

CHAPTER I THE THEORY OF PERCEPTION

The Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja like most other systems of thought in India is based more on Religious experience, metaphysics and ethics, rather than on epistemology. Epistemology came in to substantiate the conclusions of metaphysics arrived at through psychology. It is undoubted that at a later critical period as evidenced in Buddhistic schools and Advaita the psychological approach had more and more yielded ground to transcendental a priori thought construction. This transcendental approach is considered by some to be well grounded, and it is claimed that our experience must yield its place to the transcendental deductions of a priori philosophers. That logic should legislate for our experience is certainly an important thing and cannot be denied. But logic itself should find its feet on the ground and cannot and should not soar in the sky without any let or hindrance or control of fact. Thus the viciousness of the a priori usually consists in its consistent rebuttal of the evidence of experience.¹ Nor could experience be considered to be only of a particular kind. Experience is manifold, and the truth about experience must embrace all facts falling within experience. The doctrine of nihilism will result if any particular segment of experience alone is accepted and the rest denied. Universal propositions founded on the basis of partial applications will find logical collapse. The critical method is all for the best, but with the best of intentions the critical methods of early Buddhists and of Kant have floundered hopelessly in the ocean of fact. There is no other alternative to the criticist except to end in that wonderful night wherein all cows are black, or else simulate a phantom dialectic and claim reality to a non-existent spirit.

A hard headed or rather tough minded policy of discrimination of experience in all its manifold expressions and even when they refuse to fall into a scheme, to seek to discover that unity which is their reality, is the first and foremost need of a philosopher. A realistic outlook, a scientific bias, a matter-of-fact attitude, so to speak, an intention to know things as they are ere they are reduced to the forms which they are not, and a definition of the limitations or condition under which any proposition can apply with validity, constitute the fundamental approach of the common sense realist. Yathārtha Jñana is the main aim of all philosophizings and if we know things as they are in themselves and as they are for others, then we may be said to know really. All propositions avail limits. Does this mean that there are no universal propositions? As in science, we say that given the conditions or the limits so to speak, the proposition enunciated is universally applicable. No one will deny the truth of this. A universal panacea for all troubles, despite the claims made for its existence for example the philosophers stone which will disclose all truth, under all

¹ The revelational *a priori* is different from the Kantian a priori

conditions, and at all times, is an imaginary thing, a fiction, necessary, as Nietzsche will say, for making man strive to attain the impossible. The impossible, even if it be a monster, a non-existent impossible will have to be considered to be possible, if life is to be bearable on this planet of revolutionary ardor.

All metaphysical search, then, is after the concept of the Real, the total. Knowledge of Real is possible; and this total reality is not self-contradictory and discrete. It is a comprehensive explanation of this Reality that is being sought. Knowledge about reality turns out to be a real knowledge of itself. Reality is the source and substance. The causal and teleological, and the cosmological factors about it have examined in an earlier work. There are several theories of knowledge. Epistemology deals with the how, that is, as to how we apprehend the real. It investigates the apparatus of knowing and the structure of thought. It is psychological in approach as well as logical. The criterion of reality has to be formulated. The nature of the subject, and the nature of the object, the nature of their compresence have to be understood. They all depend on these three factors. Some philosophers seek to reduce these three, to one homogeneous existence. Some retain only two, and dispense with the third. Even if all the three terms are retained, their natures are altered. A self evidency test is applied by some; an extraneous test is applied by others in regard to the truth of the cognition. Some combine the extraneous and the intrinsic tests into one.

These theories as already remarked are results of metaphysical assumptions of certain utilitarian and scientific interests. Thus usually epistemology which is said to be the creator of metaphysics, is really a hand-maid finding reasons for the systems adopted. External reality, which is the objective world of transient phenomena, apparently reveals no dependence upon the mind perceiving it. This is what has led to the assumptions of realism but by no means the only factor about it. Reality is more than consciousness or the cognitive relation. Consciousness further is the function of the subject who perceives the outer objects. The momentariness of outer objects, which is certainly not the truth about them, does not vitiate their existence outside the perceiving mind and does not make them unreal in any sense. Such being the case, epistemology, if it is not to be speculative but scientific, has to accept the dictates of the system of metaphysics of realism and science, or in other words of Common sense which is the admitted and tested evidence of trained experimenters and observers of experience.

In pragmatism epistemology has a higher function. It becomes the interpreter of facts given in experience that have been tested and verified. It seeks to explain the facts presented to consciousness and affirms a relativistic truth, a truth that is progressively being amplified and enlarged by growing experience, and incidentally capable of being modified and corrected by future experiences.

In idealism, consciousness or knowledge seeks to become all important and absorbs at least seeks to absorb entire reality within itself.

