

AS



The Logic of the Vedānta

Author(s): S. N. Dasgupta

Source: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 22 (1921 - 1922), pp. 139-156

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of The Aristotelian Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4544018>

Accessed: 04/10/2008 08:19

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=aristotelian>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Aristotelian Society and Blackwell Publishing are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.

<http://www.jstor.org>

*Meeting of the Aristotelian Society at 21, Gower Street, W.C. 1,
on March 6th, 1922, at 8 P.M.*

VIII.—THE LOGIC OF THE VEDĀNTA.

By S. N. DASGUPTA.

THE word Vedānta means literally the concluding parts of the Vedas* also called the Upaniṣads, of which the earliest ones were composed probably about 500 B.C. An extremely condensed exposition of the purport of these earlier Upaniṣads was attempted by Bādarāyana probably about 200 B.C., and this work is called the Vedānta sūtras. It was commented on and interpreted in totally different ways by many philosophers of later times. The earliest and best-reputed commentary now available is that which was attempted by Śaṅkara in the eighth century A.D. The view expressed by Śaṅkara as the correct interpretation of the Vedānta sūtras and the Upaniṣads was further elaborated and supplemented in dialectical arguments by succeeding generations of his followers down to the seventeenth century A.D. It is the view of the Vedānta propounded by Śaṅkara and his followers which will form the subject matter of this paper. I shall try to show the course of the development of the logical position of the Vedānta in its different stages of growth in relation to, and in contrast with, the Buddhist philosophy and the realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, with which it was always contending.

Though individual exponents from sectarian interests have always held that the Upaniṣads preach a consistent and fully developed system of philosophy, it is by no means certain that

* The Vedic literature comprises of the four Vedas (collections of hymns), the Brāhmanas, ritualistic commentaries on the hymns, containing many kinds of other speculations, and the Upaniṣads (secret doctrines) which are separate treatises forming the concluding portions of these Brāhmanas.

such a contention can be justified. But a study of the Upaniṣads makes it clear that certain lines of thought are very much more emphasized than others. Śaṅkara laid emphasis on these, and sought to explain away all other texts that came in conflict with them. We, therefore, start from these as the nucleus of the Vedānta thought. The main feature of this thought is a sort of inspired belief or conviction of the Upaniṣad sages that the highest ultimate and absolute truth, the Brahman (lit. great) is the inmost self in us. This truth is not arrived at by a process of logical reasoning, but it is realized as the inspiration of the moment. But what is this self that the Upaniṣads describe as the highest and supreme reality? In a certain passage five kinds of self are distinguished, self as gross material body, self as vitality, self as will, self as conscious states, and self as bliss, and it is held that this last is the true self, true reality. The Upaniṣads do not seem to think that any definition of this ultimate truth is possible, for it is beyond everything else and all else falls far short of it. It can therefore only be pointed out as not this, not this, but its positive nature cannot be explained in terms of anything else. The story is told that a certain person went to a teacher of Vedānta and wished to be instructed about the nature of this highest truth, but the teacher did not say anything, and when the pupil repeated his question for a number of times, the teacher replied that he (the pupil) could not understand him though he (the teacher) was instructing him from the very beginning by his silence, for truth was silence. It may no doubt seem very mystical that no positive definition of the highest reality could be given and that it should be regarded as inexpressible. But the Upaniṣad hypothesis was such that there was no way of defining the highest reality by the enumeration of any of its characteristics. The highest reality was not a matter of mere abstraction for it was felt as immediate and concrete, and was believed to be directly given in experience. The difficulty of giving a definition was of a methodological character, for as it

