

1. The Nature of the Atman, Subject-in-Itself, Noumenal Self, Thing-in-Itself, and the Transcendental Ego
  2. Atman as Your True Inner Self
  3. The Impact of Nirguna Brahman-Atman on the Phenomenal World
  4. Advaita Ethics and Atma-Dharma
  5. Western Insights on Swami Vivekananda's Presentation of the Atman
  6. The Atman and Western Personalism
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## II. The Atman

1. The Nature of the Atman, Subject-in-Itself, Noumenal Self, Thing-in-Itself, and the Transcendental Ego

Indian: "He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought of, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower" (Br. Up. 3:7.23; cf. 3:4.2). "One who knows, meditates upon, and realizes the truth of the Self [Atman, Spirit] ... becomes master of himself, and master of all the worlds" (Ch. Up.\* 7:25.2, p. 118). "In me arose the whole world. In me alone exists the All. In me it passes—This Brahman Without second, am I" (Kavalla Up.).<sup>1</sup> "It [Brahman-Atman] is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech, the Life of the life and the Eye of the eye" (Kena Up. 1:2; cf. Br. Up. 4:4.18). "That which is not comprehended by the mind but by which the mind comprehends, know that to be Brahman" (Kena Up.\* 1:6). "He [Brahman-Atman] resides in the lotus of the heart of every being" (Mun. Up.\* 3:1.7, p. 67; cf. 2:2.1; Br. Up. 4:4.23; Ch. Up. 6:8.7; Kat. Up. 1:2.12, 20, 22; 2:1.12; 2.9; Svet. Up. 3:7, 20; 6:11; BG 15:15). "Knows the Self [Atman] to be indestructible, eternal, unborn, and immutable" (BG 2:21). "You will see all beings in your Self [Atman] and also in Me" (BG 4:35; cf. 6:29; Kai. Up. 10; LM 12:91).

Adi Shankara (c. 688/788-720/820) the greatest of the Advaita philosophers revealed that Atman "is undecaying, immortal, beyond fear, pure and homogeneous like a lump of salt, and is Pure Intelligence, infinite, boundless, without a break and devoid of differences."<sup>2</sup> "Now I shall tell you the nature of the Atman. If you realize it, you will be freed from the bonds of ignorance, and attain liberation.... That Reality pervades the universe, but no one penetrates It. It alone shines. The universe shines

with Its reflected light. Because of Its presence, the body, senses, mind and intellect apply themselves to their respective functions, as though obeying Its command. Its nature is eternal consciousness. It knows all things from the sense of ego to the body itself. It is the knower of pleasure and pain and of the sense-objects. It knows everything objectively—just as a man knows the objective existence of a jar. This is the Atman, the Supreme Being, the ancient. It never ceases to experience infinite joy. It is always the same. It is consciousness itself. The organs and vital energies function under Its command. Here, within this body, in the pure mind, in the secret chamber of intelligence, in the infinite universe within the heart, the Atman shines in Its captivating splendor, like a noonday sun. By Its light, the universe is revealed. It is the knower of the activities of the mind and of the individual man. It is the witness, of all the actions of the body, the sense organs and the vital energy. It seems to be identified with all these, just as fire appears identified with an iron ball. But It neither acts nor is subject to the slightest change. The Atman is birthless and deathless. It neither grows nor decays. It is unchangeable, eternal. It does not dissolve when the body dissolves. Does the ether [space] cease to exist when the jar that enclosed it is broken? The Atman is distinct from Maya, the primal cause, and from her effect, the universe. The nature of the Atman is Pure Consciousness. The Atman reveals this entire universe of mind and matter. It cannot be defined. In and through the various states of consciousness—the waking, the dreaming and the sleeping—It maintains our unbroken awareness of identity. It manifests itself as the witness of the intelligence.”<sup>3</sup>

Shankara also proclaimed, “The Atman is indivisible, eternal, one without a second. It is eternally made manifest by the power of Its own knowledge. Its glories are infinite. The veil of tamas hides the true nature of the Atman, just as an eclipse hides the rays of the sun ... Perfect knowledge, according to the revealed scriptures, is the realization of the Atman as one with Brahman.... The Atman is self-luminous, distinct from the five coverings. It is the witness of the three states of consciousness. It is existence, changeless, pure, ever blissful. It is to be realized by the man of discrimination as the Atman within himself.... The Atman is the witness, infinite consciousness, revealer of all things but distinct from all, no matter whether they be gross [physical] or subtle [mental]. It is the eternal reality, omnipresent, all-pervading, the subtlest of all subtleties. It has neither inside nor outside. It is the real I, hidden in the shrine of the heart.... The Atman shines with Its own light. Its power is infinite. It is

beyond sense-knowledge. It is the source of all experience. He who knows the Atman is free from every kind of bondage. He is full of glory. He is the greatest of the great.”<sup>4</sup> “Any idea of the possibility of denying the existence of the Self [Atman] is illogical, just because It is the Self. The Self is not an adventitious effect of any cause, It being self-established. For the Self of anyone does not require to be revealed to any one with the help of any other means. For such means of knowledge as perception etc., that are taken up for proving the existence of other things that remain unknown, belong to this very Self.... the Self being the basis of all such empirical dealings as the use of the means of knowledge, stands there as a postulate even prior to the use of those means. And it is not possible to deny such a Self; for It is an adventitious thing alone that can be repudiated, but not so one’s own nature. The Self constitutes the very nature of the man who would deny It. The heat of fire cannot be denied by the fire itself.”<sup>5</sup>

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) affirmed, “The different philosophies seem to agree that this Atman, whatever It be, has neither form nor shape, and that which has neither form nor shape must be omnipresent. Time begins with mind, space also is in the mind. Causation cannot stand without time. Without the idea of succession there cannot be any idea of causation. Time, space and causation, therefore, are in the mind, and as this Atman is beyond the mind and formless, It must be beyond time, beyond space, and beyond causation. Now, if It is beyond time, space, and causation, It must be infinite. Then comes the highest speculation in our philosophy. The infinite cannot be two. If the soul be infinite, there can be only one Soul [Atman], and all ideas of various souls—you having one soul, and I having another and so forth—are not real.”<sup>6</sup> “So the Hindus say that this Atman is absolute and all-pervading, therefore infinite. There cannot be two infinities, for they would limit each other and would become finite.” “There is but one Soul [Atman] in the universe, not two. It neither comes nor goes. It is neither born, nor dies, nor reincarnates. How can It die? Where can It go?” This one infinite is also called Brahman.<sup>7</sup>

He continues, “Infinite can never be divided. If that were possible, It would be no more Infinite. What is the conclusion then? The answer is, that Soul [Atman] which is the universal is you; you are not a part but the whole of It. You are the whole of God. Then what are all these varieties? We find so many millions of individual souls. What are they? If the sun reflects upon millions of globules of water, in each globule is the form, the

perfect image of the sun; but they are only images, and the real sun is only one. So this apparent soul that is in every one of us is only the image of God, nothing beyond that. The real Being who is behind, is that one God. We are all one there. As Self [Atman], there is only one in the universe. It is in me and you, and is only one; and that one Self [Atman] has been reflected in all these various bodies as various different selves.”<sup>8</sup> “If it is possible for us to attain to freedom, the conclusion is inevitable that the Soul [Atman] is by Its nature free. It cannot be otherwise. Freedom means independence of anything outside, and that means that nothing outside Itself could work upon it as a cause. The Soul is causeless, and from this follow all the great ideas that we have. You cannot establish the immortality of the Soul, unless you grant that It is by its nature free, or in other words, that It cannot be acted upon by anything outside. For death is an effect produced by some outside cause. I drink poison and I die, thus showing that my body can be acted upon by something outside that is called poison. But if it be true that the soul is free, It naturally follows that nothing can affect It, and It can never die.”<sup>9</sup>

Swami Vivekananda noted that even criminals and commonplace people have some glimpses of the higher existence. “This universe is a symbol, in and through which we are trying to grasp the thing signified, which is beyond and behind.”<sup>10</sup> God is the essence behind the world, Who bestows light on all things and is percolating through all matter and energy. “There is a screen here, and some beautiful scenery outside.... This scene outside is the Soul [Atman], and the screen between us and the scenery is Maya—time, space, and causation. There is a little hole somewhere, through which I can catch only a glimpse of the Soul [Atman]. When the hole is bigger, I see more and more, and when the screen has vanished, I know that I am the Soul.”<sup>11</sup>

Vivekananda mentioned, “The philosophy of Kant also shows traces of the teachings of the *Upanishads*.” “The philosophy of Vedanta ... posits three fundamental concepts—time, space, and causation. From these is constituted Maya, the essential groundwork of human thought, not the product of thought. This same conclusion was arrived at a later date by the great German philosopher Kant.” “Those of you who are acquainted with Western philosophy will find something very similar in Kant. But I must warn you, those of you who have studied Professor Max Müller's (1823-1900) writings on Kant, that there is one idea most misleading. It was Shankara who first found out the idea of the identity of time, space, and causation with Maya, and I had the good fortune to find one or two

passages in Shankara's commentaries and send them to my friend the Professor. So even that idea was here in India.”<sup>12</sup> Both Paul Deussen (1845-1919) and his friend the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) alluded to the similarities between Shankara’s Commentary (Bhasya) on the *Brahma Sutras* (aka *Vedanta Sutras*) and Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>13</sup>

In the West there is the “Fallacy of Compartmentalization” where many will for example mistakenly object to a comparison between the ideas of Shankara and Kant. This is because they are members of different compartments in the sense that one was an Indian and the other a European, one a Hindu and the other a Christian, one was religiously oriented and the other a philosopher, and they lived nearly a thousand years apart in different societies and cultures.

In the words of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) from his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Edition A 1781, Edition B 1787), “I have no knowledge of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself.”<sup>14</sup> “We have no knowledge of the Subject-in-Itself [Atman], which as substratum underlies this ‘I,’ as it does all thought.”<sup>15</sup> The “I” is prior to all to all the categories of thought, and thus cannot be known in terms of them. “All life is, strictly speaking, intelligible only, is not subject to change in time ... this life is an appearance only, that is, a sensible representation of the purely spiritual life ... If we could intuit ourselves and things as they are, we should see ourselves in a world of spiritual beings, our sole and true community with which has not begun with birth and will not cease through bodily death—both birth and death being mere appearances.”<sup>16</sup> “Even the inner and sensible intuition of our mind (as object of consciousness) which is represented as being determined by the succession of different states in time, is not the Self proper, as it exists in-Itself—that is not the Transcendental Subject [Atman, Self]—but only an appearance that has been given to the sensibility of this, to us unknown, being. The inner appearance cannot be admitted to exist in any such manner in and by itself; for it is conditioned by time, and time cannot be a determination of a thing-in-itself.”<sup>17</sup> “We should also have to allow the Subject an intelligible character, by which it is indeed the cause of those same actions as appearances, but which does not itself stand under any conditions of sensibility, and is not itself appearance. We can entitle ... its character as Thing-in-Itself [Atman]. Now this acting subject would not, in its intelligible character, stand under any conditions of time; time is only a

condition of appearances, not of things-in-themselves. In this Subject no action would begin or cease, and it would not, therefore, have to conform to the law of the determination of all that is alterable in time, namely, that everything which happens must have its cause in the appearances which precede it. In a word, its causality, so far as it is intelligible, would not have a place in the series of those empirical conditions through which the event is rendered necessary in the world of sense. This intelligible character can never, indeed, be immediately known, for nothing can be perceived except in so far as it appears. It would have to be thought in accordance with the empirical character—just as we are constrained to think a Transcendental Object [Nirguna Brahman?] as underlying appearances, though we know nothing of what it is in Itself.”<sup>18</sup> ... The faculty of reason, so regarded, would cease to be a cause of appearances. It must also be described in positive terms, as the power of originating a series of events. In Reason itself nothing begins; as unconditioned condition of every voluntary act, it admits of no conditions antecedent to itself in time. Its effect has, indeed, a beginning in the series of appearances.”<sup>19</sup> The noumenon is the substrate of the phenomenal universe.