The question for us is how far idealism is justified in claiming supremacy for Consciousness over the object and the subject. Does idealism prove that truth and being or knowledge and existence are identical? If this question is object to on the ground that we never know anything apart from knowing and therefore that they are identical, then, what is the process of knowing or of being? An idealism that takes for granted that reality and truth are identical on the basis of that consciousness is reality and truth, such as that of Yogacāra Buddhism, subjective idealism of Berkeley, and to a certain extent Absolute Idealism, surreptitiously uses epistemology to prove reality is consciousness only, that reality is psychical stuff, is mere consciousness not either a consciousness of anything or belonging to any subject. Nowhere do we in reality or in experience come across this kind of experience, except in the sophisticated Experience of Absolute Idealism. It is therefore important that we should criticize epistemological idealism as something fundamentally unsound because it pleads for subjectivism and an absurd unreal objectivity which it cannot dissolve, much less explain. Likewise, there is another kind of epistemological idealism which claims that One undifferentenced Consciousness (Experience) under the stress of illusion of diversity fulgurates or differentiates, or appears to do so in an unreal manner, into subjects and objects². This is epistemology that has ascended to metaphysical status. This also therefore is what we have to criticize if we would save true metaphysics. Sri Rāmānuja undertakes to point out the defects of the epistemological absolutists. Epistemology must be realistic, founded on the tested experience of the ordinary man, enabling him to understand the true nature of knowledge as well as truth, in order to be able to function in the ordinary universe of action and to struggle to realize of the highest values of life, paramapuruṣārtha.

Epistemology determines the validity of the system of metaphysics accepted, but on that account it should not be construed to be fit to override the facts of the metaphysical order. All facts fall within experience in one sense, and all have to be known in order to be accepted as real. That there may exist other things than what we experience, and that a higher consciousness may know more ourselves, and the highest consciousness might apprehend all things at one, might all be agreed to on the basis of inference and ordinary experience of relative knowledge. To go beyond these limits and to affirm that experience is something over and above, and other than all that; we in ordinary cognition introspectively as well as observationally find to be the fact, is to construct an epistemological metaphysics, as spurious as, if not worse

² avibhāgopi buddhuātmā viparyāsitadarsanah
grāhya-grāhakasamvittibhedavāniva laksyate.

Dharmakirt : quoted by Yamunācārya : Atma-siddhi

than the naive affirmations of the materialist. That is to say, in the construction metaphysics it is necessary to take into account all types of experience, all types of cognitive relationships and not merely the more abstract relationships subsisting between the knower and the known in the act of cognition by the knower, which is made to yield an abstract cognition or Consciousness.

Science taking its start from perceptual experiences (undoubtedly the only type of experience that we can have of reality), arrives with the help of the laws of self-consistence, and the methods of inductive inference at the conception of the whole reality on a realistic basis. Undoubtedly an idealistic interpretation of reality is possible as evidenced by Mach's efforts, and even necessitated in certain respects. The mass of evidence, in the other hand, has not been able to get rid of contradictions with idealistic interpretations of experience. Whilst materialism has sought to affirm merely perceptual reality and ended in a solipsism which is the characteristic feature of subjective idealism also, the realist has been trying to arrive at approaches to reality through the twin concepts of unity and difference, of subjective and objective, of permanence and change, of perception, hearsay evidence, memory and inference. In thus trying to seek guidance from these twin concepts and in granting them fundamental solutions, realism has emerged as a type of organistic view. It is true that mere organism can never explain reality, Nevertheless between the several types of organistic explanation we can select that which is non-self contradictory and which converges into one focus, so to speak, the partial views due to one sided interest and experience.

Organistic theory is typically the common sense view but with a difference. The ordinary type of common sense view of reality that has been expounded by Reid, Hamilton and others, and in modern time by Prof. Joad and Dr. Stout has not culminated in the organistic view, whereas the realistic view of Prof. A.N. Whitehead has definitely taken the organistic explanation. We might even hold that the Holistic and other evolutionary and emergent theories cannot but accept the organistic theory, though, as far as we know, they have not made up their minds on the issue. The common sense view is definitely not what the plain man in the street- that peculiarly unavailable creature made classical by Berkeley-thinks. It is what an expert in observation of reality finds to be the most acceptable, not what a speculative and adventure-some philosopher or scientist schematizes or geometrizes. There is enough scope for a fundamentally correct view; of reality without the sophisticated idealistic arguments which have sought to reduce experience to nullity and vacuum and illusion on the basis of principles of abstract non self contradiction, infinite regress and possible invalidity of memory and testimony. There are varieties of the above and in the above; there are apparent self contradictions in the abstract which turn out to be perfectly compatible in experience; there is an infinite regress which does not vitiate the conclusions; and there is testimony which is unvitated. These can be perfectly explained in accordance with the facts of experience.

Experience itself needs definition. Epistemology must investigate the conditions and limits of each principle and criticize the sources of knowledge and understanding, and all the facts of every order must be considered so as to make them fall into a view that is fundamentally self-consistent, efficient and all-embracing.

Śrī Rāmānuja starts from a metaphysical view and seeks to make out that his is a metaphysics that reconciles all conflicts according to every pramāṇa (source of knowledge)³. The cognitive relation is inquired into in all its manifold phases, such as cognition of objects, cognitive religious functions in regard to the supreme cause, Being, Reality, Self, and Destiny (paramapuruṣārtha). In arriving at the central and basic concept of organism, Rāmānuja traces the tenets of the several schools of thought and shows their weaknesses and their untenability. Rāmānuja thus first and foremost is a samanvaya (synthetic) thinker who seeks to do justice to the facts of the spiritual, moral and physical orders as well as to the facts of realism and idealism. Undoubtedly this tendency to syncretize or synthesize is traceable to the period of the Upaniṣads themselves, and to the Vēdānta Sūtras. The intention of the author of the Vēdānta Sūtras was to give a synthetic presentation of the views of the Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas and the Veda about Brahman's nature, and attainment. Rāmānuja accordingly claims to interpret the Vēdānta Sūtras on the lines laid down by earlier commentators.

