā are patyuh kāmāya patih priyo bhavati ātmanastu kāmāya patih priyo bhavati; yastu sarvāni bhūtāny ātmany evānupaśyati sarvabhūteṣu ca ātmānam tato na vijugupsate; sarvan khalvidham, Brahma, yas sarveṣu bhūteṣu tisthan sarvebyo bhūtebhyontaro yam sarvāni bhūtāni na vidur yasya sarvāni bhūtāni śarīram yas sarvāni bhūtānyantaro yamayatyēṣa ta Ātmāntaryāmy amṛta ityadhibhūtam* (Brh. Up.); all intimate the selfness of the Divine both in respect of 'ideal presence' and 'actual presence', immanence being as well emphasised as transcendence and above all giving the meaning which Śrī Kṛṣṇa later expounds that all are strung together in Brahman, *sūtre manigaṇā iva*, though this is but a cloudy metaphor of the significant "organic" relationship that individually and collectively the souls and Nature bear to the infinite, ineffable, Immortal and Undeteriorating Perfection of the Divine-Saccidananda.³

Śrī Rāmānuja finds that the mystical concepts or notions or intuitions have all to be reconciled not only as between themselves but also with the intellectual formulations that mankind has been making and the facts of the perceptual order. The primacy of the spiritual and metaphysical is in no sense abrogated or challenged by this effort. Samanvaya or harmonisation of the texts is not only possible but necessary since Truth though perceived and known and entered into seriously is One only. The aikakanthya (one voice-ness or coherency) of the scriptural texts ought to be arrived at. To dichotomise the texts as dualistic and monistic is to condemn some to lower orders of reality or illusion. Synthesis is one of the most important functions of Philosophy and a synthesis cannot dismiss much less disregard the differences which challenge our synthetic impulse. *Ekam sat, Ekam, eva advitīyam, Tat evam asi, Soham asmi*, and so on are to be explained alongside the dualistic texts: *dva suparṇau* and so on. This the mediating or ghataka śrutis are said to do. The two extreme points are to be explained by means of the principle of samanvaya: the organic conception metaphysically construed, rationally explained in terms of aprathaksiddhi sambandha, and perceptually seen as in the savikalpaka pratyakṣa

³ The Divine is sat because He grants Sat existence and sense of it to the soul. He is cit because he grants cit to the soul and He is Ananda because He grants Ananda to the soul. As the Kena. Up. says. He is therefore Satyasya Satyam etc.

which holds the many in the configurative unity of the single field, all point out to the significant necessity of the organic conception of spiritual togetherness and unity.

A hierarchical arrangement of the pramaṇas there always will be, but every higher would interpret and integrate the meaning of itself with the lower till all planes of consciousness and knowledge grow into perfect luminous illimitable fullness. p~r6a-vikasa. The principle of sublation is not always the only way for the principle is really to be samanvaya; not bādha but samanvaya should be the principle of understanding. Error is not so much a matter of omission or commission or sublatability but is due to extreme opposition, being brought to bear upon terms: in other words extremism is the cause of error when there is refutation of the other utterly and without reservation.

The problem of knowledge is whether we could ever know Reality and fully and completely. Also how the individual soul can know the Infinite Reality if it is finite.

It is clear that speaking about varieties of knowing we have each pramaṇa giving us one aspect of the Reality, not always or invariably interlapping. In one sense they almost appear to be interrelated in order to intimate the fundamental identity of that which they interpret variously. Thus no one pramaṇa can give us the knowledge fully or adequately; nor could it be said that Reality can be known fully by putting together these various apprehensions; it is not the sum of these knowledges either. Reality or Brahman as Transcendent or immanent is beyond the range of the pramaṇas even as the Kenopaniṣad has stated. One who thinks he knows, knows not and one who thinks he does not perhaps knows. In either case it cannot be instructed as to what It is. Only when It delivers (or confronts) Itself to one does one know It. The individuals cannot know it completely for its Infinity is inexpressible. But it can be known and entered into when it chooses, or reveals itself to one, but that cannot be inexhaustibly or without remainder. It is seen here that one who knows God, becomes God, or Self or Brahman is to be reconciled with the view that one can never know it. The reconciliation becomes again possible because the Transcendence and Infinity of God is not a forbidding transcendence and infinity but a participatable one. Thus God's nature does not refute the individual's knowledge but reveals Itself to it. The doctrine of knowledge through *tanmaya*, of becoming filled in by God as in knowledge soaked in devotion, or knowledge of the form of bhakti (bhakti-rupāpana jñāna) lets one into the expanse of God's infinite, illimitable, indivisible (anantatva and akhandatva) Nature. Man's knowledge is not a process of looking on at God, but by the process of participation his knowledge becomes slowly capable of grasping the manifold unity of the Divine Nature closed to the other forms of knowing. The integral universality of God's Nature is beyond the perceptual and inferential modes of approach, and only the direct revelations of the Ṛṣis (śāstra) is capable of intimating

to us both the nature of Brahman and the means to know Him.