Peter Koestenbaum of San Jose State University in California offers a detailed description of his interpretation of the “Transcendental Ego [Self],” as worked out by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) the Austrian founder of the philosophy of phenomenology. Each of the nine characteristics given below pertain to the Indian Brahman-Atman. “The Transcendental Ego is the ultimate core of consciousness. It cannot be apprehended in the manner of an object—since it is the perennial subject—but it is nonetheless present in experience.... 1) The Transcendental Ego is experienced as the source of consciousness whenever experiencing takes place, that is, whenever man is conscious.... the Transcendental Ego is experienced distinct from the body, and psychological states of the individual.... 2) The Transcendental Ego is experienced as always the same. It is the continuous background of changes in the empirical ego. These changes in the empirical ego are shifts in mood, focus, growth, outlook, attitudes, and so on. In the midst of such chaos, the individual experiences himself to be the same throughout. That sense of personal continuity and identity has its source in the experience of the Transcendental Ego. The Transcendental Ego is experienced as permanent.... 3) The conception of both the death and the birth (i.e., the nonexistence) of the Transcendental Ego is impossible. It requires the

Transcendental Ego to think, imagine, or conceive the death and birth of an ego.... 4) The Transcendental Ego is experienced as existing by virtue of its own necessity. Its nonexistence is inconceivable.... 5) The Transcendental Ego is experienced as external to both space and time. Space and time are, strictly speaking, cogitate, that is, intentions and constitutions of the Transcendental Ego.... 6) Experience discloses only one Transcendental Ego.... 7) The Transcendental Ego has close affinity and may be considered as even identical with the Transcendental Realm or the totality of Being.... It follows both from definition and from intuition that all of Being is experienced as suffused with consciousness, that is, as related to the Transcendental Ego (which I am); furthermore, consciousness—like space and time—is given to us as one, that is, as being a single.... 8) The height of religious illumination, be it the vision of God in Western mysticism or Nirvana or Samadhi in Oriental mysticism, can be described metaphysically as the experience of empty consciousness. Consciousness is there (or, what is the same thing, being is there), but the contents are gone, the particular determinations and differentiations have been eliminated. Such would be the experience of the Pure Transcendental Ego.... 9) The ninth characteristic of the Transcendental Ego, its complete freedom.”<sup>20</sup>

Concerning Husserl’s phenomenology Peter Koestenbaum stated in another context, “At the ‘center’ of transcendental consciousness we experience the peculiar and unique existence of an ‘I-pole,’ a core from which all intentional streams of experience radiate. Although this core itself can never be made objective, it is nonetheless present in experience. This core, which is a distinct and ubiquitous aspect of all my experience, is the perennial observer of anything within transcendental consciousness or the Transcendental Realm. This I-pole, the terminus a quo of all experience, is ever-present, yet cannot be apprehended in the normal way in which objects are apprehended because the disclosure of this I-pole contravenes the characteristic intentional structure of consciousness. This I-pole is the Transcendental Ego or the Transcendental Subject. In the strictest sense, I am that I-pole. I am the Transcendental Subject. One of the important aspects of being human is that I tend to identify the Transcendental Subject with two items that are really objects to the ‘impartial observer,’ as Husserl often calls the Transcendental Ego. These objects are my body and my person. We may refer to either or both of these objects as the psychological or empirical self. The ‘real me,’ the Transcendental Ego, is not to be identified with only one person among

millions... The Transcendental Ego, furthermore, is not given as an object, but as the subject for which the object manifests itself. Consequently, the Ego is not a thing or a residue of experience, but a ubiquitous single center or pole from which emanate the 'radiations' of consciousness and intentionality.... In one sense, the Transcendental Ego is outside of the world. The Ego is certainly not one item, i.e., object or event, within the world.... the tools which are the creation of the Ego cannot, in turn, be applied to the attempt to understand and measure the Ego itself.... Husserl's phenomenology, as pointed out before, has strong overtones of objective or absolute idealism, mysticism, and the notions of Atman in Vedanta and Purusha in Sankhya."<sup>21</sup>

To disclose the Essence of a thing such as the Transcendental Ego, Husserl introduced a theory of phenomenological reduction, seeking Pure Consciousness of absolute being. Only that which is immediately present to consciousness must be considered, the rest must be bracketed out and held in suspension of judgment. This involves successfully bracketing out more and more of those aspects of our empirical experience that are not the pure phenomena of consciousness. There is a systematic peeling away of symbolic meaning like the layers of an onion until only the thing itself as meant and experienced remains. Consciousness must be free of cultural, historical, and scientific beliefs; habits, customs, and norms of society. What remains is prior to all scientific and philosophical interpretation and theorizing. Husserl's method fell short of his original goal. To some extent this method resembles the Indian approach of Neti-neti (not this, not this) and yogic intuition.<sup>22</sup> Philosophical phenomenology investigates observable phenomena meaning the world of visible, and perceptible immediate experience. Emphasis is not on philosophical theories and concepts but on describing the inner meaning of phenomena that are known subjectively. Deep or hidden structures are not apparent and must be uncovered and decoded or interpreted employing the phenomenological method. Phenomenology like raja yoga like is concerned with the study of subjective experience and consciousness rather than external empirical existence.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) contrasts two types of philosophy of religion: the cosmological that focuses on the external God, a separate being "out there," and the ontological concentrating on God already present to us as the immanent ground of our being. He states, "According to Bonaventure, 'God is most truly present to the very soul and immediately knowable;' He is knowable in Himself without media as the one



which is common to all. For He is the principle of knowledge, the first truth, in the light of which everything else is known, as Matthew [of Aquasparta] says. As such He is the identity of subject and object. He is not subjected to doubt, which is possible only if subjectivity and objectivity are separated.... 'Being is what first appears in the intellect.' And this Being (which is not a being) is pure actuality and therefore Divine. We always see it, but we do not always notice it; as we see everything in the light without always noticing the light as such.... This Absolute as the principle of Being has absolute certainty. It is a necessary thought because it is the presupposition of all thought. 'The Divine substance is known in such a way that it cannot be thought not to be,' says Alexander of Hales.... The 'uncreated light' through which we see everything.... The ontological principle in the philosophy of religion may be stated in the following way: Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.... the Unconditioned is not a matter of experiential observation. 'Knowledge' finally presupposes the separation of subject and object, and implies an isolated theoretical act, which is just the opposite of awareness of the Unconditioned.... This Power of Being is the prius of everything that has being. It precedes all special contents logically and ontologically. It precedes every separation and makes every interaction possible, because it is the point of identity without which neither separation nor interaction can be thought. This refers basically to the separation and interaction of subject and object, in knowing as well as in acting. The prius of subject and object cannot become an object to which man as a subject is theoretically and practically related. God is no object for us as subjects. He is always that which precedes this division. But, on the other hand, we speak about him and we act upon him, and we cannot avoid it, because everything which becomes real to us enters the subject-object correlation."<sup>23</sup> "The power of infinite self-transcendence is an expression of man's belonging to that which is beyond nonbeing, namely, to Being-Itself. The potential presence of the infinite (as unlimited self-transcendence) is the negation of the negative element in finitude. It is the negation of nonbeing. The fact that man never is satisfied with any stage of his finite development, the fact that nothing finite can hold him, although finitude is his destiny, indicates the indissoluble relation of everything finite to Being-Itself."<sup>24</sup>

Atman (our Essential Self) is identical with Nirguna Brahman (the Essence of God). Consequently, whatever is said of the Atman is also true of Brahman. They are two different ways of describing the same Reality: Brahman from the transcendent, external, objective, transpersonal, and cosmic side, and Atman from the immanent, internal, subjective, personal, and psychological perspective. Here the subject and object are identical.<sup>25</sup>

There can only be one Atman, for if one Atman resembled another there would be numerical diversity, but there can be no diversity in It. Belief in the Atman and the innate divinity of the Soul is highly correlated with the ideas that: the highest Reality is an "I" (not to be confused with the ego); Brahman-God-realization and Self-realization are one and the same thing; Humans are intrinsically good and not merely instrumentally good; all people will eventually be liberated-saved; members of all religions and agnostic-atheists are fellow travelers on the path to the highest Reality, though the paths they travel differ somewhat; Brahman-God is the final goal for all people; It is reached through spiritual disciplines that are opened to all; and all people should be viewed positively as potentially Divine and not negatively as sinners, neurotics, etc.

Infinite Pure Consciousness pervades and shines through all of our finite thoughts and perceptions. Yet we identify with the good and bad, joyful and sad objects of consciousness. By contrast at every moment the perfected knowers of Brahman (Illumined Souls) identify with and experience that one blissful Pure Consciousness.

Like the Atman, the Noumenal Self (or Subject-in-Itself or Transcendental Subject) is the Reality from which the phenomenal self or "I" is derived. As Noumenon humans have an intelligible character beyond space, time, and causality (finitude); and as phenomenon they are subject to these three limitations. If in the Noumena there is no space, time, or change, then there is no differentiation between one thing and another. The Noumenal Self is infinite not being bound by space, eternal since it is not in time, and has perfect freedom not being constrained by any influence of causation, sensibility, or the intellectual categories of human understanding. Being omnipresent and ubiquitous, Brahman-Atman is transcendental in being above us and immanent as the Divine ground within us.

The five characteristics of Brahman discussed in Chapter III. The Intrinsic Nature of Brahman-God, also apply to the Atman. They are nonduality (simplicity), aseity (Self-existent), infinity, timeless eternity, and immutability.<sup>26</sup>

Vivekananda stated, “So all this universe is the reflection of that One Eternal Being, the Atman, and as the reflection falls upon good or bad reflectors, so good or bad images are cast up. Thus in the murderer, the reflector is bad and not the Self. In the saint the reflector is pure.”<sup>27</sup> Indicating, by purifying our mind we get a better reflection of the Atman.

From our standpoint Atman is the: a) knowing subject, b) act of knowing, c) reality known, and the d) goal of liberation. These four are roughly equivalent to the efficient, formal, material-substantial, and the final cause.

Our Higher Self is one with the Essence of Brahman-God (What Brahman-God is) but not with Its manifestations (What Brahman-God does). Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva agreed that unlike the Personal Brahman-God we can never become the creator, preserver, and/or destroyer of the world. The Atman is Nirguna Brahman in Its Essence and Saguna Brahman in Its manifestation.

Kant’s, Things-in-themselves include the clock-in-itself, table-in-itself, sofa-in-itself, etc., the object as it really is, not what it appears to us to be. Like the Platonic Ideas they are midway between the phenomenal world and Brahman-Atman.

If there is only one Atman then why is one person liberated and not another? Are we varying reflections of that one Atman? As Vivekananda states, “The infinite is one and not many, and that one Infinite Soul is reflecting Itself through thousands and thousands of mirrors, appearing as so many different souls.”<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Atman as Your True Inner Self

Shankara stated, “What are you then? That which is truth—the Self [Atman] of the nature of pure Consciousness—that thou art. Then he realizes the Self that has no change and is eternal and a witness by nature, and then that very individual rises above its identity with the body and the rest to become the Self itself—unchanging, eternal, and a witness by nature. This is declared in such Upanishadic texts as, ‘Anyone who knows the supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed’ (Mu. Up. III, 2:9). And that is the soul’s supremely reality” imagined on the sky, so the idea of the individual soul, opposed though it is to the supreme Self, is superimposed [adhyasa] on the supreme Self which is by nature eternally pure, intelligent, free, everlasting, unchanging, one, and unattached.”<sup>29</sup>

Vivekananda indicated, “My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.”<sup>30</sup> “I have neither death nor fear, I have neither caste nor creed, I have neither father nor mother nor brother, neither friend nor foe, for I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute; I am the Blissful One, I am the Blissful One. I am not bound either by virtue or vice, by happiness or misery. Pilgrimages and books and ceremonials can never bind me. I have neither hunger nor thirst; the body is not mind, nor am I subject to the superstitions and decay that come to the body, I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute; I am the Blissful One, I am the Blissful One.... You are the Self [Atman], the God of the universe. Say- ‘I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, I am He,’ and like a lion breaking its cage, break your chain and be free for ever. What frightens you, what holds you down? Only ignorance and delusion; nothing else can bind you. You are the Pure One, the Ever-blessed.”<sup>31</sup> “One principle it lays down--and that, the Vedanta claims, is to be found in every religion in the world--that man is Divine, that all this which we see around us is the outcome of that consciousness of the Divine. Everything that is strong, and good, and powerful in human nature is the outcome of that divinity, and though potential in many, there is no difference between man and man essentially, all being alike Divine. There is, as it were, an infinite ocean behind, and you and I are so many waves, coming out of that infinite ocean; and each one of us is trying his best to manifest that infinite outside. So, potentially, each one of us has that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss as our birthright, our real nature; and the difference between us is caused by the greater or lesser power to manifest that Divine.”<sup>32</sup> “Were it [the Atman] knowable, it would not be what it is, for it is the eternal subject. Knowledge is a limitation, knowledge is objectifying. He is the eternal subject of everything, the eternal witness in this universe, your own Self. Knowledge is, as it were, a lower step, a degeneration. We are that eternal subject already; how can we know it? It is the real nature of every man.”<sup>33</sup> Advaita Vedanta can be taught in two way. Positively that we are the Atman as Vivekananda does or negatively that the world is unreal, an appearance, a dream, etc.