II

What is presented in Perception is not Consciousness

Rāmānuja takes up perception which is first source of right knowledge. Perception belongs to the realm of external events which are changing and perishing constantly. It is an admitted fact that objects perish or undergo change constantly. The question of duration may be left over, though this is all important to the schools of Buddhism as well as Advaita. The external world of objects is the world of space time (kāla and deśa), and is perceived by the self through its mind, which is its mukha or face, when its sensory organs come into contact with it in the forms of sound, touch, form, taste and smell. These sensations are of very brief duration in as much as they are shifting and changing and are non-existent in the absence of the objects of perception though they are preserved in consciousness in a somewhat accentuated form of memory (jñanakāra). Śankara held the view that what is presented in perception is not the stuff of sensations, not sound, nor smell, nor form nor taste nor

³ Trividham pramāṇam, pratyaksānumānaśābdabhedāt Nyāyapari-uddhi, p.36. cf. Prajñāparitrānā: quoted by Nyāya Pārisūddhi, p. 38 (Memorial ed.)

Svyam siddhis tathā divyam paratyaksamanumāgamah |
Pañca santi pramāṇāni jaimini-vyāsayohṛdi ||

touch but principally pure consciousness itself. In the beginning there is nothing beyond what is presented, what is said and is felt, or rather felt simply. The present perception which has not been influenced by the sense organs or their functions, reveals only knowledge or more correctly consciousness alone. Thus the essence of all objects is pure consciousness. The forms and sense characters are merely modifications generated by sense organs due to *karma* and ignorance. In that pure apprehension which is initial uncorrupted and unmodified by any element of karma or ignorance or *kalpana*, ratiocination, what is revealed is pure 'isness' which is undifferentiated and unqualified. This is true being. All that exists purely as this stuff. In order to prove this thesis, the element of change or even momentariness of all things is a necessity forced upon any theory of modification by reason or understanding (*kalpana*). If this is accepted then the Advaitic theory lands itself in buddhist psychology of perception and it can never get rid of this allegiance. Sri Harsha had undoubtedly found this to be the case, and affirmed that it is not all a fault to accept even the buddhist theory, if it did prove to be right, as he felt it to be.

But the ordinary advaitin, or more correctly the *māyāvādin*, could find a way out from the theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*) through the orthodox schools instead of the heterodox. Indeed it appears that Advaitic theory was a powerful effort of the orthodox to win over the majority of the Buddhists to the Vedāntic fold, and in this Gaudapāda and Śāṅkara played the most prominent role.

In order to prove the theory of *kalpana* or modification and therefore falsification or illusification, Advaita snatched upon the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika distinction between two kinds or rather stages of perception the *nirvikalpaka*, indeterminate, and the *savikalpaka*, determinate, perceptions. The *nirvikalpaka* *pratyakṣa* reveals, according to Śāṅkara, "a permanent reality and not a momentary isolated this... as in the case of buddhist theory of *nirvikalpaka*", but according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika it is non-definite, confused knowledge which awaits determination and definition and distinctness.

Rāmaṇuja undertakes to show that what experience involves in perception is never a mere 'is', the so called permanent behind the momentary 'this', but always a well formed isolated event which can only, because of these characteristics, point to a 'this'. Nor does it mean that the activity of knowledge is merely an 'is' - the metaphysical reality of a psychical stuff. Nor can it be ever identified with consciousness as such. Between the Naiyāyic *nirvikalpaka* pure 'is' of Śāṅkara's theory, there is nothing in common except the name. Thus where Śāṅkara is prepared to see one problem alone, Rāmaṇuja sees three.

They are (i) The Naiyāyika *nirvikalpaka* *pratyakṣa* is not definite knowledge and hence is neither true nor false. Nothing can be said about it without further

investigation and looking into, and the test by pragmatological action becomes necessary.

(ii) The Naiyāyika nirvikalpaka pratyaksa may be identical with Sankara's nirvikalpaka pratyaksa but it is not anubhūti, the undifferentiated consciousness or Pure Experience void of subject or object.

(iii) The act of cognizing may mean the fundamental functioning of consciousness, but what that consciousness reveals is neither consciousness merely, nor is it merely that which cognizes, namely the self. It is always an object, self or non-self.

Rāmanuja's theory is an elucidation of these three points.

III

Two Kinds of perception

There are two kinds of perception, the determinate and the indeterminate. The indeterminate perception is that in which is present a mere 'is' or pure being, according to Śankara. According to Yogacāra, what is presented is a momentary existence, sva-lakṣaṇa or pure particular. Against this view, Rāmanuja holds that 'non-determinate perception is the apprehension of the object (in so far it is) destitute of some difference but not all difference'.⁴ The apprehension of a mere 'is' without any difference whatever is in the first place not observed to take place, and in the second place, it is impossible.⁵ All cognition can be stated in terms of 'this is such and such'. 'The true distinction between non-determinate perception and determinate perception is the apprehension of the first individual among a number of things belonging to the same class, while the later is the apprehension of a second, third, and so on individuals'.⁶ "Determinate perception is the extension to the perception of the generic character of a class-manifestation in a certain outward shape', which connects this act of perception with the earlier perception of the individuals of the same class. "Such extension or continuance of a certain generic character is, on the other hand, not apprehended on the apprehension of the first

⁴S.B.I.i.1. Nirvikalpakam-nāmā kenacid viśeṣeṇa-viyktasya grahaṇam sarvaviṣaya rahitasya