was the highest and the absolutely unchanging truth, and as it could not properly be translated and interpreted in conceptual terms, it could only be pointed out negatively as "not this" "not this" until by such negative exclusions the attention could be directed to the right experience of this highest self which though ever existent yet often remains unnoticed owing to our lack of training and want of knowledge as to where it may be looked for. Yet no mystical absorption, meditation or method is described by which this reality can be experienced: it is not produced by any particular course of conduct or process, for it is ever existent in all our experiences and this alone is the highest truth and when this is known all is known. It is said that just as when we know clay, we know all that is made out of it, or just as when we know iron, we know all that is made out of it, so when the Brahman, the self, is known everything is known. What we call a jug or a plate are but names and forms only, the truth in them is the clay. The forms and names have no reality apart from the material, and so nothing else has any reality apart from Brahman; all else are but names and forms. But the status of the world as a whole or of any other thing in relation to Brahman has never been seriously discussed in the Upaniṣads. The main emphasis was put on the supreme reality of the Brahman and the question of the philosophical status of the world did not attract much attention and was often simply passed over. The main criterion of the real and the true was that it should be absolutely unchangeable, and nothing else was considered to be so except the self. The sage Yājñavalkya says thus, "He the ātman is not this nor this. He is inconceivable, for he cannot be conceived: unchangeable, for he is not changed: untouched, for nothing touches him: he cannot suffer by a stroke of the sword for he cannot suffer any injury" (*Bṛ.*, IV, 5, 15). Again in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad it is described as "That which is inaudible, intangible, invisible, indestructible, which cannot be tasted nor smelt, eternal, without beginning or end, greater than the great, the fixed" (*Kaṭha*, III, 15).

This inmost essence has sometimes been described as pure subject-objectless consciousness, the reality and the bliss. He is the seer of all seeing, the hearer of all hearing and the knower of all knowledge. He sees, but is not seen, hears but is not heard, knows but is not known. He is the light of all lights. He is like a lump of salt with no inner or outer, which consists through and through entirely of savour. This body is the support of the deathless and the bodiless self. The self as embodied is affected by pleasure and pain, but pleasure and pain do not touch the bodiless self." Everything comes out of it and returns back to it. Thus, in *Mund* 1.1.7, it is said—

“As a spider ejects and retreats (the threads)
 As the plants shoot forth on the earth
 As the hairs on the head and body of the living man,
 So from the imperishable all that is here.
 As the sparks from the well-kindled fire,
 In nature akin to it, spring forth in their thousands,
 So, my dear sir, from the imperishable
 Living beings of many kind go forth
 And again return unto him.”

(*Deussen's Translation.*)

It is said that in this infinite and true self there is no difference, no diversity, no *meum* and *tuum*. It is like an ocean in which all our phenomenal existence will dissolve like salt in water. “Just as a lump of salt when put in water will disappear in it and it cannot be taken out separately, but in whatever portion of water we taste we find the salt, so, Maitreyī, does this great reality infinite and limitless consisting only of pure intelligence manifesting itself in all these (phenomenal existences) vanish in them, and there is then no phenomenal knowledge” (*Br.*, II, 4, 12). It is difficult to ascertain the logical position of this Upaniṣad view. The main basis seems to be the assumption that that which is absolutely unchangeable is the highest reality; the sages regarded the self as unchangeable, and therefore considered it to be the highest reality. They distinguished the self as unchangeable

from the self that thinks, feels, and wills; but they could not define it, as they thought it could not be translated or expressed in our conceptual experiences.

It is exactly at this point that the criticisms of Pāli Buddhism deserve special consideration. It definitely challenges the Upaniṣad doctrine of the self and asserts that there is no self; what appear as self are but changing sense-data, feelings, mental states, concepts, and consciousness; it is wrong to suppose that in any of our experiences we ever perceived the self, for we are, at any particular moment, aware of certain sense-data, mental states, or emotions, and beyond them there is no abiding person or self which can be pointed out as the unchangeable reality. Thus the Buddha is represented in the Saṃjutta Nikāya as saying, "When one says 'I' what he does is that he refers either to all the khandhas (groups of mental states, sense-data, emotions, etc.) combined, or any one of them, and deludes himself that that was 'I.' Just as one cannot say that the fragrance of the lotus belongs to the petals, the colour, or the pollen, so one cannot say that the rūpa (sense-data) is 'I,' or that the vedanā (feeling) is 'I,' or any of the other khandhas is 'I.' There is nowhere to be found in the khandhas 'I am.'" We can never affirm that there is anything permanent anywhere, there are only the phenomena such that some of them happening others also happen. With the Upaniṣads the absolute and unchangeable ground and cause of all things is the self, and all else are but mere names and forms, but Buddhism points out that what we experience are but the changing phenomena which are so related that when some of them happen, depending on them others also follow. Apart from this causal sequence of phenomena nothing else is experienced which can be pointed out as being permanent. The nature of these phenomena was further investigated by Nāgārjuna (100 A.D.) the great Buddhist dialectician, who sought to prove that all phenomena are self-contradictory and have therefore no essence, truth, or reality in them. He took, one by one, all the

