

EXPLORATIONS

CONTEMPORARY VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY, I

GEORGE BURCH

VEDANTA is the philosophical tradition based on the Upanishads, the philosophical portion of the Veda, and its unifying concept is that of the absolute being, called Brahman.¹ It is one of many philosophical schools in India, and within it many philosophical theories, monist and pluralist, idealist and realist, have been developed. Vedanta is not, therefore, a philosophical theory but a philosophical school, analogous to Christian philosophy in Europe, united by a historical tradition, respect for scripture, and certain categories of thought, but varied in content and capable of indefinite evolution. Its classical works are the ancient Sanskrit texts (Upanishads, Sutras, and Gita), in which its basis ideas are set forth, and the medieval Sanskrit commentaries in which the various philosophical theories are worked out. At the present time there is a vigorous revival of Vedanta philosophy in which the old tradition is being developed in many original ways. This is the work of academic philosophers writing in English, the language of education in modern India. Their works show, in forms of expression and sometimes even in content, the influence of Western thought, especially German and British idealism, but substantially they are an authentic continuation of the Vedanta school.

1. K. C. Bhattacharya.

The Vedantists with whom I studied in India represented radically different philosophical points of view, but I found one

¹ I am indebted to the Trustees of Tufts College for the sabbatical leave of absence, to the Rockefeller Foundation for the financial grant, and to Srimant Pratap Seth of Amalner for the hospitality which made possible the study on which this article is based.

consensus among them, namely that the late Professor K. C. Bhattacharya was the greatest philosopher of modern India.² The obscurity of his life and difficulty of his writings have kept Professor Bhattacharya from being well known, except to philosophers, but those who studied under him were impressed by the subtlety of his thought and the profundity of his insight. It would seem that his philosophy should be easy to study, since he has many published works and several immediate disciples eager to spread his doctrine. But the disciples competent to understand his subtle dialectic are themselves subtle thinkers in whose writings and oral teaching it is often difficult to distinguish between his system and their own developments of it, while his own written style, precise, literal, lacking any rhetorical adornments of illustration or analogy, and using ordinary words in extraordinary ways, is extremely difficult.

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya, a Bengali Brahmin, was born in 1875 at Serampore near Calcutta, one of eight children of an impoverished clerk. Educated at Presidency College in Calcutta,³ he studied under B. N. Seal, who had revived the study of Indian philosophy. He was a brilliant student clearly destined for an academic career, but his unwillingness to appease British administrators prevented his obtaining an appointment commensurate with his ability, and he held a variety of teaching and administrative positions in government colleges. When he reached the retirement age of 55, he was principal of small Hoogly College. After retirement, however, he became professor in the Calcutta post-graduate department, spent two years at the Indian Institute of Philosophy at Amalner (where he was given the title of director), and finally became George V Professor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta. After final retirement in 1938 he lived at Serampore, reading little because of failing sight, but

² The account of K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy is based principally on conversations with his disciples, while that of the philosophy of the other persons discussed in this article is based principally on conversations with them, although their published and in some cases unpublished works have also been consulted.

³ He received his M. A. in 1896, and was awarded a Premchand Roychand Scholarship based on a thesis indicating outstanding scholarship.

writing a great deal and discussing philosophy with his sons and his many visitors until his death in 1949.

Bhattacharya led an austere life, and had few personal belongings. He was a devout Hindu, but not fanatic, and ate meat, if sacrificed to Kali. The progressives claimed him because he taught at the progressive Bethune College for women, and the conservatives claimed him because he observed the orthodox rites. He loved to travel, but never went outside India. He was a simple and retiring man, but proud within himself, never bowing to anyone or trying to advance himself. His oral teaching, unlike his writing, was a model of clarity, and his dialectic irresistible. There was a brilliant group of philosophers at Amalner when he was there, but none could stand up against him.

His published works in English include two books and many articles. His earlier book, *Studies in Vedantism* (P. R. Scholarship thesis, 1901), was perhaps the first competent attempt to interpret Vedanta philosophy in modern language. The later one, *The Subject as Freedom* (lectures at Amalner in 1929), was the first systematic formulation of his own doctrine. I will quote its concluding sentence as an example of his literary style:

I am not introspectively aware of my actual introspective individuality but I am aware in my introspection into feeling that the self from which the feeling is distinguished may not actually introspect and may not even possibly introspect, that individual as it is as introspecting—individual or distinct freedom without being, it may be free even from this distinctness, may be freedom itself that is de-individualised but not therefore indefinite—absolute freedom that is to be evident.

Unpublished works include two books, *Philosophy of Kant* and *Philosophy of Sankhya and Yoga*, various articles, and a pile of miscellaneous and largely unfinished manuscripts now partly destroyed by children and termites.