Vivekananda also states, “There is but One Existence; and that One Existence when seen through the senses is called the world, the world of matter. When It is seen through the mind, It is called the world of thoughts and ideas; and when It is seen as it is, then It is the One Infinite Being.... that there is only One Existence, and that one the Atman, the

Self; and when this is perceived through the senses, through sense-imageries, It is called the body. When It is perceived through thought, it is called the mind. When It is perceived in Its own nature, It is the Atman, the One Only Existence.”<sup>34</sup>

Concerning Plato’s doctrine of Ideas, Vivekananda said, “And so you see, all this is but a feeble manifestation of the great ideas, which alone, are real and perfect. Somewhere is an ideal for you, and here is an attempt to manifest it! The attempt falls short still in many ways. Still, go on! You will interpret the ideal some day.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus “had no other occupation in life, no other thought except that one, that he was a spirit. He was a disembodied, unfettered, unbound spirit. And not only so, but he, with his marvelous vision, had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Gentile, whether rich or poor, whether saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying spirit as himself. Therefore, the one work his whole life showed was to call upon them to realize their own spiritual nature.... You are all Sons of God, immortal spirit. ‘Know,’ he declared, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.’ ‘I and my Father are one.’ Dare you stand up and say, not only that ‘I am the Son of God,’ but I shall also find in my heart of hearts that ‘I and my Father are one?’ That was what Jesus of Nazareth said.”<sup>36</sup> “The Real Man, therefore, is one and infinite, the omnipresent Spirit. And the apparent man is only a limitation of that Real Man. In that sense the mythologies are true that the apparent man, however great he may be, is only a dim reflection of the Real Man who is beyond. The Real Man, the Spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by time and space, must, therefore, be free. He was never bound, and could not be bound. The apparent man, the reflection, is limited by time, space, and causation and is, therefore, bound. Or in the language of some of our philosophers, he appears to be bound, but really is not. This is the reality in our souls, this omnipresence, this spiritual nature, this infinity. Every soul is infinite, therefore there is no question of birth and death.”<sup>37</sup> Many people think of themselves as limited finite beings with a physical body that will eventually die. Vivekananda tells us “Know you are the Infinite then fear must die.”<sup>38</sup>

Being potentially Divine, means that we do not have to create It, It already exists. Our job is to remove the barriers that prevent this Divinity from manifesting. According to ontological dualism we exist as a phenomenal entity and as an Atman. Intense spiritual practice is required to realize the latter. Being the Atman means we are not cosmically

insignificant specs in the universe. It is the Atman that motivates the “Will to Evolve,” that we seek self-improvement.

In his commentary on the *Upanishads*, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) confirmed, “that the Self [Atman] of man consists in the truly subjective, which can never become an object. It is the person that sees, not the object seen. It is not a bundle of qualities called the ‘me,’ but the I which remains beyond and behind inspecting all these qualities.... It is none of the limited things, but yet the basis of all of them. It is the universal Self, which is immanent as well as transcendent. The whole universe lives and breathes in it.... There is nothing in the universe which is not involved in the infinite Self in us. This Self, which embraces all, is the sole reality containing within itself all the facts of nature and all the histories of experience. Our small selves are included in it and transcended by it. This is the subject which is more than the flux of presentations, which are only imperfect revelations of it. All our states of consciousness revolve round this central light. Abolish it, they vanish. Without a subject there will be no flux, no order of sensations in space and sequences in time. It renders possible memory and introspection, knowledge, and morality. The *Upanishads* contend that this subject is the universal ground which is in all individuals. It is hidden in all things and pervades all creation.”<sup>39</sup>

William Chittick an expert on the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabi (1165-1240), who was born in Muslim Spain wrote that he taught, “Perfect human beings have two perfections. The first is their Essential Reality as the form of God; the second, their accidental manifestations through which they display God's names in specific historical contexts. In respect of the first perfection, all perfect human beings are essentially one, and it is possible to speak of ‘the perfect human being’ as a unique reality or as ‘the logos.’ In respect of the second perfection, each perfect human being has a specific role to play within the cosmos. Hence there are many such beings fulfilling the functions that God has given them.... In short, perfect human beings are fixed in their essences, which are not other than the Essence of Wujud [Being] Itself.”<sup>40</sup>

The Atman Doctrine tells us we are as Nondual as Brahman and as Simple (Undivided) as God. Based on his profound spiritual experiences Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328) the Dominican priest and German mystic revealed that in our Divine Ground we are consubstantial (of the same substance) with God (Nirguna Brahman). “When I stood in my first cause,

there I had no God and was cause of myself. There I willed nothing. I desired nothing, for I was pure being and a knower of myself.... This is why I pray God to rid me of God; for my Essential Being is above God insofar as we consider God as the origin of creatures. Indeed, in God's own Being, where God is raised above all being and all distinctions, there I was myself, there I willed myself and I knew myself to create this person that I am. Therefore I am cause of myself according to my Being, which is eternal, but not according to my becoming, which is temporal. Therefore also I am unborn, and following the way of my Unborn Being I can never die. Following the way of my Unborn Being I have always been, I am now, and shall remain eternally. What I am by my [temporal] birth is destined to die and to be annihilated, for it is mortal; therefore it must with time pass away. In my [eternal] birth, all things were born, and I was cause of myself and of all things.... I am what I was and what I shall remain now and forever.... I discover that I and God are one."<sup>41</sup> "There is something in the soul which is so akin to God that it is one [with God] and not [merely] united with Him.... this ground of the soul is distant and alien from all created things."<sup>42</sup> "The Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same." "For though she sinks in the oneness of divinity, she never touches bottom. For it is of the very essence of the soul that she is powerless to plumb the depths of her creator. And here one cannot speak of the soul anymore, for she has lost her nature yonder in the oneness of the Divine Essence. There she is no more called soul, but is called Immeasurable Being." "The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God, as if He stood there and they here. This is not so. God and I, we are one in knowledge."<sup>43</sup> "There is something in the soul which is above the soul, Divine, simple, an absolute nothing ... It is higher than knowledge, higher than love, higher than grace, for in all these there is still distinction.... It is bent on entering into the simple ground, the still waste wherein is no distinction, neither Father nor Son nor Holy Ghost; into the unity." "God by his grace would bring me into the Essence; that Essence which is above God and above distinction."<sup>44</sup> "But when I went out from my own free will and received my created being, then I had a 'God,' for before there were any creatures, God was not 'God,' but He was what He was. But when creatures came to be and received their created being, then God was not 'God' in Himself, but He was 'God' in creatures." The mystical union between God and the soul is due to their metaphysical oneness. "Every creature has a twofold being," a virtual existence (*esse virtuale*) and a formal existence (*esse formale*). The former is its mode of

existence in its original cause, the Divine Word, as an idea (*rationes*) in the Mind of God. The latter being its existence separate from God as a form in the sensible phenomenal universe. The pre-existent Virtual being, the real nature of the soul is uncreated and one with God's being.<sup>45</sup>

The venerated Spanish Catholic monk St. John of the Cross (1542-91) revealed, "it must be known that God dwells and is present substantially in every soul, even in that of the greatest sinner in the world, and this union is natural."<sup>46</sup>

Kant's philosophy was expanded upon following a more *Upanishadic* approach by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). It was Schopenhauer who wrote, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."<sup>47</sup> One might think of things-in-themselves as plural, that there is a different thing-in-itself for each object (according to Sankhya there are multiple Purushas), which differentiates one thing from another. For example, a lamp looks different from a chair because each has a different thing-in-itself. Schopenhauer went one step farther and considered the Thing-in-Itself to be singular which equates with the Vedantist Brahman-Atman. He expressed this Advaitic idea in this manner, "Everyone is transitory only as phenomenon; on the other hand, as Thing-in-Itself [Atman] he is timeless, and so endless." "No one can recognize the Thing-In-Itself through the veil of the forms of perception [maya], on the other hand everyone carries this within himself, in fact he himself is It [Atman]; hence in self-consciousness [resulting in anubhava, samadhi] it must be in some way accessible to him." "We ourselves are the Thing-in-Itself. Consequently, a way from within stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate from without.... Precisely as such, the Thing-in-Itself can come into consciousness only quite directly, namely by it itself being conscious of Itself; to try to know it objectively is to desire something contradictory."<sup>48</sup> "Like all objects of perception, it [the body] lies within the forms of all knowledge, in time and space through which there is plurality. But the subject, the Knower never the known, does not lie within these forms; on the contrary, It is always presupposed by those forms themselves, and hence neither plurality nor its opposite, namely unity, belongs to It. We never know It, but It is precisely that which knows wherever there is knowledge."<sup>49</sup>

Concerning the inner soul of every person, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) the American Transcendentalist and son of a Unitarian minister proclaimed, "Within this erring, passionate, mortal self sits a supreme,



calm, immortal mind, whose power I do not know; but it is stronger than I; it is wiser than I.” “It is Soul [Atman]—one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, pre-eminent over nature, exempt from birth, growth and decay, omnipresent, made up of true knowledge.” “Within man is the Soul of the whole; the wise silent; the eternal One. And this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.”<sup>50</sup>

Semyon (Simon) Frank (1877-1950) was a Jewish philosopher who converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity in 1912, and was expelled from the country by the Communists ten years later. In 1939, he expressed his conception of that reality which Vedantists refer to as Atman thusly, “This all-embracing Being is always and inseparably with us and for us, independently of the limits to what our cognitive gaze ‘reveals’ or ‘illuminates’ in this Being at every given moment. And this is the case precisely because we ourselves are in this Being, originate in it, are immersed in it, and are conscious of ourselves only through its self-revelation in us. Unconditional Being—and thus the Being of all that is outside of us—is present with maximal certainty and inevitability in every act of our self-awareness.... Only in this layer is all objective knowledge (and therefore all objective being) conclusively overcome, and it is overcome precisely because it is replaced here by the immediate self-knowledge of Reality revealing Itself to Itself.... This Reality is not ‘given’ to us; it is given only to Itself and to us only insofar as we ourselves are this Reality. This Reality is not an object of perception, examination, or reflection. It ‘expresses’ Itself only mutely in silent, ineffable experience. In this sense it is analogous to the ‘I am’ form of Being, to the self-evident Reality of this form of Being which also, after all, expresses itself.... This Reality is what was revealed to Indian thought as Brahman, as that which is known not by one who knows, but by one who does not know, and which also coincides with the bottomless depths of our own inner being—with Atman.... it is hardly the case that this Reality is present only in the experience of the detached and self-immersed reflective consciousness. Rather, it also forms the very heart of the everyday and ‘every-moment’ experience of each of us.”<sup>51</sup>