important categories that were then known to the Buddhists and showed that they were inexplicable and self-contradictory. To take one example, we find that Nāgārjuna denied the possibility of origination or the happening of an event. All origination is false, for a thing can neither originate by itself nor by others, nor by a cooperation of both, nor without reason. For if a thing exists already it cannot originate again by itself. To suppose that it is originated by others would also mean that the origination was of a thing already existing. If again, without any further qualification, it is said that depending on one the other comes into being, then even from light we could have darkness; since a thing could not originate from itself or by others, it could not also be originated by a combination of both of them together. A thing also could not originate without any cause, for then all things could come into being at all times. In this way he proceeded to demonstrate that there is no truth, no essence in any phenomena that appear, and as the phenomena have no essence they are neither produced nor destroyed; they really neither come nor go. They are merely the appearance of *māyā* or illusion. This voidness does not mean pure negation, for that is relative to some kind of position. It simply means that none of the appearances have any intrinsic nature of their own. His disciple Āryyadeva also followed his line of reasoning, and held that whatever depends for its existence on anything else may be proved to be illusory; all our notions of external objects depend on space perceptions and notions of part and whole, and should therefore be regarded as mere appearance.

It may not be out of place here to mention that, in spite of the great difference between the positive parts of the conclusions of Mr. Bradley and Āryyadeva and Nāgārjuna, there is much that is common between them, so far as the refutation of the appearance is concerned. The main principle according to which Aryyadeva seeks to distinguish the illusory from the real, is that the former depends for its existence on something else,

and is not self-contained or self-subsistent. Mr. Bradley also says, "I conclude that what is real must be self-contained and self-subsistent and not qualified from outside . . . whatever is real must be qualified from itself, and that means that so far as it is real it must be self-contained and self-subsistent."* Nāgārjuna examined some of the most important categories and showed that in whichever way they were interpreted, defined or expressed, they would have to depend on others for making themselves understood, and these again would depend on others, and so on; in whichever way they are examined they are fraught with contradictions. Mr. Bradley also follows the same method in showing the contradictions in the appearance, but he contends that since each and every appearance is dependent on others, individually each is false, but when they are taken in the totality we have the reality—

"Thus every part is full of vice,
Yet the whole mass a paradise."†

With Nāgārjuna this alternative does not arise at all, for if each and every phenomenon is essenceless and illusory, there is no possibility that all these individual illusions could give us a reality, for if they are individually illusory and if the fact of there being a collection is illusory, we can never have a reality out of them.

We have seen that the Upaniṣads asserted that the highest reality was the self, but they did not demonstrate how all the worldly phenomena could be regarded as unreal. Buddhism, as propounded by Nāgārjuna, not only demonstrated the illusory nature of the self, but showed that nothing whatever could be said to be real as things are mutually dependent, and hence fraught with contradictions. But the question arose that if such were the case, then how could the rise of the phenomena be explained at all? The Vijñānavâdin (idealistic)

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 570, 1908.

† *Ibid.*, p. 571.