This lends us to still more important elements of ontology as to the Nature of the Causality. We have already discussed this point under the conception of the 'śarīra'. Suffice it to say that the upādāna and the nimitta kārṇas are to be referred to the Brahman, for in every other case the upādāna, and the nimitta kārṇas are two different factors or conditions, one which assures the continuity of the material and the other which confers the new form to the material so received. In the case of the Divine Lord or Creator or Brahman there is a unique unity of the two causes, indeed we may be enabled to include the Aristotelian four causes also into this picture. This unity cannot be arrived at through the attempts of logic of the finite reason. Indeed we know we cannot even think of the first cause except as the limiting concept of the finite intellect as a matter of logical necessity in order to avoid the fallacy of infinite regress. The organic conception however resolves this difficulty for we can see that the continuity of the mental goes along with the changes in the physical (memory acting as the principle of unity): and volitions of the divine are the causes of the changes in the physical, which pass from the subtle to the gross manifestations, from the potential to the actual. Thus the Divine as guiding and supporting the śarīras qua self is the nimitta kārṇa and as the self of the embodied which cannot exist apart from Him is the material cause of the changes as well. The Vedānta Sūtrakāra has indeed so wonderfully expounded this di-unity of the Cause, so much so that it later includes even the final causality (upeyaphala) and the 'upāya' (means) which is unaffected by the process.

The integration of these causes whilst maintaining the purity of the spirit or keeping it really transcendent to process unaffected by it in any form and having no end for itself as such except the divine process of Grace, is one of the most successful attempts at a time of scholasticism.

The relation of subject-object is again an important problem in any theory of knowledge. The object is reduced to the level of a mode of consciousness even as the subject is reduced to the level of a mode of consciousness and thus one mode of consciousness is said to know another mode of consciousness as against it and as existing for it. This reduction of the subject and the object to the levels of modes of consciousness or consciousness simply is open to serious difficulties as all knowledge-relation is infected by this dualism of subject-object relation. Indeed epistemological idealism is at pains to show that knowledge is possible only because they are both modes of consciousness. To be an object merely is to be unknown for how can consciousness know an object external to it or other than itself? This important question of the ontological status of the object has been unanswerable. The realistic answer that the subject does know or grasp objects however different from it ontologically though contained in knowledge or rather as experienced in the medium of consciousness does not answer the real position of the object on the one hand or

the subject on the other and the knowledge-relation. The object is not pervaded by the subject in a substantive manner; or, to express it in other words, the subject does not cover or enter the object either in a spatial or material sense. There is only an activity of the subject's consciousness which enjoys the object and explores it. The object qua substance is but an impression carried by the consciousness which explores it and as such the consciousness as activity which is in a special relation as function (dharma) of the subject is the activity that brings about the relation called knowledge. It is of course not unlimited in its nature for most subjects, but its infinite possibility of expansion (vikāsa) is assured when the subject is freed from the bondage due to its location and action and ignorance. (anādi karmavidyā). This is a unique doctrine of dharma- bhūta-jñāna, which reconciles the infinite expansive possibility of knowledge so as to be divya-jñāna (samānajyotis) with that of Brahman, universal in its import and true in its knowledge, and unconditioned in its action.

The conception of the dharma-bhūta-jñāna, is analogically made from the source of light and the light that spreads about it illuminating all kinds of objects, both conscient and inconscient, cit and acit. It is itself not self-conscious for that is the quality of the subject and not of his consciousness which throws light on objects and for the purpose of the subject. The subject because he is the source of this light or knowledge (consciousness) is substantively self-conscious (dharmi-bhūta-jñāna) and not merely potentially conscious that is becoming conscious in contact with objects as vaiśeṣika system conceives even as an epi-phenomenon or responsive reaction, (native to the subject or soul even as fire in the faggot or flint). Dharma-bhūta-jñāna plays an important part in this synthesis of subject and object. It is that which undergoes limitation and expansion, not the subject. Its is capable of existing for the finite subject and yet grant unlimited knowledge when that subject or soul is liberated that is participates in the Divine Self as its Self conscious śarira (body). The liberation of the soul itself consists in this illimitable expansion of its dharma-bhūta-jñāna which will coincide with that of the Divine with this difference that the Divine or Godhead is also substantively infinite, as well. The individual soul thus has the unique opportunity of being able to experience God fully through its knowledge function and be co-terminal with God in this respect without the unique divine function of Infinite presence directly and substantially. The individual loses this ego which is the sense of limiting knowledge function but not its individuality as a finite centre or atomic point of view or monad, as that is inalienable.

The Advaitic conception that the soul loses even its essential individuality in the process of release from ignorance misses this double poise of the individual's dharmi-bhūta jñāna and dharma-bhūta-jñāna which makes it possible for us to explain its present status of bondage or its later possibility of freedom (which the theory of Maya

cannot explain at all if it affects the dharmi-bhūta jñāna)⁴. The dvaita conception that the monad or soul can never attain the extensity and fullness of Divine knowledge is corrected in so far as the substantial nature of the soul as cit is incapable of being modified into vibhu (infinity). Thus the two extreme views are gathered into the significant conception of the dharma-bhūta-jñāna. The direct possibility of knowledge which is pure and true in respect of all objects and subjects in their mutual togetherness and in relation to the Divine Godhead is one of the assurances of this conception. In this sense it is clear also that the Upaniṣadic teaching that the Divine can be known and entered into becomes possible.