From a Vedantic standpoint quite possibly the most outstanding Western philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Paul Tillich (1886-1965). The German-American Lutheran was a professor of “philosophical theology” synthesizing the two disciplines in his writings. He expressed

the belief that, “In the center of the human mind there is an immediate awareness of something unconditional. There is an *a priori* presence of the Divine in the human mind expressed in the immediate awareness of the unconditional character of the true and the good and of Being-Itself. This precedes every other knowledge, so that the knowledge of God is the first knowledge, the only absolute, sure, and certain knowledge, the knowledge not about a being, but about the unconditional element in the depths of the soul.”<sup>52</sup> “An awareness of the infinite is included in man’s awareness of finitude. Man knows that he is finite, that he is excluded from an infinity which nevertheless belongs to him. He is aware of his potential infinity while being aware of his actual finitude.”<sup>53</sup> “There are two possible ways of looking at man. The one way is essentialist which develops the doctrine of man in terms of his Essential Nature within the whole of the universe. The other way is existentialist which looks at man in his predicament in time and space.” “The Essence of Man is eternally given before any man appeared on earth. It is potentially or essentially given, but it is not actually or existentially given.”<sup>54</sup> “Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his True Being.... one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged. Man is not a stranger to his True Being, for he belongs to it.”<sup>55</sup> “Man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated.”<sup>56</sup> “The God above the God of theism is present, although hidden, in every divine-human encounter. Biblical religion as well as Protestant theology are aware of the paradoxical character of this encounter. They are aware that if God encounters man, God is neither object nor subject and is therefore above the scheme into which theism has forced him. They are aware that personalism with respect to God is balanced by a transpersonal presence of the Divine.... They are aware of the paradoxical character of every prayer, of speaking to somebody to whom you cannot speak because he is not "somebody," of asking somebody of whom you cannot ask anything because he gives or gives not before you ask, of saying "thou" to somebody who is nearer to the I than the I is to itself. Each of these paradoxes drives the religious consciousness toward a God above the God of theism.”<sup>57</sup> “Being itself, the ground of our being is God” and also our “ultimate concern.” This is so because our ultimate destiny is our “ultimate concern.” Why, because “Being itself, the ground of our being” is our true Self (Atman) that we will

all eventually realize. This has been verified not only intellectually, but also through religious experience of the great sages.

The four main principles of the “Perennial Philosophy” were laid out by the renowned English-American author Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) a student of the Vedanta philosophy, “First: the phenomenal world [vyavaharika-satya] ... is the manifestation [nirmanā shakti] of a Divine Ground [Brahman, God] within which all partial realities have their being [sat], and apart from which they would be non-existent [asat]. Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing [vritti-jnana] about the Divine Ground by inference [anumana]; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition [anubhava], superior to discursive reasoning [tarka]. This immediate knowledge [para vidya] unites the knower [jnata] with that which is known [jnaya]. Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego [ahamkara] and an eternal Self [Atman], which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit. Fourth: man’s life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self [Atman] and so to come to unitive knowledge [anubhava] of the Divine Ground.”<sup>58</sup>

In review, in the West the Atman has been referred to as my Essential Being (M. Eckhart), Subject-in-Itself and Transcendental Subject (I. Kant), Thing-in-Itself and inner Being-in-Itself (A. Schopenhauer), Transcendental Ego (E. Husserl), Unconditional Being (S. Frank), Essence of Man and True Being (P. Tillich), and the Eternal Self (A. Huxley). According to the Moral Argument for the existence of God, the fact that people have a moral sense, listen to the voice of their conscience, feel obligated to do the right thing, and feel guilty if their behavior is not ethical, implies the existence of God. It is true that people are moral due to a reality beyond the natural world that is superior to themselves. This reality can be described as God or as Atman depending on the perspective the person comes from.<sup>59</sup>

The Atman Doctrine tells us that not only is Brahman-God nondual but we are also nondual in our essential nature. According to Advaita Vedanta due to maya, we have a false consciousness thinking we are the limited mind and body, when our true identity is the Atman (Pure Consciousness). The purpose of life is to realize our inherent divinity, which brings about personal evolution and development. Even when a

person seeks another goal, if properly executed they are advancing toward this goal to some degree. The Atman is equally present in all people but its manifestation varies considerably from one person to the next. Realizing the Atman is knowledge by identity (of the internal subject) not knowledge by objectification (of an external object).

The Atman is pure consciousness that is not known because of the impurities of the mind. You are the pure Subject, the witnessing Self (Atma-sakshi), an infinite ocean of consciousness and bliss. The Atman is eternal, indestructible, formless, infinite, immutable, and indivisible. It has also been described as “not this, not this,” since it is not the body, mind, senses, or any type of object. Just like the sunlight shining in the sky is blocked by a thick layer of dark clouds, so the light of the Atman is obstructed by an impure mind. Through discrimination and devotion surrender yourself to this inner Reality. A pure sattvic mind reflects the light of the Atman. Your inner self is the Atman; It is not something you become. Let your pure consciousness shine through you. This is realized through self-realization, an inner awakening. When you attain this state you become self-enlightened not depending on any external source, the witness of everything that happens to you both externally and internally. This is the ultimate goal of life.<sup>60</sup> Following the Atman idea, we are all like actors playing various roles on the stage of life. Like an actor who knows his/her true self after the play is over, we should realize who we really are. Is it a great paradox of existence that a finite human being is the Infinite, the limited the unlimited, the imperfect the perfect?

From the standpoint of Advaita Vedanta, the same Consciousness works through all people. What is known differs from one thing to another, but it is the same Consciousness that illumines these objects. Space in a glass is not limited by the size of the glass since it extends beyond it, similarly Pure Consciousness is not limited to a single mind. This awareness cannot be objectified. Because it witnesses, it shines upon, illumines everything. The eternal Witness (Saksin, Sakshi) is 'Pure Awareness' that observes the world but does not get affected or involved in it. It is eternal, and infinite Pure Consciousness (Chit) that is our true Essential Self. I am the Self-luminous knower, the subject not the object, beyond language. We are the Eternal Subject, the Witness Consciousness which is the Witness Self. It is the timeless Being that observes the ceaseless flow and change in the world of thought and things. We suffer because we do not know who we really are. This consciousness that is continually

watching things is one and undivided. Eyes are one, yet they see the many things.

Witness consciousness is like the light in a room that shines on objects that are separate from it. While illumining things it remains unchanged. Consciousness is always the same, as the Atman, the self-effulgent Witness Self. It is Existence-Itself (Sat) an intrinsic property that never ceases to exist, while phenomenal existence resides temporarily in every object. The real me is immutable, while the mind and body continually change. Our true Self is Pure Subject, not an object that is known through sense experience. The Self cannot be objectified, being that it is a subject and not an object. It supports all three states of consciousness: the waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. Operating through this body-mind system it is present even when there is nothing for it to dwell on as in deep sleep. Consciousness works through the mind and is not its product as many Westerners believe.

Just as the various reflections do not affect the mirror, our thoughts should not affect us. We realize we are a separate person from the reflection we see in the mirror. We are the knower, not the known, not the mind but its witness. The thoughts of the mind are superimposed on the Atman. When watching a movie we are detached from what we see on the screen. We are already the Atman and should realize there is nothing new to add. Do this by being the witness and not attached to your thoughts. The happiness of the Self is the ultimate source of joy (Ananda) being an end in itself. Other things are loved because of it, while it is not loved for the purpose of obtaining something else.<sup>61</sup>

Swami Sarvapriyananda head of the Vedanta Society in New York (West Side) explains it like this, "See, this table is an object of experience to my eyes. My eyes and the body are objects of experience to my mind. And my mind is an object of experience, I cannot deny it, it's a fact ... to what? That awareness which experiences the mind from within. That awareness which cannot be objectified. That is called, for want of a better term, because it witnesses, it shines upon, illumines every movement of the mind, every thought, every idea, every memory, every feeling, it's called the Witness."<sup>62</sup>

From a nondualistic (Advaita) standpoint we are Self-luminous Consciousness (Chit), the unchanging seer, the witness of the mind. This Pure Consciousness is Self-luminous, Self-existent (aseity), eternal, unchanging (immutable), and infinite without any boundaries. As Self-luminous existence we are the seer of the mind, but not the mind. We

shining make our own existence known to us and through borrowed or reflected consciousness illuminates the senses and our thoughts. We are the eternal subject, not an object to ourself since being nondual we never see ourself as a separate object. Without that Self-luminous radiance we could not think and would not exist. It is not that each one of us has a separate Self-luminosity as Sankhya teaches. According to Advaita Vedanta it is the same Self-luminous entity that works through every conscious being. To experience this state is possible, but difficult to achieve.<sup>63</sup>

“To experience peace, stability, and happiness, we need to separate the observing Self from the mind and body and become centered in that rather than in our minds and bodies or the things we observe. If you become an observing Self and remain detached from the happenings around you, you perceive things with greater clarity, insight, and calmness. You will be in greater control of your thoughts and emotions and relate to the world without becoming involved with it.... Through the practice of yoga they learned to detach themselves from their minds and bodies and became centered in their witness selves.... They practice mindfulness to become centered in it and gradually dismantle the formations and aggregations that make up the personality.... I find that when I am my observing Self, I am in greater control of my thoughts and emotions and I become more observant and intuitive....”<sup>64</sup> Buddhist mindfulness meditation involves neutrally observing the activity of the mind without judging or criticizing.

Mindfulness is an act of introspection where the mind as observer (subject) studies the observed contents of the same mind (object). During the entire process of Mindfulness (studying the mind, getting the results), it is the Eternal Witness that is illumining the mind.<sup>65</sup> We think of ourself as the doer when we are actually a secondary cause; it is the Eternal Witness as the first cause that is the doer.

Following the Vijnana religious philosophy Brahman-God has two aspects. For a Nondualist the Eternal Witness is Nirguna Brahman-the Essence of God. For a Dualist-Theist the Eternal Witness is the omniscient Saguna Brahman-Personal God. In addition to being a witness It is also the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe.<sup>66</sup> Can we identify the Atman with the presence of Saguna Brahman-Ishvara in our consciousness?

We can be perfect as the Atman and imperfect as humans because they are in two different realms. Within the same realm an individual

person cannot be perfect and not know they are perfect, which is itself an imperfection. They can be imperfect and potentially but not actually perfect.

Possibly extraordinary genius, worldly success, and great skills are to some degree limited secular manifestations of the Atman.<sup>67</sup>

The three basic questions are: Presently, who am I?; Who should I become?; and How do I reach that goal?

### 3. The Impact of Nirguna Brahman-Atman on the Phenomenal World

Indian: “He is the origin of all. He is the end of all (Mand. Up.\*, p. 74). “Then the Self thought: ‘Let Me send forth the worlds.’ He sent forth these worlds” (Ait. Up.\*, p. 95). “Thou art the source of life” (Chan. Up.\*, p. 103). “The Self is one with Brahman, lord and creator of all” (Br. Up.\*, p. 179). “He is the creator” (Svet. Up.\*, p. 193). “Thou art creator of time” (Svet. Up.\*, p. 202). “From Me all emerge, in Me all exist, and to me all return. I am Brahman” (Kai. Up.\*, p. 210).

One of the most important aspects of Vivekananda’s Advaita Vedanta is his emphasis on the influence of Nirguna Brahman-Atman on phenomenal existence. There are a number of reasons for realizing that Nirguna Brahman-Atman is not “wholly other” or “totally other” from finite existence. The fact that Nirvikalpa Samadhi has been attained by the greatest spiritual souls while living in a human body means that there is some connection between the Absolute and Relative realms of existence. There must be a bridge that connects them. If Nirguna Brahman-Atman is “wholly other” It could not be realized by a person with a human mind living in a physical body. We are always intimately related to Nirguna Brahman-Atman that is present everywhere, though consciously we may not be aware of it. Since the most spiritual souls like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda realized this, that means they resemble Its nature far more than other people. Again if the Reality is completely unknowable, almost nothing could have been written about It in the religious scriptures. It is easier for most devotees to identify with a concrete immanent Brahman-God that directly affects their life, than with an abstract transcendent Brahman-God that dwells in another realm.