Buddhists tried to explain them on a wholly idealistic basis. They held that all qualities and substances were but imaginary constructions of our minds. There is no movement in the so-called external world as we suppose, for it does not exist. We construct it ourselves and then are ourselves deluded into thinking that it exists by itself. Our understanding is composed of two categories called the *pravicayabuddhi* and the *vikalpalakṣaṇagrahābhiniveśapratīṣṭhāpikābuddhi*. The *pravicayabuddhi* is that which always seeks to take things in either of the following four ways, namely, that they are either this or the other, either both or not both, either are or are not, either eternal or non-eternal. But in reality none of these can be affirmed of the phenomena. The second category consists of that habit of the mind by virtue of which it constructs diversities and arranges them in a logical order of diverse relations of subject and predicate, causal and other relations. He who knows the nature of these two categories of the mind knows that there is no external world of matter, and that they are all experienced only in the mind. There is no water, but it is the sense-construction of smoothness that constructs the water as an external substance; it is the sense-construction of activity or energy that constructs the external substance of fire. In reality there is nothing which is produced or destroyed, it is only our constructive imagination that builds up things as perceived, with all their relations and ourselves as perceivers. It is simply a convention to speak of things as known. Whatever we designate by speech is mere speech-construction and unreal. In speech, one could not speak of anything without relating things in some kind of causal relation, but none of these characters can be said to be true; the real truth can never be referred to by such speech-construction. When pressed further, these idealistic Buddhists would not agree to the truth or reality of mind as well, for the existence of the mind was only relative to its constructions, and apart from them the existence of even the mind could not be affirmed. Thus, in

spite of their idealism, the whole situation with reference to the origin of the phenomena was not more improved by them than what we find in Nāgārjuna. If the phenomena were all false and illusory, and if nothing beyond them could be experienced, we could neither explain the nature and cause of the phenomena, nor discover anything which could be called real or true. Buddhism by its dialectical logic resulted in absolute scepticism or nihilism.

It was at this juncture that first of all Gauḍapāda and later on Śaṅkara and his followers sought to discover a new solution by reverting to the Upaniṣads. If individual phenomena are all interdependent and false, then they cannot be true collectively; we ourselves are conversant only with the phenomena, and if in them we can nowhere be in touch with reality or truth, we must then be wholly unfamiliar with its nature and there is no means in our hands by which we could affirm that the accumulated whole could be called reality. The reason why the same dialectical criticism which rendered all the phenomenal manifestations futile could not be applied to the whole was due to a methodological difficulty, namely, that in assuming such a whole the logician is silenced by the very hypothesis that whatever inconsistencies may be pointed out are held within the whole and reconciled within it. If all finite and limited things are false and illusory and if there is no grain of truth in them, how can we discover the truth with them? To meet this difficulty Mr. Bradley assumed that all phenomena have a partial degree of truth so far as they are joined with the Absolute. But this truth would be no truth at all for it is only relative, and according to the fundamental principle of the dialectical logic it falls to the ground. If any truth is to be discovered on which we could stand as on a firm rock it must be found beyond or outside the relativity of the infinite series of interdependent phenomena. The Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara and his followers did not try to find the reality in the whole as Rāmānuja did, but it maintained

that in every phenomenon we find an association of two different and distinct categories, the real and the relatively real or unreal. In all our concepts and ideas there is one element which is immediate and direct but not conceptually an object of knowledge. This immediate and direct element is nothing but the self-luminosity of knowledge as apart from the form and content that it revealed. This was what it called pure consciousness (*cit*), which existed independently by itself and did not depend for its manifestation on anything else. The logical outlook of the Vedānta differed from that of the Buddhists in this, that it maintained that there was a permanent self-subsistent and self-contained element in all phenomena and that these could not therefore be regarded as wholly relative, interdependent and false. In all cognitive states this self-subsistent entity is directly revealed as the illumination and revelation of consciousness. Apart from this immediateness, revelation and illumination, none of the characteristics of finitude or relativity could be associated with it. This self-subsistent entity is what is also called the self, and the Brahman by the Vedāntist. But by whatever name it may be called it is the only permanent and unchangeable reality, which underlies all phenomena, mental or physical. Though any phenomenon taken in itself cannot give us the truth, yet it is not wholly false for it has for its ground and basis the pure and self-subsistent spirit of Brahman. Whatever appears to us, be it an undeniable physical law, a thing upon my table, or the most grotesque illusion and fancy, has in it as its basis the spirit, the reality. So on the one hand, since nothing but spirit is real, there are no phenomena which are wholly true, and on the other, since they all have the Brahman as their basis, they are never wholly false. The phenomena of world-appearance thus present to us a curious union of reality and unreality. An experience according to Vedānta is said to be true if it is not contradicted by later experience; and it maintains that all other experiences

are contradicted some time or other, whereas the self-revealing Brahman is ever present with us and is never contradicted by any other later experience. There are no degrees of truth and reality in the sense in which Mr. Bradley uses the word ; but between one phenomenon and another there may be this difference that the falsity of one may be discovered much later than that of the other. Thus the illusion of a mirage is broken when one goes nearer to the place of illusion ; the illusion of a dream breaks only with the break of sleep ; but the illusion of world-appearance will not break until one has reached perfection. But it believes that if we lead the perfect life of a saint and cultivate the true philosophy of the Vedānta, a time will come when we shall realize that the Brahman alone is the reality and everything else is false.