⁵ S.B.I.i.!(Thibauts trans)

⁶ Nature of thought by Brand Blaushard Vol I. P.62nirvikalpakama ekajātīya dravyēśu prathamapinda grahanuṃ: dvitīyādi-pinda-grahanuṃ savikalpaṃ.

individual, and perception of the latter kind thence is indeterminate.⁷

According to Rāmanuja every kind of perception involves (in a psychological interpretation) the perception of a structure or form(samsthāna) along with qualities of colour, touch and etc., Even the most initial perception reveals some form or structure(samsthāna) which is jāti(for generic character is nothing but structure).⁸ The apprehension in nirvikalpaka or indeterminate perception is the apprehension of structure or jāti that gives rise to the judgment of difference or unique setting. This means that all perception is, firstly an apprehension of a rūpa, a form or samsthāna-ākārā, and secondly when it is connected with some other recollected or memory, the form becomes the mediating class-concept, a universal,jāii. Jāti is the extension of the rūpa especially when the rūpa is available in more than one thing. The apprehension of a relation of identical form in two things which have been observed is called determinate perception, since it determines the nature of the thing in relation to other things around it. This extension of generic connection in several things and the judgment thereon may give rise to judgments of difference as well as uniqueness, but no less than the second, the first perception displays the structure or form as an inherent characteristic of the thing perceived. Form is the structure of a thing and is perceived in the most initial perception, such as, 'this', 'that'. Form is a category in perception and there is no perception without form. Every is or 'this' is a formed is (sarūpa) and a samsthāna viśeṣa (a structure-event). " Even if perceptive cognition takes place within one moment, we apprehend within that moment the generic character that constitutes on the one hand the difference of the thing from others, and on the other hand the peculiar character of the thing itself. And thus there remains nothing to be apprehended in a second moment.⁹ Every perception thus is a structure event, and is an individual occurrence. It is not a mere mass of feeling, undifferentiated and inarticulate. It is consciously perceived and articulated and is never to be confused with mere feeling. Even feeling is not altogether free from quality; awareness, even whilst it is almost soaked in feeling has yet a quality. Perception even in its most elemental and initial character is a perception of a form, however vague it might be. It is only logical relationship and comparison that makes for

⁷ S.B.1.i.1. nirvikalpaka ekajātīya dravyēśu prathamapinda grahanuḥ: ḍvitiyādi-pinda-grahanuḥ savikalpaḥ(Ananda Press ed Vol I p.27) Savikalpakakam jatyādyneca padārtha-viśiṣṭa - viśayatvād-eva saviśe-savisyam. Nirvikalpakaṁ saviśaya-viśayameva (Ibid p.26) cf. Vedārtha Samgraha 309, Nirvikalpakapratītyakṣe pī saviśeṣameva vastu pratiyate: cf. Gangeśa who defines perception as immediate awareness: pratyakṣasya sākṣātkāritvam lakṣanam.

⁸ S.B.1.i.q.p.46(thibaut) Jains also hold that every perception is of saviseṣa vastu cf. Hist of Indian Phil. Das Gupta Vol I.P.183

cf. Vedānta Samgraha: 178 and 179 (p.160 Telu ed) " Sanmātra grāhi pratyakṣam na bheda grāhi, ityādi vādāḥ nirastāḥ. Jātyāsamsthānaṁ sthitasyaiva vastunaḥ pratyakṣeṇa gṛhitatvāt, tVsvaiva samsthānarūpa jātyādeh, pratiyogyapekṣayā bhedavyavahāra hetuvācca.

⁹ S.B.1.i, 1 (p.44) cf. Nirvikalpakasya saviśeṣaviśayatām darśayati; Tātparyadīpikā:

determinate perception¹⁰. It is the sensation of modern psychology which later on becomes perception. Modern Gestalt theory in Psychology whose special attention has been directed to perception, has adequately and amply proved that even the most elementary sensation is a perception of gestalt, samsthāna- sthiti or rūpa¹¹. Thus it is clear that a perception of the most primitive character which is said to be nirvikalpaka, is in reality defined, relatively less of course than the savikalpaka but nonetheless defined, by structure and colour etc.(nirvikalpakamapi saviśeṣa- viṣayameva).¹²

The refutation of the Nyāya theory of nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa (as interpreted by Advaitins) lies in the fact that there is no sensation or perception which is not characterized by some form (rūpa) and colour even if it be a mere patch. But we can conceive of the first point of awareness as sensation, indeed very pure, in so far as it is characterized by any definite quality; it is that awareness when the consciousness is reduced to extremest poverty, as Bergson says¹³; and we can in modern psychological parlance, call it sensation as distinguished from perception which involves discrimination and exploration and comparison and all the other activities of constructive correlation of the mind. Sensation that is the undetermined unutterable matrix of perception, is something on which the mind has not operated in any manner and has not schematized it in any way and has not made it or reduced it into the set patterns of objects which it pragmatically deals with. The unique quality of the sensation becomes in perception overlaid with construction of the mind and as such unreal. Sensation, nirvikalpaka, that is, that which is not compared or schematized by mind, is thus the unique first contact of the object with the mind. The main question then resolves itself into what that first moment should be like. It is ,as has been well said, the point instant when there is barely sufficient activity of consciousness to apprehend the object.¹⁴ Such a state of consciousness alone facilitates the awareness of the sensation, a sensation from which withdrawing we shall not be able to state at all as to what it is like.