K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy developed in three phases. The first phase was subjectivist, and strictly within the Vedanta tradition, although developed in an original way. Vedanta was in his blood: his grandfather was a pandit, reading of Vedanta classics was common in his family, and he was brought up to believe in them. But he maintained that faith in any authority

implies the necessity of raising ourselves to the authority's own standpoint and feeling the truth as he has felt it. He found the first clue to this understanding of faith in the Kantian theory of knowledge which he studied in college. Rejecting Kant's doctrine of the impossibility of metaphysics, he maintained on the contrary that Kant's epistemology leads inevitably to the metaphysics of Advaita⁴ Vedanta. Instead of following the Sanskrit classics, with their interminable references to scripture and refutations of ancient theories, we should take a phenomenological approach to philosophy.⁵ We should seek truth by a critical analysis of normal experience.⁶ This point of view is developed in a series of articles, of which the most important are "Sankara's Doctrine of Maya," "The Correction of Error," and "The False and the Subjective," and in the book *The Subject as Freedom*.

The first pillar of this first-phase philosophy is the subjective thought based on an analysis of *knownness*. The given object possesses knownness just as it possesses redness, but the knownness, unlike the redness (but like spatiality, which is studied independently by geometry), can be studied independently of any object and so reveals knowing as distinct from object known. This epistemological approach to the subject proceeds through a consideration of the fact of *error*. Correction of error has three stages: the snake⁷ is first presented, then corrected, then contemplated as corrected. First, the snake is perceived as real, though not judged to be real, since no judgment is made about it at all. Second, the rope is perceived as real, and by contrast with the snake is also judged to be real, although the rejected snake is not judged to be unreal, since now there is no snake, but its disappearance brings out the meaning of reality: "The quality of

⁴ *Advaita* (literally, "non-dualism") is the sub-school of Vedanta which teaches absolute monism. Its principles are: Brahman is the only reality; the world is illusion; the self is Brahman.

⁵ Professor Marvin Farber stated in a letter to K. C. Bhattacharya that *The Subject as Freedom* is a work on phenomenology.

⁶ This is the usual Vedanta approach to philosophy. The possibility of mystical experience is not denied, but it is not stressed or used to demonstrate any philosophical truth.

⁷ He employs the stock Vedanta example of a rope mistaken for a snake.

reality is explicitly felt only when it is experienced as dissipated in an illusion." Third, the snake is not even disbelieved in or considered non-existent: "Correction is not disbelieving in a previously believed *content* but only disbelieving that the previous belief had a content at all." The snake is gone, rather there never was a snake, yet the rope's *reality*, as distinguished from the merely perceived rope, is significant only with reference to the belief in the snake. The false is what is corrected or disbelieved, that is, subjectively negated, not merely objectively perceived, and conversely, reflective consciousness of a belief implies disbelief in its content, since we examine a belief reflectively only in order to question the reality of its content by dissociating this content from our belief in it. Hence the doctrine that "the consciousness of the false and the consciousness of the subjective imply each other," with its corollaries that the object exists as such through the self-alienation of the subject, and that the subject is known only by denial of the object.

The second pillar of the first-phase philosophy is the assertion of *faith*, not faith in revealed scripture but faith in the fulfillment of the demands presented by experience. It is by faith that we go beyond Kant to Vedanta. According to Kant the self is not real, though it demands to be real, since this demand is impotent. But Bhattacharya maintains that there is no evidence that this demand will not be actualized, and we have faith that it will be, not merely as an ideal of pure reason or postulate of practical reason but as known. To know the phenomenon is neither to know the reality nor not to know it, but to know it as unknown and demanding to be known. The absolute, although unknown, is believed not to be unknowable but as demanding to be known. The Vedanta doctrine of Brahman and illusion is the conceptual formulation of this demand, which is based on our feeling of the vanity of life and consequent unreality of the world. Unreality has meaning only in contrast with reality. The illusory object demands the real subject.

The superstructure erected on these pillars is the dialectical system which Bhattacharya called "transcendental psychology" and summarized in *The Subject as Freedom* as a sequence of grades of subjectivity. *Objekt* includes whatever is meant. The *subject* is