The question naturally arises, what does Vedānta mean by regarding the phenomena as false ? Does it mean that they do not exist at all : that they are pure essenceless negation ? The answer that Vedānta gives to it is that we must distinguish between two categories, *viz.*, that which is absolutely real, unchangeable and self-subsistent and that which is changeable, dependent and only relatively real as appearance. The latter category is not absolutely negative, but it depends on the Brahman, the real, for getting itself manifested, and howsoever persistently it may appear as real throughout the course of our world-experiences, there comes a time in the life of a saint or a seer when it is found in its own nature as unreal ; since it persists throughout the course of our world-experience, it cannot be said to be negative or absolutely non-existing, but since it is not self-subsistent or self-contained and since the experience of the seer finds it to be illusory and false, it cannot be called real. It is the category of the unknowable and the indefinite and all creations of the manifold diversities of the world are due to it, and these appear temporarily as real on account of their association with the real, the Brahman. When the Nyāya realists challenged the

Vedāntists and tried to demonstrate that pure consciousness was as much a result of collocating agents as any other thing was, and when they maintained that all the categories of our ordinary experience had nothing indefinite or indescribable about them, the Vedānta dialecticians, Śrīharṣa and Citsukha replied to them by examining all their definitions, and showed that in whatever way we might try to define any of the categories of ordinary experience, such as time, space, causality, relation, quality, difference, etc., we came to contradictions, and concluded that it proved that their nature was relative and undefinable, and that they were thus nothing but the manifestations of the irrational and the unknowable. These categories are refuted in great detail, and it is impossible to give any adequate idea of it within the compass of this brief paper. I may, however, just give one example, the examination of the notion of difference, just to show the method of their discussions. Thus Śrīharṣa says that four explanations are possible of the notion of difference: (1) difference may be perceived as appearing in its own characteristics in our experience; (2) difference between two things is nothing but the absence of one in the other; (3) difference means divergence of characteristics; (4) difference may be a separate quality in itself. Taking the first alternative, we see that it is said that the jug and the cloth represent in themselves by their very form and existence their mutual divergence from each other. But if by perceiving the cloth we perceive only its difference from the jug as the characteristic of the cloth, then the jug also must have penetrated into the form of the cloth, otherwise how could we perceive in the cloth its characteristics as the difference from the jug? That is, if difference is a thing which can be directly perceived by the senses, then as difference would naturally mean difference from something else, such as jug, etc., that from which the difference is perceived must also be perceived directly in the perception of the cloth. But if the perception of difference between two things has penetrated together in the same iden-

tical perception, then the self-contradiction becomes apparent. Difference as an entity is not what we perceive in the cloth, for difference means difference from something else, and if that thing from which the difference is perceived is not perceived, then how can difference as an entity be perceived? If it is said that the cloth itself represents its difference from the jug, and that this is indicated by the jug, then we may ask what is the nature of the jug? If the difference from the cloth be the very nature of the jug, then the cloth itself is also involved in the nature of the jug. If it is said that the jug only indicates that it is a term from which difference is intended to be conveyed, then that also becomes impossible, for how can we imagine that there is a term which is independent of any association of its difference from other things, and is yet a term which establishes the notion of difference? If it is a term of difference, it cannot be independent of its relation to other things from which it is differentiated. If its difference from the cloth is a quality of the jug, then also the old difficulty comes in, for its difference from the cloth would involve the cloth also in itself; and if the cloth is involved in the nature of the jug as its quality, then by the same manner the jug would also be the character of the cloth, and hence not difference, but identity results. Moreover, if a cloth is perceived as a character of the jug, the two will appear to be hanging one over the other, but this is never so experienced by us. Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain if qualities have any relation with things; if they have not, then absence of relation being the same everywhere, everything might be the quality of everything. If there is a relation between these two, then that relation would require another relation to relate itself with that relation, and that would again require another relation, and that another, and so on. Again, it may be said that when the jug, etc., are seen without reference to other thing, they appear as jug, etc., but when they are viewed with reference to cloth, etc., they appear as difference. But this cannot be so, for the perception as jug