According to Rāmaṇuja, there is nothing wrong in accepting two steps in perception a first moment namely the sensation, and the second moment the

¹⁰ Savikalpaka-pratyakṣa

¹¹ cf. Gestalt Psychology; Kohler p.12. cf. Psychologies of 1925 article by Koffka.

¹² Śatadūṣani by Sri Vedānta Deśika, 11th refutation.

¹³ Creative Evolution p 293

¹⁴ Cf. Buddhist Logic: prof Stcherbertsky Vol 1. p 151, who quotes Dharmakīrti's view on this Nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa “ That sensation is something quite different from productive imagination can be proved just by introspection. Indeed, everyone knows that an image is something utterable (capable of coalescing with a name). Now if we begin to stare at a patch of colour and withdraw all our thoughts on whatsoever other(object), if we thus reduce our consciousness to a condition of rigidity, (and become as though unconscious) this will be the conditions of the pure sensation..”.

perception which is a product of discriminative activity (vikalpa) including comparison and inference: nirvikalpakam eka jāṭīyadravyeṣu prathamapindagrahaṇam. Sensation is not to be reduced to the almost non cognitive state, the state of rigidity of mind-body when no comparison or construction(vikalpa) is possible. Nirvikalpaka is either a state of cognition or it is not; it has either an element or object of consciousness or it has not. If it is, then even as such it is not, then the alternative is that it is not at all. The genetic theory of perception is utilized to discredit the very cognition. The contradictory contrast between thought and sense, which is said to be the highest peak of ancient as well as modern philosophy (more truly of idealism from Parmenides and Plato, to Hegel and his followers), is utilized to demonstrate the correctness of the illusory theory. Once such a contradiction is raised no power on earth can rescue that view from ending in that thorough going illusion whose culmination is to be found in Nirvana and Nihilism. The savikalpaka jnana is what we seek in knowing. It is undoubtedly a product of mental activity linking present experience with the past. As visnucitta has said it is influenced by *samskāra* and udbodha. If nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa is merely the reaction of the sense-organs to the object.¹⁵ Savikalpaka is the discrimination which expands that sense-knowledge. It is that which relates that fragmentary experience to the total reality and educts its relations to it. It is synthesis as well as analysis, comprehension which follows on apprehension.¹⁶

We find that the importance given to the nirvikalpaka as the *ding an sich*, thing-in itself, svalakṣaṇa, as the real, are extreme statements which seek to reduce the error arising out of the subject's previous cognitions and habits of interpretation. Thus having turned unduly critical of mind itself, idealists have inevitably reduced all cognition into illusionary imposition, all reality into chimerical display of causality that cannot apply anywhere. Prof. Dawes Hicks takes a standpoint very much similar to Rāmanuja's views on the nature of Perception. There is no place for mere sensation in a dynamic consciousness. Even the sense-organs are operating only by the will of the cognizer. There can obviously under these circumstances be no mere or abstract sensation. "Cognition is essentially the same in all its forms, both in its lowest and its highest levels. There is no break in its development. It is from the beginning a process of separating, distinguishing and comparison (distinguishing differentiation, discernment and comparison of features, characters and marks, which are to be found in the object). Cognition includes an act of synthesis, but this synthesis is not a putting together of the parts of the object. It consists rather in holding together different views of awareness. The essence of an act of cognizing is a process of distinguishing and comparing features which as given are already synthesized and not

¹⁵ Kevala - cakṣurādi-indriya-janyam nirvikalpakam N P p.43

¹⁶ cf. The Authors "some problems of Indian Logic" J.S.V.O.I Vol 1953

any creative synthetic activity exercised on the given manifold of experience".¹⁷ Rāmanuja's view on perception is identical with the above. Whether as a pure sensation or as definite cognition, the object is not constructed, but what are in it are educed, to use the expressive phrase of Prof. Spearman.

Every cognition from the simplest sensation to the most highly correlated perception, is more or less mediated and the distinction drawn between knowledge through acquaintance and knowledge through description cannot be deemed to be absolute indeed if it is not denied.

IV

Nyāya Nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa and Nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa of Advaita

We shall next consider how far we can assume that the Nyāya Nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa, sensation, is identical with the sensation of Advaita.

In the first place supposing the Nyāya Nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa is capable of revealing the mere 'isness' of a thing undifferenced and undefined, is it the same as the sanmātra of Advaita? The latter 'isness' is the isness of consciousness of ānubhūti, experience or samvid, and is not the mere 'is' of Nyāya the atomic structure of material presentation in its mass-character. The tertiary compounds made out of binary atoms alone are the perceptible matrix of all objects. Their combinations and arrangements make objects. These are being perceived. The 'isness' of this character is different from the psychical 'isness' of Advaitic idealism. That which is perceived is the one case is pure matter of the thing; in the other case, it is the pure expansiveness of consciousness without any limitation or name or quality. The latter is the pure consciousness alienated from the impressions and re-collections and associated tags of individual ignorance, which overlay all cognition of objects. Every savikalpa-pratyakṣa is a relational knowledge wherein the matter of the object is pure consciousness, and the form and name and relations, which constitute, what for us are outer and inner objects, are constructions of the mind itself on that original matrix. It is thus absolute for this theory of Advaita, and incidentally of Buddhism which was the parent of this theory, that *savikalpaka pratyakṣa* should be wholly erroneous from the ultimate stand point; whereas for the realistic schools, though *Savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* might become erroneous due to the over-burdening impositions of progressive symbolic relations,¹⁸ or due to the application of thought for the limited purposes of conduct and efficiency in a particular manner, it is not something that is

¹⁷ Hundred Years of British Philosophy; Rudolf Metz p.513.