Vivekananda’s presentation is the opposite of Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804), who in spite of his intelligence did harm to religion by emphasizing only the transcendent aspect of God (Essence of God). For

Kant every aspect of God (both Nirguna and Saguna), Personal God, the soul, and afterlife being outside of the spatio-temporal-causal order is totally unknowable and indescribable by the human intellect. According to this false notion anything written about God and the Divine realm in religious scripture is meaningless. Swami Abhedananda mentioned, “The chief defect of the Kantian system is the unnatural separation of the Thing-In-Itself completely from the plane of experience.” As brilliant as Kant was he appeared to operate only through the intellect and this can lead to errors in religious philosophical thought. Thomas Aquinas worked through both the intellect and the spirit and he taught an analogical relationship between the world and God.

Vivekananda’s personal and immanent approach indirectly received support from the following two thinkers. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) the Danish philosopher was a precursor of the Existentialist movement. In his criticism of the Hegelian system with its abstract metaphysics, Kierkegaard emphasized that philosophy should center on the individual and be relevant to the existential problems of human life. Philosophy is a way of life, not centered on ideas and propositions but something that is immediately lived, felt, and acted upon. For Hegel, “The real is the rational,” meaning the historical dialectical progression of Spirit. Conversely, for Kierkegaard Christianity is to be lived not to be argued. The devotee attempts to live as Jesus did and offers their life to the service of the Divine.<sup>68</sup> Carl Jung (1875-1961) the psychologist intuitively wrote, “If I assume God is absolute and beyond all human experience, He leaves me cold. I do not affect Him, nor does he affect me. But if I know He is a powerful impulse of my soul, at once I must concern myself with Him, for then He can become important.”<sup>69</sup>

What follows are some of the Nirguna Brahman-Atman functions in phenomenal existence. The first five are associated more with Chit (Consciousness), the six with Ananda (Bliss and Love), and the last four with Sat (Existence or Being). There is a tendency to attribute subjective Chit and Ananda functions to the Atman rather than to Nirguna Brahman.

1) We would not be able to form rational concepts or to perceive objects without the existence of Nirguna Brahman-Atman:

Shankara (c. 688/788-720/820) the Advaita Vedanta and seer-philosopher expounded, “There is a self-existent Reality, which is the basis of our consciousness of ego. That Reality is the witness [Saksin], of the three states of our consciousness, and, is distinct from the five bodily coverings. That Reality is the knower in all states of consciousness—



waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions. It is the Atman.... It gives intelligence to the mind and the intellect, but no one gives It light.... By Its light, the universe is revealed.... The Atman reveals this entire universe of mind and matter.<sup>70</sup> "The Atman is Its own witness, since It is conscious of Itself. The Atman is no other than Brahman. The Atman is Pure Consciousness, clearly manifest as underlying the states of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is inwardly experienced as unbroken consciousness, the consciousness that 'I am I.' It is the unchanging witness that experiences the ego, the intellect and the rest, with their various forms and changes."<sup>71</sup>

Vivekananda discerned, "It is through the Self [Atman] that you know anything. I see the chair; but to see the chair, I have first to perceive myself and then the chair. It is in and through the Self that the chair is perceived. It is in and through the Self that you are known to me, that the whole world is known to me; and therefore to say this Self is unknown is sheer nonsense. Take off the Self and the whole universe vanishes.... This Impersonal God requires no demonstrations, no proofs. He is nearer to us than even our senses, nearer to us than our own thoughts; it is in and through Him that we see and think. To see anything, I must first see Him. To see this wall I first see Him, and then the wall, for He is the Eternal Subject."<sup>72</sup> Concerning the immanence of God, "He is the Witness, the Eternal Witness of all knowledge. Whatever we know we have to know in and through Him. He is the Essence of our own Self. He is the Essence of this ego, this I and we cannot know anything excepting in and through that I. Therefore you have to know everything in and through the Brahman."<sup>73</sup> "He whom all the Vedas worship, nay, more, He who is always present in the eternal 'I', He existing, the whole universe exists. He is the light and life of the universe. If the 'I' were not in you, you would not see the sun, everything would be a dark mass. He shining, you see the world."<sup>74</sup> "The light of the Spirit--moves and speaks and does everything [through our bodies, minds, etc.]. It is the energy and soul and life of the Spirit that is being worked upon in different ways by matter... The Spirit is the cause of all our thoughts and body-action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature, although it lends its light to everything."<sup>75</sup> "First, here is the body, second, the mind, or instrument of thought, and third behind this mind is the Self [Atman] of man. The Sanskrit word is Atman.... The Self [Atman] is the illuminator, and the mind is the instrument in Its hands,

and through that instrument It gets hold of the external instrument, and thus comes perception.... Indriyas, and they carry sensations to the mind, and the mind presents them further back to another state of the mind, which in Sanskrit is called Chitta, and there they are organised into will, and all these present them to the King of kings inside, the Ruler on His throne, the Self of man. He then sees and gives His orders. Then the mind immediately acts on the organs, and the organs on the external body. The real Perceiver, the real Ruler, the Governor, the Creator, the Manipulator of all this is the Self of man.”<sup>76</sup> “The intellect must carry it [the sensation] forward and present the whole thing before the ruler in the body, the human Soul [Atman], the king on the throne. Before him this is presented, and then from him comes the order, what to do or what not to do; and the order goes down in the same sequence to the intellect, to the mind, to the organs, and the organs convey it to the instruments, and the perception is complete.”<sup>77</sup>

Vivekananda refers to the Atman as the “Eternal Subject.” Viewing this Reality from another perspective, is Nirguna Brahman then the “Eternal Object?” Immanuel Kant conceived of the Thing-in-Itself as the Pure Object independent of a perceiving subject. Is the subject prior to the object and the creation a process of objectification? Paul Tillich writes that the Ground of Existence is beyond subject-object differentiation or we can think of the subject and object as identical. While the Atman is pure subjectivity, the empirical self comes to self-expression through objective relationships with others in space and time.

Swami Sarvapriyananda of the Ramakrishna Order in New York City teaches that perceptual and conceptual knowledge requires two things. First, a modification or thought wave in the mind (vritti) and second reflected consciousness that illumines that vritti. The two events occur almost simultaneously. Pure Conscious (Nirguna Brahman-Atman) gets reflected in the mind and illumines whatever is there. By analogy, sunlight (Pure Consciousness) shines on a polished steel plate (the mind) producing reflected light. Whatever you think about in the mind is illumined by the reflection of Pure Consciousness (reflected consciousness). Conversely, to realize Nirguna Brahman-Atman (Pure Consciousness) the mind has to be focused directly on Brahman without the aid of reflected consciousness. Similarly, to see the real sun you must perceive it directly, not through reflected sunlight.<sup>78</sup> We mistakenly think that sensual and mental happiness comes from some empirical source, but actually it is due to a small portion of the blissful Atman being reflected

on the mind.

According to one theory, the same pure consciousness reflects off the mind of all living beings. Reflecting off the highest mind it produces revelation, down a notch the result is sattvic genius. Further down is rajas, and then tamas and dullness.

The Italian philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-52) taught the idea of Ontologism that human reason first grasps Infinite Being [God] “containing within It all determinations, even though they cannot be distinguished by earthly knowledge. This being (*Essere* also called *Ente* by Gioberti, ‘that which is’) is perpetually present to the human mind, and it is only in the light of this being that existing things are known, which remain on the level of sensation as they impinge on experience. Knowledge is a philosophical reflection on the relationship present in the mind between existing things and this being, by virtue of which they exist. They are not part of it, as in Pantheism, but they are created by it.... Infinite Being, God, is the first and intuitively grasped object of thought, with all other things only known in the light of this intuition.” According to Ontologism, God and Divine ideas are the first object of our intelligence, we see all things, even material and concrete entities in Him. We do not have any intellectual knowledge of finite things independent of the knowledge of God. This idea was condemned by the Catholic Church in 1861 since it blurs the distinction between God and His creatures. Why are so many people not conscious of the presence of God in their minds and some doubt His existence? Our idea of God is not direct but is analogical.<sup>79</sup>

Christian thinkers like St. Augustine, Bishop Robert Grosseteste, and St. Bonaventure assign the illuminating function of the Divine light to the Personal God. For a more in depth discussion of this subject, see Chapter IV, Section 7. Luminosity.

Above Vivekananda writes, “It is through the Self [Atman] that you know anything” and “it is in and through Him that we see and think.” And in another context, “Behind this never-ending chain of motion is the Purusha, the changeless, the colourless, the pure. All these impressions are merely reflected upon It, as a magic lantern throws images upon a screen, without in any way tarnishing it.”<sup>80</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabi (1165-1240) from Muslim Spain the most Vedantic of all Islamic sages supports the idea that the Absolute (Brahman-Atman) is the mirror, and the empirical world is its reflection shining on the mirror. He writes, we see our “own form as reflected in the mirror of the Absolute. It does not see the Absolute Itself.

Nor is it as all possible for it to do so ... This is similar to what happens to a man looking into a mirror in the empirical world. When you are looking at forms or your own form in a mirror you do not see the mirror itself, although you know well that you see these forms or your own form only in the mirror.”<sup>81</sup>

According to this idea, we are always looking at Brahman-Atman, but see only the reflection. This occurs if we look at external objects or internally into our own mind. Though we are unaware of it, the first thing we perceive either in the external sense world or internal world of the mind is Brahman-Atman. Due to the dust of maya that covers the mirror we see the phenomenal object. The illumined soul removes the veil of the reflected image and directly sees Brahman-Atman that pervades it. This is a powerful religious technique, to realize when we perceive an external object or introspectively look into our own mind, we are actually seeing the mirror of Brahman-Atman the ground of existence. One problem is that a changeless mirror only reflects changing images, but unlike Brahman-God it does not create them.

## 2) Unity of apperception and a sense of personal identity:

Shankara taught that there must be something that underlies human thought, a reality that pervades the flow of consciousness, by which the events of consciousness can be fixed. As the permanent synthesizing subject, Brahman-Atman is the root cause of all knowledge. It is the knower that pervades the changing cognitive empirical self. Being the foundational unitary consciousness and first cause, It organizes the manifold ideas and scattered data of perception within the human mind, synthesizing them into a meaningful and coherent unity. This unchanging ground is necessary for the awareness of personal identity and for making memory and inference possible. “Unless there exists one continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable Self which cognizes everything, we are unable to account for remembrance, recognition, and so on.”<sup>82</sup>

Swami Vivekananda explains the role of the Atman in unifying our thought, “Similar is the case with the sensations which these organs of ours are carrying inside and presenting to the mind, and which the mind in its turn is presenting to the intellect. This process will not be complete unless there is something permanent in the background upon which the picture, as it were, may be formed, upon which we may unify all the different impressions. What is it that gives unity to the changing whole of

our being? What is It that keeps up the identity of the moving thing moment after moment? What is It upon which all our different impressions are pieced together, upon which the perceptions, as it were, come together, reside, and form a united whole? We have found that to serve this end there must be something, and we also see that that something must be, relatively to the body and mind, motionless. The sheet of cloth upon which the camera throws the picture is, relatively to the rays of light, motionless, else there will be no picture. That is to say, the perceiver must be an individual. This something upon which the mind is painting all these pictures, this something upon which our sensations, carried by the mind and intellect, are placed and grouped and formed into a unity, is what is called the Soul [Atman] of man.” “Where is that unity which we call the Atman? The idea is this, that in spite of this continuous change in the body, and in spite of this continuous change in the mind, there is in us something that is unchangeable, which makes our ideas of things appear unchangeable. When rays of light coming from different quarters fall upon a screen, or a wall, or upon something that is not changeable, then and then alone it is possible for them to form a unity, then and then alone it is possible for them to form one complete whole. Where is this unity in the human organs, falling upon which, as it were, the various ideas will come to unity and become one complete whole? This certainly cannot be the mind itself, seeing that it also changes. Therefore there must be something which is neither the body nor the mind, something which changes not, something permanent, upon which all our ideas, our sensations fall to form a unity and a complete whole; and this is the real Soul, the Atman of man. And seeing that everything material, whether you call it fine matter, or mind, must be changeful, seeing that what you call gross matter, the external world, must also be changeful in comparison to that—this unchangeable something cannot be of material substance; therefore It is spiritual, that is to say, It is not matter—It is indestructible, unchangeable.”<sup>83</sup>