is entirely different from the perception of difference. It should also be noted that the notion of difference is also different from the notions of both the jug and the cloth. It is one thing to say that there are jug and cloth, and quite another thing to say that the jug is different from the cloth. Thus a jug cannot appear as difference, though it may be viewed with reference to cloth. The notion of a jug does not require the notions of other things for its manifestation. Moreover, when I say the jug is different from the cloth, I never mean that difference is an entity which is the same as the jug or the cloth ; what I mean is that the difference of the cloth from the jug has its limits in the jug, and not merely that the notion of cloth has a reference to jug. This shows that difference cannot be the characteristic nature of the thing perceived.

It is needless to give here the examination of the other alternatives of the criticism of the category of difference, for my intention is only to give an example of the manner in which the dialectical criticisms of Śrāharsa and Citsukha against the realistic definitions of the categories of experience by Nyāya were directed.

Though not so definitely stated, yet when we look deeper we find that Nāgārjuna held that no worldly phenomena could be called either positive or negative ; he called them essenceless or indeterminate. This was with him a logical category which was neither positive nor negative, but indefinite. But Nāgārjuna did not acknowledge the existence of any other category. The Vedānta of Śaṅkara accepted the category of the positive and the negative, as well as that of the indefinite. All phenomena, so far as they were only relative and self-contradictory, were of the same nature as illusions, and could not be called either positive or negative. They are to be subsumed under a different logical category, viz., the category of the indefinite. The admission of this category indicates that the law of excluded middle is not fundamental. The logic of change and of illusion, of relativity and movement, seems to support the Vedānta view,

that side by side with positivity and negativity, the indefinite has a place in human thought, and that much confusion has occurred in philosophy by trying to solve all philosophical problems by a reference to the dual division of the positive and the negative. Philosophers who have not definitely admitted the existence of this category have often been forced to such difficult corners that, in spite of their great dialectical skill, they could hardly explain themselves without unconsciously accepting the indefinite as a possible logical category. The objection that is often made against this theory is that it is unintelligible and inexplicable. But the answer that Vedānta gives may best be put in the language of Mr. Bradley that "a theory may contain what is unintelligible, so long as it really contains it; and not to know how a thing can be is no disproof of our knowing that it both must be and is." The old Vedānta of the Upaniṣads was satisfied only in pointing out that there was a positive element in our consciousness which was the highest and the greatest truth; it did not concern itself to inquire into the logical status of the phenomena, of all that is outside the supreme reality. But the Buddhists challenged the existence of this permanent reality and maintained that all phenomena were but relative and there was no permanent reality in them. The later Vedānta proposed a compromise that all phenomena showed themselves to be a combination of two categories the positive—the permanent, and the indefinite—the changeable. But the question still arises as to how there can be any union or connexion between these two opposite categories? To this the Vedānta reply is that it is impossible to say how the connexion arises, but the fact remains that in all phenomena most of that which appears is only relative and dependent and does not represent the reality by itself, is not self-subsistent and self-contained, and is full of self-contradictions, and if we do not admit any further permanent and self-subsistent reality, we are landed in absolute scepticism and we have to ignore the