neither meant nor thought nor intuited, yet it is speakable and known as what the speaker intends by *I*. The modes of subjectivity are the modes of freeing oneself from the modes of objectivity. Constructing a series of steps from object to subject is standard Vedanta practice, and in doing this Bhattacharya is following the Vedanta tradition, but with a new elaboration of stages, a new subtlety of discrimination, and a new language drawn largely from Western thought. He distinguishes the following stages of subjectivity:⁸ (1) the perceived environment, purely objective; (2) the body as perceived, similar to other perceived objects, yet unique in being the center of spatial reference for all objects and in not having its unperceived parts completed by imaginary perception from another position, and subjective in relation to the environment; (3) the body as felt internally, which gives the first feeling of detachment or freedom; (4) knowledge, by conscious non-perception, of absence as a present fact, this distinguishing of what the present is not being the beginning of psychic fact; (5) image, that is, the image of what is absent, essentially incomplete, since completion would make it a percept; (6) idea, finished form that interprets the image's forming form; (7) thought, unobjective yet referring to object, definable only as what the object is not; (8) feeling, a psychical state unreflectively conscious, complete dissociation from objectivity or meaning, and, coordinate with it, willing, free identification with objectivity—cancellation of the objective attitude bringing freedom either for withdrawal from the object in feeling or conquest over it in willing; (9) introspection, believing which is not itself meant, which is the *I* itself; (10) the non-individual self beyond actual introspection, when distinction is negated as illusory; (11) the subject as freedom itself. At each step the demand for consciousness of a deeper reality is fulfilled as the previous experience is rejected as illusory.

Bhattacharya's interest in this scheme is not merely theoretical. As a Vedantist he is interested in philosophy primarily as a practical discipline. *The Subject as Freedom* is a Vedantic discipline

⁸ These are sub-stages of four principal stages: objectivity (1), bodily subjectivity (2-4), psychical subjectivity (5-7), spiritual subjectivity (8-11.)

analogous to the psychosomatic discipline of Yoga. Spiritual progress means the realization of the subject as free, or rather as freedom, and it is by the resolute cultivation of the subjective attitude, denying every meant object and believing in the reality which this denial demands, that this freedom is attained.

The second phase of K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy, developed after his retirement from "service" in government colleges and especially during his residence at Amalner, is represented by a number of articles. The influence of Vedanta (and also of Kant) is still strong, but the second-phase philosophy goes far beyond anything which could be recognized as orthodox Vedanta. The subjective attitude which dominated the first phase now yields equal importance to the objective attitude,⁹ and also to a third attitude, that of feeling. This broader point of view culminates in the doctrine of the alternative forms of the absolute, which is perhaps his most original and significant contribution to philosophy.

The epistemology of this phase is formulated in the article, "The Concept of Philosophy",¹⁰ at once the most intelligible and most easily available of Bhattacharya's works. In place of the stages of subjectivity he distinguishes four "grades of theoretic consciousness"—empirical, pure objective, spiritual, and transcendental thought. Empirical thought is concerned with science, the other three with philosophy. (1) The content of empirical thought (theoretic consciousness necessarily referring to an object perceived or imagined) is *fact*. Fact is speakable literally, not *spoken* but *spoken of* as information. "Beliefs in science alone," he says in a notable concession to positivism,¹¹ "are formulable as

⁹ This, like everything I say about K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy, involves some simplification. For him the objective attitude is involved in the subjective attitude, which has two currents, the one looking toward the pure subject (subjective attitude proper), the other looking at the lower stage objectively when you have arrived at the higher stage subjectively (becoming the objective attitude). Realism is always transcended.

¹⁰ *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London, 1936; 2nd ed. 1952), pp. 105-25.

¹¹ Professor T. R. V. Murti protested against my calling this a "concession" to positivism, maintaining that it is rather an assertion of positivism.

judgments and literally thinkable." Fact is expressible as a judgment which has no reference to its being spoken, yet it is nowise independent of its being known, for it is believed not as self-evident or self-subsistent but as essentially knowable, though perhaps actually unknown. For science the object is knowable as of right, not only knowable but also usable, and it is this wrong spiritual attitude of science toward the object which provokes a philosophy which goes beyond science. (2) The content of pure objective thought (contemplative consciousness without necessary reference to perception) is *the self-subsistent object*. The self-subsistent object is speakable literally, not *spoken of* but *spoken* as meant. It is constituted by being spoken, and so always has reference to the subject, and is not, like fact, literally expressible in an independent judgment. Not being restricted by perception, however, it is not necessarily knowable, and so is self-subsistent, not dependent on any individual mind but self-evident. The philosophy of the object includes logic, the study of the form of the self-subsistent object (which is also the form of fact), and metaphysics, which is the study of the object in reference to the subject. (3) The content of spiritual thought (enjoying consciousness or introspection) is *reality*. Reality is speakable literally, spoken not as meant but as symbolized. It cannot be understood literally, but the objectively contemplated meaning symbolizes a subjectively enjoyed content, the subject *I*, spoken as though it were object but understood as the speaking subject. The subject *I* is enjoyed either psychologically as embodied, morally as related to other selves, or religiously in communion with the over-personal self. But religious experience is infinitely varied, and systematizes itself in alternative religious systems, which in turn are expressed in alternative systems of psychology, metaphysics, and logic. There is consequently indefinite scope for differences in philosophical theory. Philosophy can never progress toward a unanimously acceptable solution, but is a systematic symbolism which necessarily admits of alternatives. (4) The content of transcendental thought (in which both objective and subjective attitudes are rejected) is *truth*. Truth is speakable,¹²