He adds, “Motion can only be perceived when there is something else which is not moving. But when two or three things are relatively moving, we first perceive the motion of the faster one, and then that of the slower ones. How is the mind to perceive? It is also in a flux. Therefore another thing is necessary which moves more slowly, then you must get to something in which the motion is still slower, and so on, and you will find no end. Therefore logic compels you to stop somewhere. You must complete the series by knowing something which never changes.”<sup>84</sup>

Unity of consciousness is absolutely necessary for rational coherent thought, memory, and the awareness of self-identity. Though the German thinker Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) unlike the Advaitists did not identify this unchanging consciousness with our Real Self he did write, "If we were not conscious that what we think is the same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be useless.... For this unitary consciousness is what combines the manifolds successively intuited, and therefore also reproduces, into one representation. Such consciousness, however indistinct must always be present; without it, concepts, and therewith knowledge of objects, are altogether impossible.... There must therefore, be a Transcendental Ground of the unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions, and consequently also of the concepts of objects in general, and so of all objects of experience, a ground without which it would be impossible to think any object for our intuitions; for this object is no more than that something, the concept of which expresses such a necessity of synthesis. This original and transcendental condition is no other than Transcendental Apperception [Atman, pure unchanging consciousness].... To render such a transcendental presupposition valid, there must be a condition which precedes all experience, and which makes experience itself possible. There can be in us no modes of knowledge, no connection or unity of one mode of knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness which precedes all data of intuitions, and by relation to which representation of objects is alone possible. This pure original unchangeable consciousness I shall name Transcendental Apperception. That it deserves this name is clear from the fact that even the purest objective unity, namely, that of the *a priori* concepts (space and time), is only possible through relation of the intuitions to such unity of consciousness.... [The mind] subordinates all synthesis of apprehension (which is empirical) to a transcendental unity, thereby rendering possible their interconnection according to *a priori* rules."<sup>85</sup> The Transcendental Ground (Thing-in-Itself, Noumenon) is the origin and ground of phenomenal existence. Yet, it is beyond the grasp of human understanding since it is not an object of our experience and knowledge.

Kant continues, "The 'I' of apperception, and therefore the 'I' in every act of thought, is one, and cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects, and consequently signifies a logically simple subject ... But this does not mean that the thinking 'I' is a simple substance."<sup>86</sup> "The unity of

this apperception I likewise entitle the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, in order to indicate the possibility of *a priori* knowledge arising from it. For the manifold representations, which are given in an intuition, would not be one and all my representations, if they, did not all belong to one self-consciousness.... The thought that the representations given in intuition, one and all belong to me, is therefore equivalent to the thought that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or can at least so unite them; and although this thought is not itself the consciousness of the synthesis of the representations, it presupposes the possibility of that synthesis. In other words, only in so far as I can grasp the manifold of representations in one consciousness, do I call them one and all mine. For otherwise I should have as many-coloured and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself. Synthetic unity of the manifold of intuitions, as generated *a priori*, is thus the ground of the identity of apperception itself, which precedes *a priori* all my determinate thought.... Now all unification of representations demands unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them. Consequently it is the unity of consciousness that alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, and therefore their objective validity and the fact that they are modes of knowledge; and upon it therefore rests the very possibility of the understanding.”<sup>87</sup>

### 3) Responsible for a sense of freedom:

This point was brought forth by Vivekananda, “Within law is bondage; beyond law is freedom. It is also true that freedom is of the nature of the Soul, it is Its birthright: that real freedom of the soul shines through veils of matter in the form of the apparent freedom of man. Every moment of your life you feel that you are free. We cannot live, talk, or breathe for a moment without feeling that we are free; but, at the same time, a little thought shows us that we are like machines and not free.... Man is really free, the real man cannot but be free. It is when he comes into the world of Maya, into name and form, that he becomes bound.”<sup>88</sup> “We are bound so far as intelligence goes, that we are free so far as the soul is concerned. It is the real nature of man, the soul, the Purusha, which is beyond all law of causation.... That soul is free, and it is its freedom that tells you every moment that you are free. But you mistake, and mingle that freedom every moment with intelligence and mind. You try to attribute that freedom to the intelligence, and immediately find that intelligence is not free; you attribute that freedom to the body, and

immediately nature tells you that you are again mistaken. That is why there is this mingled sense of freedom and bondage at the same time. The Yogi analyses both what is free and what is bound, and his ignorance vanishes. He finds that the Purusha is free, is the essence of that knowledge, which coming through the Buddhi [intellect], becomes intelligence, and, as such, is bound.”<sup>89</sup> Purusha is Pure Consciousness the unchanging and eternal witness.

Kant writes, “In its intelligible character (though we can only have a general concept of that character) this same subject must be considered to be free from all influence of sensibility and from all determination through appearances. Inasmuch as it is Noumenon, nothing happens in it; there can be no change requiring dynamical determination in time, and therefore no causal dependence upon appearances. And consequently, since natural necessity is to be met with only in the sensible world, this active being must in its actions be independent of, and free from all such necessity.... freedom and nature, in the full sense of these terms, can exist together, without any conflict, in the same actions, according as the actions are referred to their intelligible or to their sensible cause.”<sup>90</sup> “In respect of the intelligible character, of which the empirical character is the sensible schema, there can be no before and after; every action irrespective of its relation in time to other appearances is the immediate effect of the intelligible character of Pure Reason. Reason [Atman as active] therefore acts freely; it is not dynamically determined in the chain of natural causes through either outer or inner grounds antecedent in time. This freedom ought not, therefore, to be conceived only negatively [neti-neti] as independence of empirical conditions.”<sup>91</sup>

4) Provides motivation for self-development and evolutionary development:

Evolution of humans is caused by their manifesting the perfection of the Atman to a higher degree. See Chapter VIII, Section 9. Vivekananda and Alexander on Evolution that discusses the views of Vivekananda, Bergson, and Alexander on this subject.

5) Nirguna Brahman-Atman reveals Itself to humans both substantially and conceptually and that is why we seek Brahman-God:

Vivekananda notes, “The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in



all religions, I place it here—in realizing God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point.”<sup>92</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976) mentioned, “Vedantists point out that, because of the presence of God within us, there exists in everyone, whether sinner or saint, the urge to attain God. But a sinner is one who is unconscious of that urge, while a saint is one who understands that urge and consciously strives for its attainment. Now what is that urge? It is the hope to attain freedom from suffering, freedom from misery, freedom from ignorance, freedom from death. What is the sinner seeking by his sins? Happiness, freedom. In other words, he too is seeking heaven, only he is seeking it the wrong way?”<sup>93</sup>

In Plotinus’ (c. 205-70) philosophical presentation the Nous [Divine Intellect, equivalent to Saguna Brahman, Ishvara] acquires its power from the One also called the Good [equivalent to Nirguna Brahman]. The *Enneads* state, “But we say that Intellect [Nous] is an image of that Good; for we must speak more plainly; first of all we must say that what has come into being must be in a way that Good, and retain much of It and be a likeness of It, as light is of the sun.... Intellect, certainly, by Its own means even defines Its being for Itself by the power which comes from the One, and because Its substance is a kind of single part of what belongs to the One and comes from the One, It is strengthened by the One and made perfect in substantial existence by and from It.”<sup>94</sup>

The English mystic William Law (1686-1761) apprehended, “Though God is everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul.... But there is a root or depth of thee from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a centre, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the centre, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity—I had almost said the infinity—of thy soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it rest but the infinity of God.”<sup>95</sup>

Sudhindra Chakravarti affirmed, “According to [Soren] Kierkegaard [1813-55] the first thing that reveals itself to me as a result of the concentration of my inward attention is an inner conflict between the finite and the infinite in me. I cannot rest content with my finitude, for my existence inwardly yearns after the Infinite. It seeks perfection, immortality, eternity, and absolute happiness which a mere finite being cannot possess. The intense feeling of this disparity between what I am and what I should and can be, brings about a pathos or melancholy which is usually disturbed, by objective speculation and aesthetic work. The

difficulty of resolving this conflict is clearly realised when all distractions and temptations are suppressed by a firm ethical determination to follow the end of existence. The end of existence is the attainment of eternal and absolute happiness. The acceptance of this absolute end demands the sacrifice of all relative and temporary goods. While directing his will absolutely to this absolute end, the exister has to choose between the relative worldly goods and the Absolute Good. Either the relative good *or* the Absolute good must be chosen, for there is no room for both in ethical life.”<sup>96</sup>

#### 6) The cause of love in us:

Quoting the *Upanishad's* Vivekananda wrote, "It is not for the sake of the husband that the wife loves the husband, but for the sake of the Atman that she loves the husband, because she loves the Self. None loves the wife for the sake of the wife; but it is because one loves the Self [Atman] that one loves the wife. None loves the children for the children; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves the children. None loves wealth on account of the wealth; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves wealth. None loves the Brahmin for the sake of the Brahmin; but because one loves the Self, one loves the Brahmin. So, none loves the Kshatriya for the sake of the Kshatriya, but because one loves the Self. Neither does any one love the world on account of the world, but because one loves the Self. None, similarly, loves the gods on account of the gods, but because one loves the Self. None loves a thing for that thing's sake; but it is for the Self that one loves it.... Even when the wife loves the husband, whether she knows it or not, she loves the husband for that Self. It is selfishness as it is manifested in the world, but that selfishness is really but a small part of that Selfness. Whenever one loves, one has to love in and through the Self. This Self has to be known. What is the difference? Those that love the Self without knowing what It is, their love is selfishness. Those that love, knowing what that Self is, their love is free; they are sages.... Every time we particularize an object, we differentiate it from the Self. I am trying to love a woman; as soon as that woman is particularized, she is separated from the Atman, and my love for her will not be eternal, but will end in grief. But as soon as I see that woman as the Atman, that love becomes perfect, and will never suffer.”<sup>97</sup> See Section 4. Advaita Ethics and Atma-Dharma for more of these ideas.

For Vedanta it is the attraction of the Atman than moves the human will towards love and for Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) the attractive power

of God (the universal good) moves the human will towards goodness. Aquinas discerned, “I answer that, Just as the intellect is moved by the object and by the giver of the power of understanding, as was stated above, so the will is moved by its object, which is the good, and by Him who creates the power of willing. Now the will can be moved by any good as its object, but by God alone is it moved sufficiently and efficaciously.... Now the potentiality of the will extends to the universal good, for its object is the universal good, just as the object of the intellect is universal being. But every created good is some particular good, and God alone is the universal good. Therefore He alone fills the capacity of the will, and moves it sufficiently as its object. In like manner, the power of willing is caused by God alone. For to will is nothing but to be inclined towards the object of the will, which is the universal good. But to incline towards the universal good belongs to the first mover, to whom the ultimate end is proportioned; just as in human affairs to him that presides over the community belongs the directing of his subjects to the common weal. Therefore in both ways it belongs to God to move the will; but especially in the second way by an interior inclination of the will.... Thus then does God work in every agent, according to these three things. First, as an end. For since every operation is for the sake of some good, real or apparent, and since nothing is good, either really or apparently, except in so far as it participates in a likeness to the highest good, which is God, it follows that God Himself is the cause of every operation as its end.”<sup>98</sup>

7) The background-substratum and substantial first cause of the phenomenal universe:

See Chapter V, Section 1. It is the Immutable Background-Substratum-Ground (Foundational Cause) of All Existence for more details.