testimony of our consciousness in which we feel that we are somehow in touch with reality and the search of which is the ideal of all our scientific and philosophic inquiry. It may not be out of place here to point out that when Mr. Bradley after dealing with the self-contradictions of appearance turns to the problem of reality, he argues the existence of reality from the fact that in judging things we apply a criterion of reality. Thus he says, "To think is to judge, and to judge is to criticize, and to criticize is to use a criterion of reality . . . in rejecting the inconsistent as appearance, we are applying a positive knowledge of the ultimate nature of things. Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself; here is an absolute criterion."* But a criterion cannot give us any information either about the nature of the reality or that it exists at all. It only remains as an instrument by which we can test whether any particular thing is false or not. But whether there is anything which can stand the test of the criterion, or what may be the nature of such a thing, the criterion is unable to solve. Mr. Bradley himself admits the justice of this criticism and says, "The criterion is a basis which serves as the foundation of denial; but since this basis cannot be exposed, we are but able to stand on it and unable to see it. And hence, in effect, it tells us nothing, though there are assertions which it does not allow us to venture on. This objection, when stated in such a form, may seem plausible, and there is a sense in which I am prepared to admit that it is valid."† But not only is the criterion unable to tell us the nature of the reality, but the Vedānta maintains that the reality which has to depend on a criterion in order to establish itself is dependent on it and therefore not self-valid; moreover if the reality is not immediate and self-revealing, the criterion cannot prove its existence. If there is any reality, it must be direct, immediate, self-contained

* *Appearance and Reality*, 136.

† *Ibid.*, 139.

and self-valid. Any reality which would require a criterion to establish it would according to Vedānta be only a relative truth, and so belong to the realm of the category of the indefinite. Vedānta, therefore, maintains that the definition of reality is that it is immediate, but not an object of any cognitive act (*avedyatve sati pratyaksavyavahāra-yogyatvam*). Such an element can be experienced in all our conscious mental operation and the self-revealing nature of thought. This self-revealing pure consciousness is self-manifested and self-valid; it has no definite form or variety and is hence beyond the range of relativity. Whatever may be the variety of forms through which it is manifested, it itself is never changed and is never dependent on anything else for its manifestation. When the Vedānta says that the self or the Brahman is the highest truth, it does not mean by self what we ordinarily understand by it, *viz.*, the ego, the I, or the subject, for these are all relative and are hence the joint product of the reality and the category of the indefinite; the Vedāntic self is the pure self-revealing consciousness which manifests itself in all our mental states. The principle, however, is not only a subjective principle of thought, but it is the underlying reality of all phenomena. The definition or criterion of reality as want of self-contradiction is only an external one. When we seek to discover truth by this criterion in the field of the phenomena we can only discover relative truths, some of which will stand uncontradicted for a much longer time than others. But in the seer's experience they will all be contradicted, and the element of the category of the indefinite which forms their stuff will be made apparent to him, when he will discover that nothing but the Brahman is the truth.

Popular interpretations of the Vedānta based only on Sāṅkara without any reference to the works of his followers do an injustice to it when they explain it as holding that all phenomena are absolutely illusory, that they have no sort of being at all, and that the Brahman alone is real. This

statement is indeed literally true, but it is misleading, unless the logical status of the category of illusion is explained along with it. The problem before the Vedānta is not scientific, but logical and ontological. Science deals with the laws about the sequences of phenomena and not with their logical status. There may be atoms or electrons, mere sense-data or some other thing which scientists of a later age may be disposed to believe. It does not concern the Vedānta and it is indifferent to it. It maintains that whatever may be the stuff of the phenomena, it has logically the same status as illusion, it only presents phases of relativity and change, and if we look at it apart from its connexion with Brahman, there is nothing in it which can be described as the unchangeable reality. We cannot escape from the region of relativity and change, by simply taking all the phases together in one whole; it can only be done by admitting the category of the indefinite and the indefinable as a separate category of existence which appears to be invested with reality, by its association and seeming identity with the Brahman. What the Vedānta means by saying that the world-appearance is false, is that its appearance is relative, changing, and is such that it can be said to be both "is" and "is not"; it belongs to a wholly different logical category from the real. To admit the worldly phenomena as wholly relative would be to jump into absolute scepticism, and to accept them as wholly real would be to ignore the elements of change, relativity and illusion. The real and its contradictory cannot indeed be associated, but the world is not unreal, in the sense that it is contradictory to the real, it is so only in the sense that it is indefinite (*i.e.*, neither real nor unreal), and Vedānta holds that there can thus be an association between the indefinite and the real, by virtue of which the real appears as the phenomenal and the phenomenal as the real.