¹⁸ cf, Kants a priori synthesis.

fundamentally false; on the contrary, it is that which is fundamentally true, because it is that which has been arrived at through careful observation and comparison, and experimentation. Knowledge in order to be true should be definite, and well defined so that it leaves one in no doubt as to what is true, and as such unambiguous and clear. Therefore *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* can become a *pramāṇa*, a source of right knowledge. If, on the other hand, it be uninformative, nebulous and ambiguous, it can never be a *pramāṇa*. It is thus self contradictory to hold at that rate that *pratyakṣa*, determinate or indeterminate, is true at all. Other sources of knowledge indeed have to be approached.

Knowledge is definition, and definition can have and has a place, as we have said, in sensation understood in the sense of *nirvikalpaka*. We have already described the qualities of this sensation. But Śankara's *Nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* is said to transcend the definitions of true and false. Says Sir Radhakrishnan " Since indeterminate perception does not transcend immediacy, is dumb and unanalyzed, is what James calls 'raw unverballed experience,' the distinction between true and false does not apply to it." There is certainly nothing against accepting this statement which goes to show that it is immediate, that is, that it is almost a reflexive type of action, *pratibimba*. As we have said the most initial sensation can only be definite, with relative indefiniteness, but it is something, a 'somewhat' and not a mere 'that'. But the implications of sensation do not go only that far. Advaita holds that the sensation presents, firstly, non-difference; secondly, that it is unqualified; thirdly, that the stuff presented is homogeneous consciousness where there is no distinction between subject and object; and fourthly, that it is unutterable, *anirvacanīya*. It is of course, a true claim to make that we shall never know the infinitude or the illimitability of truth, but that is not equivalent to saying that it is unknowable and unpredictable. Unspeakable, it might be, but it is not unknowable. It is one of those claims of intuitionists who do not wish to see that definition is the fundamental nature of right knowledge, since definition precludes all watering down of the laws of contradiction and excluded middle. But even these laws can be overcome through imagination. Intuition comes to birth as result of enquiry, and imagination helps this enquiry; in limiting all imagination by the principle of non-self-contradiction we might arrive at new angles of vision, and achieve a synthesis that shall not possess the cast iron moulds of mechanical logic. Direct intuition has universal significance, because it is synthetic apperception, definite in knowledge and essentially communicable in some manner, if not in words, in symbols that the mind in its multi-dimensional nature might grasp. Religious consciousness might be touched to the core by it and reveal essential significances inexpressible in words. But to mistake direct apperception of intuition for the initial raw unverballed immediate sensation of mass feeling is fundamentally wrong, and vitiated by inner contradiction, though forsooth it is impossible to refer any inner contradiction to it. Thought might not be adequate to express the tension of the spirit, and the rich concreteness of the sensation might be

made to live an unreceptive life when the mind becomes rigid in its reception and as if unconscious of it. But sensation is the tension of the organ which is impugned upon by the object. Its liveliness, it owes to the object. Intuition is equally lively, but it is unambiguous and definite, and the complaint about its inexpressibility is due to the finiteness of the subject and its distance from integral truth and its limitations. The claim that intuition is sensation is untrue and such an experience does not exist.¹⁹

The activity of thought (*vikalpa*) on the content of sensation modifies it, so to speak, and makes it a percept. It is not a merely additive function that thought has for it makes the perception organic with the world of experience that it already knows. But by no stretch of imagination can it be said that this sensation is mere consciousness, *samvidā*. Even Kant who made the region of Pure Reason almost universal, could not surrender the realm of brute fact, so much so he held that conceptions without intuitions are empty. This has a nature indeed different from the cognizing consciousness. By no stretch of imagination can it be argued that we see in sensation a barren 'that'; even if it be true, it can never be consciousness. Consciousness does not get any place in sensation, since from it every effort of consciousness has been sedulously withdrawn. Consciousness gets a contact, and establishes a relation between the sense organs of the embodied self and the external object. Without this relation there can be no cognition. An obsessed idealist thinks that all things are merely states of consciousness or streams of states of consciousness and just psychological stuff. To find reasons for this unfortunate deduction through introspective psychology he has to invent a theory of phenomenalism or categorical make up and conjure up a power of ignorance that makes a world of appearance and creates a permanent subject. The material of this world of appearance has finally to be found in the creative activity of the subject, the storehouse of all these impressions or rather psychological imaginations, the *ālaya-vijnāna*; and thus there exists nothing else except series of states, and a storehouse of psychological impressions which might well be called the self in a phenomenal sense according to Buddhist *Yogācāra*, and in a noumenal sense according to Advaita.