8) Is the life force and cause of existence:

Anselm (1033-1109) the Archbishop of Canterbury articulated, “Whatever is sustained [in existence] is sustained by some one thing which alone is sustained through Itself, while everything else is sustained through another.... just as nothing was made except through the creative and present Being, so nothing is sustained except through the conserving presence of this same Being.... where the Supreme Being does not exist, nothing exists.... Consequently, it is clear that this Being is what sustains, excels, limits, and pervades all other things. Therefore, if these conclusions are conjoined with the ones we discovered earlier, then one

and the same Being exists in and through all other things and is that from which, through which, and in which all other things exist.” It cannot decay and is neither divisible nor extended, but is completely present everywhere.<sup>99</sup>

Thomas Aquinas compares our existence to that of air that is lit as long as the sun (God) illuminates it, and that it ceases to be lit as soon as the sun ceases to act upon it. The sun is light through its own nature, whereas air is illuminated only by participating in the light of the sun but not the nature of the sun. Hence, Aquinas concludes that if God were to cease His action in governing created things, all species would cease to be and would perish.<sup>100</sup> The Being (God) that causes all things to exist through the act of participation must be immutable and simple. That from which all others ultimately receive their own particular limited modes of being, does not simply exist, but is Existence-Itself or Being-Itself (*Ipsum Esse*). He wrote, “If there were a *per se* heat, it would be the cause of all hot things, that have heat by way of participation. Now there is a Being that is its own Being: and this follows from the fact that there must needs be a Being that is pure act [no potentiality, Immutable] and wherein there is no composition [Simple]. Hence from that one Being all other beings that are not their own being, but have being by participation.”<sup>101</sup>

Jan Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) the Flemish mystic explained that all things exist eternally in God beyond space and time. They are present in the eternal ground of the Father and objectify through the Son. “Our created being abides in the Eternal Essence and is one with it in its essential existence.” The image of God “has an eternal immanence in the Divine Essence [Nirguna Brahman] without distinction and an eternal out flowing in the Son in distinction.” “All creatures come forth from the Son eternally and they are known as other, yet not other in all ways because all in God is God.” After which they enter into space and time and eventually, they return to God through the Holy Spirit. “The image of God is that in which God reflects Himself and all things, and in this image all creatures have an eternal life outside themselves, in their Eternal Archetypes.” All creatures reflect the image of God, the Eternal Archetypes in the depth of their soul. “And in the Divine light they see that as [in] regards [to] their essential essence they are that Ground from which the brightness shines forth, and they go forth from themselves above reason in an intuitive gazing, and are transfigured into the light which they see and which they are, and they behold God in all things without distinction in a simple seeing, in the Divine brightness.”<sup>102</sup> “The

image of God is found essentially and personally in all mankind. Each possesses it whole, entire and undivided, and all together not more than one alone. In this way we are all one, intimately united in our eternal image, which is the image of God and the source in us of all our life. Our created essence and our life are attached to it without mediation as to their eternal cause.”<sup>103</sup>

Continuing with this idea, the German mystic Henry Suso (1300-66) and student of Meister Eckhart proclaimed that all beings are one with the Essence of God. The Divine Essence equates with Nirguna Brahman and the Manifestations of God with Saguna Brahman-Ishvara. “All creatures have existed eternally in the Divine Essence, as in their exemplar. So far as they conform to the Divine idea, all beings were, before their creation, one thing with the Essence of God. (God creates into time what was and is in eternity.) Eternally, all creatures are God in God.... So far as they are in God, they are the same life, the same essence, the same power, the same One, and nothing less.”<sup>104</sup>

#### 9) The cause of eternal life:

Vivekananda related, “He [Brahman-Atman] dies not. The same voice, ‘I am, I am,’ is eternal, unchangeable. In Him and through Him we know everything. In Him and through Him we see everything. In Him and through Him we sense, we think, we live, and we are.”<sup>105</sup>

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) indicated that the Self (Atman) "is the subject which persists throughout the changes, the common factor in the states of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth, and final deliverance. It is the simple truth that nothing can destroy. Death does not touch it nor vice dissolve it. Permanence, continuity, unity, eternal activity are its characteristics. It is a world self-complete. There is nothing outside of it to set against it.”<sup>106</sup>

From the Western standpoint Origen (c. 185-254) the Christian Middle Platonists explains it, “If then the heavenly powers receive a share of intellectual light, that is, of the Divine nature, in virtue of the fact that they share in wisdom and sanctification, and if the soul of man receives a share of the same light and wisdom, then these beings will be of one nature and one substance with each other. But the heavenly powers are incorruptible immortal; undoubtedly therefore the substance of the soul of man will also be incorruptible and immortal ... every existence which has a share in that eternal nature must itself also remain forever incorruptible and eternal.” Jerome (c. 343-420) later added that according to Origen,

“the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, all angels ... and even man himself in virtues of his soul’s dignity, are of one substance.”<sup>107</sup>

#### 10) The source of motion and activity:

Nirguna Brahman-Atman is the source of existence, consciousness, and love in the phenomenal world. But since they are immutable, how can they produce change? A partial explanation follows.

Shankara pointed out, “A magnet, though possessing no tendency to act by itself, still induces that tendency in iron; or objects of perception like color etc., which by themselves have no tendency to act, still impart this to the eye etc. Similarly, it is but logical that God who is all-pervasive, the Self [Atman] of all, omniscient, and omnipotent, should be the impeller of all even though He is Himself free from any tendency to act.”<sup>108</sup>

Sankhya-Yoga philosophers and their Vedanta commentators like Vijnanabhiksu (fl. 1550/75) taught the following as explained by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Purusha (the Transcendental-Immanent Self) is the primal Unmoved Mover, which dwells apart from the natural world. “The first cause as well as the final cause, of the cosmic process is Purusha. But the causation of Purusha is purely mechanical, being due not to its volition but to its mere proximity. Purusha moves the world by a kind of action which is not movement. It is compared to the attraction of a magnet [Purusha] for iron [the world].... God, the first mover, is said to move the world by being the object after which the whole creation strives, and not as if it were in any way determined by his action. Concern with the affairs of the world would destroy the completeness of Brahman’s (God’s) life. So God, who is pure intelligence, though himself unmoved, moves the world by his mere being. The further development of things arises from their own nature.” Immutable Purusha is not affected by the events that occur in the world. As the foundation of teleology, all desires and movements that take place in the world are unconsciously and unwittingly motivated by a striving for Purusha the final cause of all events.<sup>109</sup>

A more detailed exposition is given by Aristotle’s (384-322 B.C.) concerning the Unmoved Mover, which is both the First Cause and Final Cause of the universe and its activities. It is possible to believe in a Nondual God and a real dualistic universe. For Aristotle (*Physics*, Book 8), there must be an Unmoved Mover in order to explain the motion of entities. Time is eternal and since “time is the measure of motion,” the latter must also be eternal. Motion is not self-caused and thus cannot

begin without the prior existence of something already in motion.

“Aristotle concludes that there must be something that imparts motion without Itself being moved; otherwise, there would be an infinite regress of movers, the moved and instruments of moving, which is unacceptable.... all movable things are only potentially in motion, and require something else to act upon them in order to be set in motion.... since motion is both eternal and necessary, the First Mover must be equally eternal and necessary.... there is only *one* Unmoved Mover, not only because many Unmoved Movers are unnecessary, but because only one mover could produce a continuous motion, in the sense of being an interconnected system of causes and effects. Moreover, since it is continuous, motion is one; one effect requires a single cause, so that the Unmoved Mover must also be one. He concludes that an Unmoved Mover causing eternal motion must likewise be eternal.”

In *Metaphysics* 12.7 Aristotle concludes according to the commentator, “‘Since that which moves and is moved is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality.’ The First Mover is an eternal, fully actual substance that moves the First Heaven without Itself being moved, either self-moved or moved by something else. Being unmovable, It is fully actual, because, otherwise, It would have potentiality [to change] and therefore not be unmovable.... The Unmoved Mover as Final Cause causes motion by being loved [desired] ... God could not impart motion as the first efficient cause, because to do so God would have to be in motion, and if God were in motion, then God would be moved and movable.... the First Heaven has intelligence, or soul, in order to love the Unmoved Mover and so allow the latter to function as Final Cause.... Its necessity consists in the fact that it cannot be otherwise but can exist only in a single way; in other words, Its necessity is a result of its lacking all potentiality [for change]. The First Mover is also a first principle (*archê*), for the First Mover explains everything else because it causes all motion.” Aristotle writes, “There is a substance which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things. It has been shown also that this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts, and indivisible (for it produces movement through infinite time, but nothing finite has infinite power; and, while every magnitude is either infinite or finite, It cannot, for the above reason, have finite magnitude, and It cannot have infinite magnitude because there is no infinite magnitude at all.”<sup>110</sup> It does not change because It is fully realized having attained everything.

Vivekananda concentrated on the positive approach emphasizing, “It is the real nature of man, the soul [Atman], the Purusha, which is beyond all law of causation. Its freedom is percolating through layers of matter in various forms, intelligence, mind, etc. It is its light which is shining through all.” “He shining, everything else shines. It is His light that they have borrowed, and He is shining through them.” “The bright body is considered as the receptacle of the mind, and the Atman is beyond that. It is not the mind even; it works the mind, and through the mind the body.” “Deification of the world--giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us--and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone. We read at the commencement of one of the oldest of the *Upanishads*, ‘Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord.’”<sup>111</sup>

Without Nirguna Brahman there would be no heavenly or phenomenal world. In this sense, It is the cause of the existence (thatness) of everything, but is It the cause of the specific content and events (whatness) of everything? Does Nirguna Brahman determine the way that Saguna Brahman creates the world? This is a difficult question to answer since Nirguna Brahman transcends every form of human thought and activity including will, reason, and causation.<sup>112</sup>

If the creator of the universe is a nondual Brahman-God, then it transcends reason and all forms of human knowledge since they are a dualistic way of thinking. Consequently, all attempts using reason to explain why a perfect Brahman-God would create an imperfect universe (Theodicy) have their shortcomings.

#### 4. Advaita Ethics and Atma-Dharma

The ethical implications of oneness. Indian: “It is not for the sake of the husband, my beloved, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self [Atman]” (Br. Up.\* 2:4.5, p. 142; 4:5.6). “He who sees all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, hates none” (Is. Up.\* 6, p. 4). “Because he sees the Lord present alike everywhere, he does not injure Self by self” (BG 13:28). “He who thus recognizes the Self through the Self in all created beings becomes equal-minded towards all” (LM 12:125).

Old and New Testament: “The commandments ... are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom. 13:9; cf. Lev. 19:18; Mt. 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27; Gal. 5:14; Jam. 2:8).

The Golden Rule. Indian: “Do naught to others which if done to thee,



would cause the pain” (MB 5:1517). “Treat others as thou would’st thyself be treated. Do nothing to thy neighbor which hereafter thou would’st not have thy neighbor do to thee, in causing pleasure or in giving pain, in doing good, or injury to others” (MB 13:5571). “The supreme yogi ... looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as he looks on them in himself” (BG 6:32).

New Testament: “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12; cf. Lk. 6:31).