¹² He has no place in his theory of knowledge for the ineffable, taking the plausible position that everything we speak is speakable.

but symbolically, not literally, for it cannot be understood as it is believed, but is expressible only by the negation of *I*. The absolute is, not as perceived fact, contemplated object, or enjoyed reality, but as self-revealing truth independent of being spoken.¹³

The absolute, for which everything else is nothing, has nothing to be distinguished from, yet is capable of internal distinctions. It may be *truth*, or it may, in opposition to truth, be absolute *freedom* beyond all being, or it may be absolute *value* as the indeterminate togetherness (though not synthetic unity) of truth and freedom. Truth, freedom, and value are alternative forms of the absolute, and the prototypes of the three subjective functions knowing, willing and feeling. Historically the absolute is conceived as truth in Advaita Vedanta, as freedom in Buddhism, and as value in Hegelianism. The theory of knowing which culminates in absolute truth recognizes the possibility of alternative theories of willing and feeling which culminate in absolute freedom and absolute value.

The theory of willing is not elaborated in detail in his published works, but the theory of feeling is developed in the articles, "The Concept of Value" and "Artistic Enjoyment."¹⁴ We speak of the value of a known content or a willed content, but value itself is a felt content. *Rasa* (literally "flavor") is the felt essence of a thing, as contrasted with its known essence, or rather the feeling itself. Primary feeling is enjoyment of an object. Sympathetic feeling is feeling of another's feeling (not merely understanding it or having a like feeling). Contemplative feeling or artistic enjoyment is sympathy with sympathy, that is, feeling of the feeling of another person—actual, indefinite, or universalized—who feels sympathetically, so that in artistic enjoyment the feeling is freed from its reference to an individual subject and made impersonal and eternal as the beauty of an object—yet a feeling, not a property.¹⁵ On the one hand it is no judgment (and

¹³ This scheme seems less reminiscent of classical Vedanta or Kant than of Plato, the four grades suggesting his shadows, ideas, soul, and Good respectively.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Professor P. J. Chaudhury for a copy of this unpublished work.

¹⁵ This, he says, is why "Indian art is prevailingly abstractive or contemplative in character and not dynamically creative."

so not objective); on the other it is independent of valuation (and so not subjective). Absolute feeling or value is not speakable but expressible only symbolically as an exclamation.

The general theory of the absolute is developed most completely in the article, "Concept of the Absolute and its Alternative Forms." Philosophy starts in *reflective consciousness*, in which we are not merely aware of a content but are aware of it in relation to consciousness. The content of *knowing* is not constituted by the act of knowing, which does not construct but discovers the object.¹⁶ The content of *willing*, on the contrary, is constituted by the willing. The content of *feeling* is imperfectly distinguished from the feeling, so that value is alternately content and consciousness. In all three cases reflection tries to understand the relation of content to consciousness on the analogy of the relation of contents, but the analogy can be extended only part way, and must be completed by forms of negation meaningless to reflection: unrelatedness (known content understood as what need not be content of knowing), negation of the emergent (willing understood as the negation of being—even the being of the willed content), and indifference of being and non-being (value understood by the known being distinguished from it). The absolute is what is free from the dualism of content and consciousness. The known freed from its contenthood (reference to consciousness) is the self-evident *is* or *truth*. Consciousness freed from content (as solely creating its content) is *freedom* of the will. The implicational relation of content and consciousness freed from their distinction is *value*. We cannot assert either that there are three absolutes or that there is one absolute, but the absolute must be formulated in this triple way—truth, freedom, value (absolute for knowing, willing, feeling). Each is absolute, but what are three are only their verbal symbols, "they themselves being understood together but not as together." The absolute is an *alternation* of truth, freedom, and value.

The third phase of K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy, developed during the last years of his life, has no written documents either

¹⁶ Both realism and idealism are overstatements, he says, but realism is a better approximation to the truth.

published or unpublished, but is extant only in Kalidas Bhattacharya's recollection of his conversations with his father. In these conversations he generalized the concept of alternatives into a logic of alternation. Beside the Aristotelian logic based on contradiction (this, *not* that) and the Hegelian logic based on synthesis (this *and* that), this is a third sort of logic based on disjunction (this *or* that).