All these poises of the Self and soul and Nature are possible only because of the guiding conception of Organic Unity understood and interpreted in a metaphysical manner.

Thus it can be seen that Viśiṣṭadvaita has tried to synthesize (1) the pramaṇas: pramaṇa-samanvaya: and (2) it has synthesized the prameyas: prameye-samanvayas, It is not a critical or dialectical synthesis but an organic synthesis in a metaphysical sense which includes and interprets the biological synthesis of evolutionism. Thus the name Viśiṣṭadvaita which is translated into english as modified identity does not bring out the meaning of the conception. It is not modified monism but a unique type of monism: distinctive monism. It is different from the identity and difference theories, Bhedābheda theories, which assume the substantial Monism or the final annulment of the distinctions or differences. Bhaskara did not accept the theory of Māya but yet held that the differences would pass away at mukti: Yadava Prakasa held that the Brahman fulgurated into the triple categories of God, souls and Matter and the goal of freedom is the restoration of the Oneness of God. Almost all schools of thought of the idealistic pattern had finally seen that the Ultimate condition of freedom is the attainment of the annihilation of the self and nature (niṣprapañcikaṛaṇa) and of the sole experience of Brahman.

As against this there is the dualistic affirmation of the continuous immortal existence of the Soul as distinct from God, and of Nature too as distinct from God and the Soul, and the souls as distinct from one another.

Whilst it may be maintained by some that the alternative to Monism is the Philosophy of Difference, yet it is clear that differences have to be held in unity to prevent chaos by means of the postulate of One Godhead who controls and conditions and orders their existence ;and dependence on Him is the only conceivable relation. Monotheism is said to be the alternative to Monism. Even this

⁴ Śrī Rāmānujas conception of Dharma Bhūta Jñāna avoids the pitfalls of Advaitic conception of consciousness which he refutes by his Saptavidhanupapatti in his Sri Bhasya.

monotheism however can never perfectly link the several factors of existence simply by the concept of dependence. Just as identity is not sufficient to explain the process and unity of distinctions and differences, so also dependence is not capable of revealing the inner pulse of unity that threads and links the many. Therefore the organic conception of śarīra-śarīrī understood in the metaphysical sense adequately explains the two: by conferring the status of Monotheism to the system, since all the gods of the pantheon of man's anthropological and mystical experiences are shown to be but 'bodies' or 'powers' or manifestations of that one Supreme Being.

Again there is another synthesis that requires our attention, for the Divine Nature is not a mere bare Being, impersonal and beyond, and void of any quality or determination. The Divine Nature is certainly beyond the limiting categories of existence, and void of the qualities of the material and psychic nature of sattva, rajas, and tamas. No predication can be made of it but it does not mean that there are not actually positive predicates such as Truth, Intelligence, Infinity, Purity, Delight or Bliss. The Personality of God is rich with this double quality of being free from all material and psychic qualities (heya-pratyanikatva) and of being full of infinite auspicious attributes which cannot be true of any one else (ananta kalyāṇa-guṇa paripūrṇatva). This is the ubhaya-liṅga nature of God, which makes Him because of the other excellent attributes such as aiśvarya, vīrya, bala, tejas, jñāna and śakti the supreme worshipable Niyanta and Self of all; thus the personality of God is not a mask but a manifestation and presence of omnibeneficent character by which He upholds the world of dharma.

Personality for man is a mask but for the Divine it is a perfection. The divine Godhead is an infinite personality for all perfections are in Him. He is the source of all law and of everything. He is perfectly equal to all (sama) and in Him there is neither imperfection nor cruelty. He is the Self of all, pervading all both within and without, He is unique. He is adorable and lovable as well, for in Him is supreme love for all by which He upbears all.

Śrī Rāmānuja's conception of the 'śarīrī' is a synthesis of all views about Brahman in the sphere of ontology and epistemology. God is not only Transcendent (Para), He is also the God who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer-redeemer, the Lord of all processes and ruler of all the categories (vyuhas). He is the indwelling Self (antaryāmi) of all souls and Nature. He is in addition to these tri-unity or trinity (of Absolute, God and Self) the Historically descending Godhead for the redemption and rescue of saints and good men and for the establishment of righteousness (dharma) and annihilation and extirpation of adharma and evil, (Avatār). These four poises of the Absolute, who is God and Self and Avatar, are true and perfect and make God what he is. And in addition Śrī Rāmānuja intimated a fifth poise known to the Mystics to whom the Divine in His infinite compassion reveals Himself in an effulgent form for worship and adoration, (arcā).

These quintuple forms of the One Supreme Being are to be known and realised for the purpose of an integral knowledge. This however is the most difficult part of the logical intellect but this difficulty could be overcome only through bhakti, the devotion that is the fulfillment of knowledge and is a form of knowledge.