The 'that' in sensation is not of the stuff of consciousness. Though whatever is perceived is a consciously perceived object, it cannot be spoken of as

¹⁹ Cf. Modern Philosophers : H.Hoffding. It is true that Benedetto Croce accepts intuition as equivalent to sensation even as Kant does. But they were aware of the difference between an intuition of sense and intuition of reason. A confusion on this point has led to the view that all of us are intuitive in an elemental manner and that all experiences are intuitive. To what logical faults this doctrine may lead one need not be canvassed here. It is absolutely true that every idealism has ended in a dualism between the absolute and finite. Ergo the truth lies in dualism.

consciousness itself, or as a formation of consciousness. Experience is a conscious experience, but experience involves also an experience of a 'that'. The 'that' might persist or might not persist in the outer world, be it a momentary existence or persistent thing, but so far as the inner memory is concerned it belongs to consciousness and exists as psychical stuff or knowledge. At no time does it give up its reference to the outer object. Though it is a representation in one sense, in perception itself it is not the representation that we perceive but the object itself directly as standing out there. The representation in memory at no time loses its outer reference and projection, but on this account it cannot be said that representationalism is accepted. It is the *given*, and between this and the undifferentiating(undifferenced) consciousness, there is nothing in common.²⁰

It is an ingenious device to ask for a sanction of Nyāya for the Advaitic conception of nirvikalpaka as the core of reality. Even if it were an independent conception, which it is not, since this is undoubtedly buddhistic, it is an unprovable assumption. As Rāmanuja says there is no barren sensation, a sensation without an attribute of form, rūpa, and colour even if it be merely a patch of light. The concept of an undifferenced sensation as a limiting phase of consciousness might be conceded; but without the qualifications attached to its appearance, it is an impossible experience, if not an unreal abstraction.

V

Consciousness and Cognition

The next point we shall discuss pertains to the nature of the act of cognition and the nature of consciousness which is claimed to be a homogeneous substance, the known and the act of knowing rolled into one.

Consciousness is a function of the knower revealed in the act of cognition. It is realizable as a function of the knower, necessary for the purpose of life itself, and it is inseparable from the existence of the knower. Every act of cognition reveals more or less simultaneously three terms; the object, the subject and the cognitive relation. It is found that it is purposive in so far as it bears the message of the outer existence to its owner, the self, whose function it is revealed to be. It is thus a *dharma*, a function, a quality, dynamic, purposive, and essentially belonging to some self. It is

²⁰ S.B.I.i 1. Nā sanmātrameva vastu. Na-kenāpi pramāṇeṇa nirviśeṣa-vastu siddhiḥ: Vedārtha Samgraha 308.

I.i.3: Atyantātīndriyatvena pratyakṣādi pramāṇaviśayatayā brahmaṇās sastrai kapramāṇakatvāt utkasvarūpam brahma. The Brahman is altogether beyond the senses, and so does not form the object of any means of proof, such as perception etc, and the satra alone forms the means of proving Him. Kena Up. I.

not found apart from its substrate, the self, whose function it is.²¹ It reveals its owner as well as itself in the act of cognition, as also the object. Yāmunācārya writes that perceptive consciousness is that which reveals a thing through itself at the time of presentation.²² He defines consciousness as svāśrayasya svasattayaiva prakāśamānatvam svaviṣaya-sādhanatvam vā anubhūtitvam. Rāmanuja accepts this definition of Consciousness as stated by Yāmunācārya²³. “The essential nature of consciousness – consists therein that it shines forth, and manifests itself, through its own being to its own substrate at the present moment; or that it is instrumental in proving its own object to *its substrate*”.

In the above definition one important feature is that cognition which is perceptive refers to the moment and not to the part or the future. This limitation of cognition to the present moment has a fundamental reference to the conditions of time and space, refutation of which has led to the other schools into pitfalls.

This consciousness is awareness of something be it ever so much as a mere structure or a *jāti*. It is not bare awareness without content or with non-existence as content. It is not either a form of consciousness that we perceive or consciousness merely that does not reveal even the subject. That which is perceived is a *real being*, a *sattā*, as we have already said, which is *objective*, and is never a mere cit. Even if it were another embodied being, a cit encased in a body, it is as an object that it is being perceived and not as one’s self, whatever identity in *jāti* the subject and object might here possess. A *sanmātra* thus can never be identified with one’s own *cinmātratva* in perception. So far from conscious mind being owned by experience, it is experience that is being owned by conscious minds, just as the light owned by the flame rather than the flame is owned by the light. Prof Dawes Hicks says that “so far from conscious minds being owned as F.H.Bradley conceived, by experience, the fact rather is that experience is owned by conscious minds, if, indeed it is permissible in this context, to talk of ‘ownership’ at all²⁴.”

VI

Yogi -Pratyakṣa and Consciousness as Object

A further contention is made that in the higher states of Consciousness we

²¹ Siddhitraya : p21

²² Siddhitraya :p23 Pratyak ṣasamvit svasattākāle svaviṣayasya sadbhāvam sādhananti

²³ S.B.I.i.1. “Anubhūtitvam nāma vartamānadaśāyām svasattayaiva svāśrayam prati prakāśamānatvam..” (cf. Thibaut’s p.48)

²⁴ Philosophical Bases of Theism : Prof. Dawes Hicks : p.31

perceive the highest experience as a mere mass-feeling and that this can be attained by the practice of yoga (trance). In aparokṣa experience (immediate higher experience) we are told that we do experience the Undifferented Consciousness, nirviṣaya, nirābhilāpya, anirvacanīya consciousness, as the substrate of all phenomena.