The quasi-realism of "Concept of the Absolute and its Alternative Forms" is transcended in a more involved dialectic where knowing reveals reality as subject (*chit*), while willing posits reality as object (*sat*), and feeling apprehends reality as subject-object dialectically united (*ananda*). Each of these three attitudes (knowing, willing, feeling) can be deduced from each of the others by formal logic,¹⁷ the basic concept of which is negation (including double, triple, and quadruple negation). There are two elementary categories, *is* (position, which is no form, and useless for deduction) and *is not* (a living form which can draw out something from something else), and five combinations of them.¹⁸ Logic gives possibilities. We start from the actuality or existence of what is given in experience and so simply *is*. By logic we discover possibilities, but cannot choose among them, since all are established by logic and so alternate. Actuality and possibility never clash but themselves alternate.¹⁹ Conflict among actuals (for example, religions) ceases when all are recognized as not only possible but alternatively actual, that is, by lifting up the actual to the realm of the possible, getting rid of the standpoint of actuality.²⁰ Starting from the given, we proceed by reason, that is, negation, to reach other possibilities, each a negated being, and from each possibility still others are deduced. In the realm of possibility there is no position and

¹⁷ Kalidas unfortunately has forgotten how.

¹⁸ Different from and more basic than the categories of Jain logic, which however contributed to K. C. Bhattacharya's logical thought and is discussed in his early article, "The Jain Theory of Anekantavada" (theory that truth is indeterminate).

¹⁹ For example, there is no synthesis or hierarchy of religions; for each man only one is actual, but he recognizes the possibility of others.

²⁰ This superior attitude of the pure logician he called the "angelic attitude."

no positive language: data are not-A, not-B, etc. Starting with actual object, we proceed to not-object, not-not-object (a higher concept not to be confused with the original object), and so forth.²¹ But the realm of possibility is the realm of alternation. Among possibilities either may be true, but insofar as they negate each other both cannot be true. The meaning of possibility is not *this or both* but *either*.

It is language which makes possibilities and therefore alternation possible. The three subjective functions are an empirical fact, but there is also a fourth function, speaking, which is the unity of the others in formal logic. Besides the alternative attitudes of knowing, willing, and feeling, there is the attitude common to them all, the linguistic attitude of semantics, which studies their common structure. Although the meaning of particular words and the grammar of particular languages are empirical, that words must have both meaning and syntactical connection is known *a priori*. Just as in feeling the artistic creativity is basic yet requires also the subordinate beauty, so in language the semantic function of words is basic yet requires also the subordinate syntactical connection. Hence we can develop a system of semantics, in which words give not actualities but forms, semantic thought giving "mere forms" and syntactic thought "pure forms." This philosophy of language, however, is not an autonomous system independent of those based on experience, and it does not lead to a fourth absolute.

While K. C. Bhattacharya is perhaps the most influential Indian philosopher of recent times, this does not mean that contemporary Vedanta philosophers accept his system. So far as I know there is not a single contemporary philosopher who simply accepts Bhattacharya's doctrine. His influence has been organic, not systematic. He did not teach a theory to be accepted but a way to be followed, a new way of philosophizing, in spirit the ancient way of Vedanta but in content informed by his own novel genius. His disciples have not accepted his philosophy but have developed it, and in different directions.

²¹ I quote, as an example of style: "Negation applied to actualities makes them exhaustive and alternative—but my father did not say that: he spoke of double and triple negation."

2. *Kalidas Bhattacharya.*

The third phase of K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophy is now being developed by his son Kalidas. He considers his own philosophical thought to be a continuation of and organically one with his father's. They form a single intellectual process, but it is a process, not a fixed system. Kalidas acquired from his father the fundamental principle of alternative absolutes, but in certain important theses, notably the correlation of the absolutes with the conscious functions, he never agreed with him.

Kalidas Bhattacharya, third son of K. C. Bhattacharya,²² was born in 1912. Educated at Calcutta, he received a P. R. Scholarship, and has always been a student and teacher of philosophy.²³ Since 1951 he has been professor of philosophy at Government Sanskrit College in Calcutta. He is more interested in philosophical ideas than in the textual research with which this college is concerned, but is free to pursue his own interest, having no formal duties.²⁴ He does, however, give individual instruction to advanced students.²⁵

Kalidas Bhattacharya is a friendly, pleasant, humble man interested in philosophical ideas, and not in his own standing as a philosopher. He is a serious, competent, and scholarly philosopher, perhaps the best young philosopher in India. He treats basic problems in an original and profound way, and is developing an epistemological and metaphysical system of great

²² His elder brother Gopinath, of Presidency College, Calcutta, is also well known as a brilliant philosopher and teacher. He rejects their father's philosophy, especially the doctrines of indefiniteness and alternation, and is himself a realist, but has no philosophical system of his own.

²³ One of his former students at Calcutta University told me that his philosophy class, ending at three o'clock, usually continued to five and then sometimes went in a body to the professor's home, thirteen miles away, to continue the discussion for one or two days.

²⁴ He remarked to me that, although he had been in his present position for three years, nobody had yet told him what his duties were.

²⁵ When I met him, he had five students, some themselves professors of philosophy, to whom he was teaching Vedanta, Nyaya, Tantra, Kant, and his father's philosophy respectively. When he was teaching one, the others would usually listen in, and when I called they would stop whatever they were doing and he would talk to me.

interest. His oral style is like that of an inspired prophet, the inspiration being his recollection of his conversations with his father. He does not develop his argument consciously, but struggles, sometimes incoherently, to bring up from his sub-conscious mind the memory of those half forgotten discussions. Asking him a question evokes a vivid example of what Plato called recollection.

Unlike his father, Kalidas Bhattacharya has an oral style which is often obscure but a written style which is a model of clarity, although not always of literary elegance. He has written three books and many articles. His first and most important book, *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy* (Ph.D. thesis, 1945; published 1953), develops the logic of alternation and applies it to the conscious functions knowing, feeling, and willing. His second book, *Object, Content and Relation* (P. R. Scholarship thesis, 1951), applies the logic of alternation to the content of perception and to relations. His third book, *The World and the Concept of Necessity* (not yet completed), modifies the logic of alternation and applies it to the ideal and the actual.

The foundation of his philosophy is a theory of knowledge. The central problem of philosophy, he says, is how knowledge is possible—not merely synthetic knowledge *a priori* but any knowledge. Knowledge and object are so opposed in nature that their conjunction is contradictory, yet as a matter of fact they are not only conjoined but united in the close unity “knowledge of object.” Knowledge, whether perception or memory or inference, is the subjective feeling of an object, while object is that which is known as not itself knowledge. We may accept their unity, in spite of their incompatibility, as a synthetic unity of contradictories, but this Hegelian approach is only one possible solution. We may assume the subjective enjoying attitude, in which consciousness is felt as identical with the feeling of it, or we may assume the objective contemplative attitude, in which object is felt as standing over against the feeling of it. At the perceptual level, consciousness, object, and their unity exhaust the experience, but at higher levels of knowledge there is a third element, content. Images and universals, for example, are contents but not objects. Contents are alternately objective and subjective as knowledge progresses

through the correction of error. In inferential correction the error is corrected, but in perceptual correction the false appearance is not only corrected but rejected. What suddenly disappears is illusion, while what suddenly appears in its place is the real. Not contradiction but rejection determines unreality. All appearance is real so long as contrary evidence is not forthcoming. The unreal is that which, once real, has exploded into nothingness. This is an account of the unreal at the unreflective level of consciousness. At the reflective level, the unreal is that which resists confirmation, while the real stands fully, and especially socially, confirmed. There is cognitive condemnation of content as false from a higher level (somehow analogous to social condemnation of a criminal by a judge authorized to condemn), recognition of error thus showing that there is a higher standpoint which must be admitted. In knowledge this higher standpoint is truth, and in the object it is necessity. In ordinary reflection the higher standpoint reveals things which were already present, although unrecognized, in the unreflective experience, but in transcendental reflection entities are discovered which were not present at all at the unreflective level. This is a new method of knowledge, transcending perception and inference, treating categories as entities (not as functions or laws or abstractly, as in ordinary reflection), and culminating in a demand for or belief in values which is given only by teaching in a cultural tradition. The teaching is apprehended in four stages—spoken word, empirical concept, pure concept, logos—and the world is apprehended rationally as a development of language.²⁶

These epistemological considerations, he maintains, lead to an Advaita Vedanta metaphysics—but it is an original system hardly recognizable as classical Advaita. It is based on the logic of alternation, which means disjunction. Disjunction occurs when alternatives exist at the level of possibility. One alternative must be asserted, that is, tied to actuality for the speaker, but if the alternation is real (A both opposed to and united with B) the commitment may be arbitrarily to either. The other alternatives

²⁶ This is true also of Western rationalism, according to Kalidas Bhattacharya's analysis of it, reason being language for Greek rationalism, although only subjective thinking for modern rationalism.

are then rejected or ignored or subordinated or included, and by the dialectic resulting from these processes the chosen alternative is developed to its logical conclusion. The most important dialectical process is rejection, which must not be confused with mere negation or contradiction, and in which the act of contradicting a content is itself negated, leading to the neo-Advaitic doctrine of the ultimate negation of the penultimate negation of the world.