In Yoga there is a state of consciousness is called the fourth, turya, in which there is said to be the realization of the unchanging Self.²⁵ Gaudapāda, one of the most profound thinkers undoubtedly influenced by Buddhistic Yogācāra school, in his Kārikā on the Māndūkya Upaniṣad maintains that this state reveals the dissolution of the subject-object relation in an all embracing consciousness.²⁶ It is in this state that the purest and the undifferented identity of all reality, its singleness or monism is realized or known. Difference is the stigma of all phenomena and is the cause of perishability or mortality. The real is neither perishable nor difference nor causal prius.

Yogi Pratyakṣa (this aparokṣānubhūti) has nothing to do with this turya-consciousness of the Māndūkya. "Although such a perception-which springs from intense imagination-implies a vivid presentation of things, it is after all, nothing more than a reproduction of the previously perceived and does not therefore rank as an instrument of knowledge; for it has no means of applying itself to objects other than those perceived previously.²⁷ It is on the other hand a source of error.

What we find on analyzing Yogic experience is that it is most often nothing more than a hallucinatory self-projection of one's own memories and previous experiences gaining the vividness characteristic of perception, due to internal stimulation. It is a product of over-wrought imagination which might lead to erroneous judgment, and in any case it cannot be an instrument of pure knowledge. The realization of the *turya* state may be the state of realization of the limitless expanse of consciousness divested of all limitation of body and mind and all contradiction which thwart the apprehension of the real. Consciousness perceived in this manner in *turya* may be taken to be not the substance of all things but rather as the attribute of the individual who has been freed from all its limitation -- nirūpādhikajñāna.

Yogi pratyakṣa can never real reality as such, since it is imagination. It can never be real.

²⁵ Buddhistic thought does not accept a permanent self, though it might accept an ālay-vijñāna, a storehouse of impressions which also is a momentary thing.

²⁶ Ajāti-vāda of Gaudapāda

²⁷ S.B.I.i.3, Nāpi yogajanyam: bhāvanaprākaraṣaparyantañjanmanas tasya visadāvabhāsatve pi pūrvānubhūta viṣayasmrīmātratvān prāmānyam

This conclusion ought not to be taken to mean that Rāmanuja does not accept any experience such as that. Yāmunācārya himself affirmed that the proof of divine existence can only be through Yoga; that is, Yoga-praxis leads to or grants the divine perception. God in His infinite grace endows the vision which the normal eye cannot have.²⁸ This indeed is different in kind from the pratyaksa that is said to be caused by Yoga. The super sensory perception is granted by the grace of God as a fruit, so that the individual might perceive the entire organic character of reality even as the visions of Bali and Arjuna. Bhagawad-prasāda-labdha yogi-pratyakṣam divyam²⁹. Thus this also is yogi pratyaksa but it is a free gift of the Divine to the individual. This is the real intuition in relation to the external world when the individual is fit to receive this grace tat yuktāvasthāyān manonmātrajanyam³⁰. This is perception by the mind that has become an eye divine(divya-cakṣus).³¹

It is a fruit of disinterested service of the Divine, a fruit of freedom from vacillation and dejected consciousness. Whatever it is the Divine Knowledge (gnosis) or the integral or complete knowledge of the world, does not make much of a difference. It is the attitude of absolute disinterestedness in imagination, coupled with complete union with the Divine in all activities that can lead to the true knowledge about any object. Constant remembrance of prior experiences cannot be a source of knowledge. *Bhāvana balaja mātram jagat kartari-pratyakṣam pratikṣiptam*³². In either case, real knowledge is available through the disinterested pursuit of truth, or truth pursued for its own sake. This truth is many-faced and undoubtedly infinite, and includes an integral aspect which grants it the unity of singleness as much as it does the manifoldness or plurality.

This knowledge is available to all freed souls after they are liberated from their physical bodies which they had inherited: *vijuktā-vasthāyām tu bāhyentriya-janya-mapi*³³. When the individual by his consecrated devotion to the Highest God earns his freedom to know everything, which is said to be *svarūpāvadhāraṇam*, (an individual possessing capacity to know the entire world and merge³⁴ himself in the Divine Lord who is the self of all other individuals too), then he gains the divine vision, the capacity to know the infinite mansions of the Divine. A new body that does not hide or interfere with perception but grants fullest freedom, knowledge and bliss, becomes his; a divine body is at it were worn. Thus *Divya-pratyakṣa* is not an impossible thing.

²⁸ Siddhītraya: Isvarasiddhi

²⁹ Nyāya Parisuddhi; from Sri Viṣṇucitta

³⁰ Ibid., p.39

³¹ “ sr̥vantopi na sr̥vanti, Jānantopi na janate,
paśyantopi na paśyanti pasyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ

³² Nyāya-Parisuddhi p.40

³³ Nyāya Parisuddhi p.39

³⁴ Ibid p.38

Indeed it is the truth of the individual consciousness when it is liberated from the trammels of the sensory organs. But this is not the imagination intensified by praxis of Raja and Hatha yogas.

Thus we find that despite the fact that there is a variety of perception different from nirvikalpaka and savikalpaka such as the perception through the divine eye or mind, it does not even give a proof of the bare being the nirvisaya consciousness or experience. The subject object relation can never be reduced to mere experience. The object can never be made into a function of the subject, that is mere consciousness. The subject cannot be dissolved into its attributes or functions, though the three are inevitably implied in all perception.

It has been suggested that intuition reveals a bare or pure consciousness meaning by intuition something different from perception. Rāmanuja considers this problem in detail. For our purpose it is not necessary to enter into the meaning of the texts. Suffice it to find out the logical basis of these experiences themselves.