The most important application of the logic of alternation is to the problem of knowledge itself. We may adopt the outward objective attitude by which the object is apprehended or the inward subjective attitude by which knowledge itself is apprehended. In the latter we find that *knowing* has three levels—perception, memory, thought. Memory is more reflective than perception, and thought more reflective than memory, this increasing rejection of the object being the essence of cognition. In knowing the subject determines or creates its object. This is subjective idealism.²⁷ The subjective is certain because the consciousness of subjectivity is identical with subjectivity itself. Going beyond positivism (which “exaggerates its business” in denying the ideal, which as the criterion of evaluation cannot be ignored), and seeking the essence of things, we find a hierarchy of essences each claiming to be autonomous, the highest being the ideal value or demand beyond, yet immanent in, the region of facts. The knowing process culminates in the reflective self-positing of pure subjectivity. Its antepenultimate stage²⁸ is pure self (*jiva*) as consciousness of *I*, and at this stage there is only one self.²⁹ The penultimate stage is God (*Ishvara*), pure self with reference to the potentiality of all actual worlds. The ultimate stage is pure consciousness (*Brahman*), with no I-hood and no question of other individuals.

²⁷ Which is true Vedanta, he claims—stated correctly in K. C. Bhattacharya's *The Subject as Freedom* but wrongly in his “Concept of the Absolute and its Alternative Forms.”

²⁸ Though he rejects this phrase, finding this stage somehow coordinate with the following (though not in the sense of Brahman dividing into God and self).

²⁹ The doctrine, controversial among Vedantists, of monopsychism (*ekajivavada*).

If, alternatively, we adopt the objective attitude, we reject knowing in order to apprehend the object. This is *feeling*, which also has three levels—pleasure-pain and emotion, aesthetic creation, aesthetic appreciation. The de-subjectification of emotion in aesthetic creation and that of mere pleasure-pain in appreciation point to the fact that aesthetic qualities, including beauty, are pure objects indifferent to subjectivity. This is the correspondence theory: truth, instead of being constituted by logic, as in the preceding alternative, is simply *felt* to be true, with immediate certainty. Art and aesthetic joy in it are purely objective.³⁰ The feeling process culminates in pure objectivity, and its ultimate ideal is that of surrender to the infinite object.

The disjunction of knowledge and object thus offers two alternatives, but alternative to their disjunctive unity is their dialectical unity. This presents the possibility of a third alternative attitude, the dialectical, which is expressed in conation or *willing*. This likewise has three levels—instinctive and other unreflective activities, ordinary voluntary will, moral will (i.e., willing the good). The dialectical attitude tends toward a concrete subjectivity which posits a negative object by negating the positive object, and by comprehending this negation enriches subjectivity into a dialectical synthesis. Will is a self-transcending activity which reaches its terminal point in the object which is said to be created. The objective facts, however, from their own point of view are not determined by will, but by their own objective causes; there is a pre-established harmony (i.e., alternation) between will and the facts of the world. At the highest level the action is determined by the mere *ought* or *good*, which is a matured disposition of our past actions *as good*, and this presupposes that also at the time of their occurrence these actions were reflectively apprehended as good.³¹ Reflective

³⁰ The hierarchy of the arts depends on the amount of that indifference to subjectivity which is the essence of aesthesis. The lowest art is poetry, bound up as it is with thought; higher is music, which is free from thought; still higher is painting, which is free even from the quasi-intellectual modes of music; highest is architecture, where the thought element is completely eliminated.

³¹ The ethical standard is social instinct. The ideal known by transcendental reflection exists in the actual, although in a disguised form.

actions consequently can never be interpreted in terms of unreflective ones. This originality of reflective activity (not indeterminism, something unknown to Indian philosophy) is freedom.³²

Thus the three alternative attitudes lead to three alternative absolutes. The dialectic is somewhat different in the three cases. Knowing *subordinates* feeling, feeling *rejects* knowing, and willing while subjective *incorporates* the objective.³³ These are alternative philosophies.³⁴ He says:

There is to be no preferential treatment of these three attitudes, and these themselves are related to one another in such a way that on the assumption of one the others as *independent* have to be either rejected or ignored. There is thus *absolute alternation* between the attitudes. Yet in each the unity sought for is gained.³⁵

Subjective idealism, which speaks in the language of truth (constituted by forms of thinking), objective realism, which speaks in the language of necessity (constituted by self-subsistent Platonic forms of objective thought), and dialectic, which speaks in the language of negation, are equally correct and complete systems capable of explaining all phenomena, but they reject each other, and there is no passage from one to another. *Each* is correct, but *all* are not correct; three alternatives do not mean three facts. There are three objective worlds—objects created by knowledge, objects which cause feelings, objects which are termini of will—and these cannot be identified theoretically (unless by a superhuman “angelic” insight which we do not have),

Social laws are images of ideals, and so I must observe them (according to “my station and its duties”). Here also there is alternation—between *duty* (what we ought to do) and *right* (what we ought to be or have).

³² Asked whether truth and freedom are the same or opposite, he replied that pure consciousness by itself is truth, pure consciousness as determining the world is freedom, impure truth has an influence of the object, and impure freedom is determinate action accompanied by the feeling of *I*—while pure feeling apprehends only the beauty, etc., of the object and does not disturb *me*.

³³ This distinction, different from that given in his published works, is developed in his forthcoming book.

³⁴ The three alternative philosophies, he remarked, are suggested by the three Critiques of Kant.

³⁵ *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy*, p. 205.

although in practice we always do identify them.³⁶ Alternation is not a fact of the *empirical* world, where the empirical self has the three functions confused. But when the self *reflects*, it disintegrates into three possibilities. Knowing, feeling, and willing tolerate each other in the finite world of time, but reflectively each *demand*s the subordination, rejection, or incorporation of the others. Ultimately, as an ideal, each is absolute, not simultaneously but alternatively—pure subjectivity (absolute knowing, Truth) or pure object (absolute feeling, Beauty) or dialectical synthesis (absolute willing, Goodness).³⁷

There are many other applications of the principle of alternation. *Thought* may be understood anti-intellectually (inference only between data), intellectually (forms held *a priori* yet referring synthetically to data), or logically (logical construction or pure meaning). *Content of perception* may be understood as object, appearance, or relation. *Image* may be understood as change of perceptual object, withdrawal from percept, or subjectivity referring to percept. *Relation* may be understood as external, internal, or “happening to be coeternal.” *Reality* may be understood as actual, ideal, or infinite. All these alternatives represent the objective, subjective, and dialectical attitudes respectively. In political philosophy, the alternative ethical ideals of right, duty,³⁸ and love lead respectively to democracy (including communism), fascism, and super-political religion.³⁹

The ultimate problem of philosophy, according to Bhattacharya, is the status of alternation itself. Granting that our problems about reality have alternative solutions, must we suppose that reality itself is alternating? This question also has alternative answers. The three philosophies are alternative images

³⁶ He rejected the suggestion that a similar argument would establish three subjective worlds, since the subject of feeling is negated and that of will is identified with that of knowledge as pure consciousness.

³⁷ These represent, respectively, the traditional three “paths” of Hindu religious philosophy—knowledge, love, action (*jnana*, *bhakti*, *karma*); characteristic, respectively, of the schools of Advaita, Vaishnavism (also Nyaya-Vaisheshika), and Tantric Saivism (also Buddhism).

³⁸ Duty, he points out, is most prominent in the Hindu tradition.

³⁹ Alternation of political philosophies incapable of synthesis is what is now called “coexistence.”

of reality, but the phrase *image of reality* may mean that reality is nothing but the image, that the image is a function of the reality, or that there is some dialectical unity of one with the negation of the other. In the first case there is no reality but only alternative philosophies, in the second reality itself is alternative, in the third there is one reality but alternative standpoints from which it can be viewed. The first alternative is advocated by Buddhism, the second by Jainism, the third by Vedanta. The alternation of these alternative "super-philosophies" is the last word of philosophy.

Kalidas Bhattacharya's philosophy, with all its intricacy and digression, is founded on the one doctrine of disjunction, rather than contradiction or conjunction, as the fundamental principle of logic. Disjunctive alternatives are equally valid as possibilities; and indeed equally tenable as actualities for different persons, but only one is actual for any one person. This, he points out, is the way we usually do think in ordinary unphilosophical problems. But he defends it also as correct in philosophy, which is always based on a prior commitment to some alternative.

A philosopher does not become an Idealist or an Objectivist through logical arguments. He is an Idealist or an Objectivist at the very start, according as he begins with the subjective or the objective attitude; he only interprets phenomena from the standpoint he has already assumed.⁴⁰

On the one hand, this doctrine avoids the dogmatism which maintains that, if one view is tenable, the opposite view is untenable. On the other hand, it avoids the irrational pseudo-liberalism which would hold contradictory views simultaneously either by some compromise (involving a sacrifice of essential points), by a hierarchical arrangement (involving subordination unacceptable to the subordinated view), or by alleged harmony ("different paths leading up to the same mountain top"). We start from the same unreflective experience. As we reflect philosophically, our paths do not converge but diverge, and their final goals are the alternative forms of the absolute.

(*To be concluded*)

Tufs University.

⁴⁰ *Object, Content and Relation*, p. 140.