### Advaita Ethics Based on the Oneness of Existence

For Swami Vivekananda “Advaita Ethics” is an imperative of prime importance in the modern world. Here he explains the ethical correlates of the doctrine of the oneness of all people and all existence, “Behind everything the same Divinity is existing, and out of this comes the basis of morality. Do not injure another. Love everyone as your own self, because the whole universe is one. In injuring another, I am injuring myself; in loving another, I am loving myself.... Why should I not injure my neighbour? To this question there was no satisfactory or conclusive answer forthcoming, until it was evolved by the metaphysical speculations of the Hindus who could not rest satisfied with mere dogmas. So the Hindus say that this Atman is absolute and all-pervading, therefore infinite. There cannot be two infinities, for they would limit each other and would become finite. Also each individual soul is a part and parcel of that Universal Soul, which is infinite. Therefore in injuring his neighbour, the individual actually injures himself. This is the basic metaphysical truth underlying all ethical codes.... The Vedanta lays down that each man should be treated not as what he manifests, but as what he stands for. Each human being stands for the Divine, and, therefore, every teacher should be helpful, not by condemning man, but by helping him to call forth the Divinity that is within him.... The Vedanta claims that there has not been one religious inspiration, one manifestation of the Divine man, however great, but it has been the expression of that infinite oneness in human nature; and all that we call ethics and morality and doing good to others is also but the manifestation of this oneness. There are moments when every man feels that he is one with the universe, and he rushes forth to express it, whether he knows it or not. This expression of oneness is what we call love and sympathy, and it is the basis of all our ethics and morality. This is summed up in the Vedanta philosophy by the celebrated aphorism, *Tat Tvam Asi*, ‘Thou art

*That.* To every man, this is taught: Thou art one with this Universal Being, and, as such, every soul that exists is your soul; and everybody that exists is your body; and in hurting anyone, you hurt yourself, in loving anyone, you love yourself. As soon as a current of hatred is thrown outside, whomsoever else it hurts, it also hurts yourself; and if love comes out from you, it is bound to come back to you.”<sup>113</sup>

Vivekananda continues, “We have always heard it preached, ‘Love one another.’ What for? That doctrine was preached, but the explanation is here. Why should I love everyone? Because they and I are one. Why should I love my brother? Because he and I are one. There is this oneness; this solidarity of the whole universe. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings that ever lived—all have various bodies, but are the one Soul.”<sup>114</sup> “The other great idea that the world wants from us today ... is that eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe ... There is but one Soul throughout the universe, all is but One Existence.... Where is that eternal sanction [for morality] to be found except in the only Infinite Reality that exists in you and in me and in all, in the Self, in the Soul? The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers—every literature voicing man’s struggle towards freedom has preached that for you—but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and all spirituality.”<sup>115</sup> “What is the reason that I should be moral? You cannot explain it except when you come to know the truth as given in the Gita: ‘He who sees everyone in himself, and himself in everyone, thus seeing the same God living in all, he, the sage, no more kills the Self by the self.’ Know through Advaita that whomsoever you hurt, you hurt yourself; they are all you.”<sup>116</sup>

Swami Turiyananda (1863-1922) of the Ramakrishna Order told his followers, “Speak to others even as you speak to yourself. That is to say, know everyone as your own self. Do you ever get angry with yourself? Even so, behave with others. But that would be possible only when you see your own [Divine] Self existing in others.... Indeed there is a plane of consciousness where everything appears as one’s own Self.” Swami Akhandananda (1866-1937) stated, “When I serve others I serve my own Self, my Atman. Everyone is my Atman.”<sup>117</sup>

Along this line Swami Abhedananda (1866-1939) answered the question, “Why should I love my neighbor as myself? Like Christianity, Vedanta teaches this ideal.... Vedanta gives the rational explanation and tells us why we should love our neighbors as ourselves: Because the true

Self [Atman] of our neighbor is one with our true Self. And that recognition of this spiritual oneness, when understood, is the meaning of love. Love means spiritual oneness, oneness of two souls—that is true love.” All selfishness vanishes when we overcome the idea of our own egocentric separateness, hence the awareness of the oneness of all is the basis of morality. When we love others, we love our own self and when harming others we harm ourselves. We should never injure, hate or cheat others because of the underlying spiritual unity of humanity.<sup>118</sup>

Swami Akhilananda (1894-1962) explained, “Because the Godhead is within each one of us, Vedanta teaches not merely the brotherhood, but the identity of man with man. It says: ‘Thou art That.’ Every soul is your own soul. Every creature is yourself. If you harm anyone, you harm yourself. If you help anyone, you help yourself. Therefore, all feelings of separateness, exclusiveness, intolerance and hatred are not only ‘wrong,’ they are the blackest ignorance, because they deny the existence of the omnipresent Godhead, which is One.”<sup>119</sup>

On this theme Swami Nikhilananda (1895-1973) added, “Maya hides from us the ultimate Truth, which reveals man’s identity with Brahman, as expressed in the Upanishadic statement: ‘That thou art.’ Man is therefore more than the finite or narrow self. He is really the Universal Self, though oblivious of this fact on account of a veil, concealing his true nature. It is the duty of man to recognize and realize his oneness with Brahman.... When a man is asked to love his neighbor, he should also be told that every living being is his neighbor... Universal love is based upon the fundamental oneness of all living beings.”<sup>120</sup> These views were also confirmed and supported by Bal G. Tilak (1856-1920), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), M. Hiriyanna (1871-1950), M. P. V. Kane (1880-1972), and S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975).<sup>121</sup>

### Western Perspectives on the Subject

The French-Swiss leader of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin (1509-64) drew an important moral implication from the idea that the “Image of God” mentioned in the *Bible* dwells in all people. “The great part of them [humans] are most unworthy if they be judged by their own merit. But here Scriptures help in the best way when it teaches that we are not to consider that men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honor and love. However, it is among members of the household of faith that this same image is more

carefully to be noted [Gal. 6:10], in so far as it has been renewed and restored through the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him.... Say 'He is contemptible and worthless'; but the Lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image. Say that you owe nothing for any service of his; but God, as it were, has put him in his own place in order that you may recognize toward him the many and great benefits with which God has bound you to himself. Say that he does not deserve even your least effort for his sake; but the Image of God, which recommends him to you, is worthy of your giving yourself and all your possessions. Now if he has not only deserved no good at your hand, but has also provoked you by unjust acts and curses, not even this is just reason why you should cease to embrace him in love and to perform the duties of love on his behalf.... It is that we remember not to consider men's evil intention but to look upon the Image of God in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them."<sup>122</sup>

Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) concept of the oneness of our "own inner Being-in-Itself" has ethical implications similar to Vivekananda's explanation of Atman. Following Schopenhauer's logic, "The Will is the in-Itself [comparable to the Atman] of every phenomenon, but Itself as such is free from the forms of that phenomenon, and so from plurality. In reference to conduct, I do not know how this truth can be more worthily expressed than by the formula of the *Veda* already quoted: *Tat tvam asi* (*This art thou*). Whoever is able to declare this to himself with clear knowledge and firm inward conviction about every creature with whom he comes in contact, is certain of all virtue and bliss, and is on the direct path to salvation."<sup>123</sup> "The good conscience, the satisfaction we feel after every disinterested deed. It springs from the fact that such a deed, as arising from the direct recognition of our own inner Being-in-Itself [comparable to the Atman] in the phenomenon of another, again affords us the verification of this knowledge, of the knowledge that our true self exists not only in our own person, in this particular phenomenon, but in everything that lives. In this way, the heart feels itself enlarged, just as by egoism it feels contacted.... so the knowledge that every living thing is just as much our own inner Being-in-Itself as is our own person, extends our interest to all that lives; and in this way the heart is enlarged."<sup>124</sup>

Schopenhauer continues, "If that veil of Maya, the *principium individuationis* [principle of individuation], is lifted from the eyes of a man

to such an extent that he no longer makes the egotistical distinction between himself and the person of others, but takes as much interest in the sufferings of other individuals as in his own, and thus is not only benevolent and charitable in the highest degree, but even ready to sacrifice his own individuality whenever several others can be saved thereby, then it follows automatically that such a man recognizing in all beings his own true and innermost Self, must also regard the endless sufferings of all that lives as his own, and thus take upon himself the pain of the whole world. No suffering is any longer strange or foreign to him.”<sup>125</sup> “My true inner being exists in every living thing as directly as It makes itself known in my self-consciousness only to me. In Sanskrit *Tat tvam asi* (*This art thou*) is the formula, the standing expression, for this knowledge. It is this that bursts forth as *compassion* on which all genuine, i.e., disinterested, virtue therefore depends, and whose real expression is every good deed. In the last resort, it is this knowledge to which every appeal to gentleness, leniency, loving-kindness, and mercy instead of justice, is directed. For such an appeal is a reminder of that respect in which we are all one and the same entity.”<sup>126</sup>

Paul Deussen (1845-1919) under the influence of Schopenhauer’s writings, in his Bombay lecture of 1893 stated, “The highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedanta. The Gospels fix quite correctly as the highest law of morality: ‘love your neighbour as your selves.’ But why should I do so, since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbour? The answer is not in the *Bible*, but it is in the *Veda*, is in the great formula ‘Tat tvam asi,’ which gives in three words metaphysics and morals altogether. You shall love your neighbour as yourselves—because you are your neighbour, and mere illusion makes you believe, that your neighbour is something different from yourselves. Or in the words of the *Bhagavadgita*, ‘he who knows himself in everything and everything in himself, will not injure himself by himself.’ This is the sum and tenor of all morality, and this is the standpoint of a man knowing himself as Brahman. He feels himself everything—so he will not desire anything, for he has whatever can be had—he feels himself everything—so he will not injure anything, for nobody injures himself.”<sup>127</sup>

Next we come to the oneness of existence based on the universal will to live or will to exist (on the earthly plane of existence). In 1915, on a small steamer in rural Africa, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) the German-French Nobel Peace Prize winning humanitarian, Christian missionary, and son of a Lutheran-Evangelical pastor was trying to solve the problem of

how modern culture could manifest greater moral depth and energy. Weary with despair, tired and discouraged at sunset, “there flashed upon my mind unforeseen and unsought, the phrase ‘Reverence for Life.’” Schweitzer interpreted this maxim, as an elemental and universal conception for a spiritual and humane ethics. He concluded, “Through Reverence for Life, we come into a spiritual relationship with the universe. The inner depth of feeling we experience through it, gives us the will and capacity to create a spiritual and ethical set of values that enables us to act on a higher plane, because we then feel ourselves truly at home in our world.”<sup>128</sup> “Reverence for life contains everything that expresses love, submission, compassion, the sharing of joy, and common striving for the good of all.”<sup>129</sup> “What is the immediate fact of my consciousness? What do I self-consciously know of myself, making abstractions of all else, from childhood to old age? To what do I always return? We find the simple fact of consciousness in this, *I will to live*.... I cling to life because of my Reverence for Life.” “The immediate facts of human consciousness testify: ‘I am life which wills to live in the midst of life which wills to live.’”<sup>130</sup> Practicing Reverence for Life “my finite will-to-live experiences union with the infinite will in which all life is one.”<sup>131</sup>

For Schweitzer a basic principle of morality is, “good consists in maintaining, promoting, and enhancing life, and that destroying, injuring, and limiting life are evil. Affirmation of the world, which means affirmation of the will-to-live that manifests itself around me, is only possible if I devote myself to other life.... For in world-and life-affirmation and in ethics I carry out the will of the universal will-to-live which reveals itself in me. I live my life in God, in the mysterious Divine personality which I do not know as such in the world, but only experience as mysterious Will within myself. Rational thinking which is free from assumptions ends therefore in mysticism. To relate oneself in the spirit of Reverence for Life to the multiform manifestations of the will-to-live which together constitute the world is ethical mysticism.”<sup>132</sup> “Reverence for Life arising from the will-to-live that has become reflective therefore contains affirmation of life and ethics inseparably combined. It aims to create values, and to realize progress of different kinds which shall serve the material, spiritual, and ethical development of men and mankind.”<sup>133</sup>

On this subject the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) and son of a Protestant Minister wrote, “On the basis of the eternal will of God we have to think of every human being, even the oddest, most villainous or miserable, as one to whom Jesus Christ is Brother and God is Father;

and we have to deal with him on this assumption. If the other person knows that already, then we have to strengthen him in that knowledge. If he does not know it yet, or no longer knows it, our business is to transmit this knowledge to him. On the basis of the knowledge of the humanity of God no other attitude to any kind of fellow man is possible. It is identical with the practical acknowledgement of his human rights and his human dignity. To deny it to him would be for us to renounce having Jesus Christ as Brother and God as Father.”<sup>134</sup>

Modern Catholic writers like Roger Haight, S.J. also write of the ontological unity of the human family. “This extremely vital value in liberation theology points to a deeper ontological truth that should be characterized as a theological supposition, namely, the unity of the human race. Despite enormous cultural differences between peoples, both across the span of recorded history and the spectrum of differentiated situation and ethos today, there is some transcendental unity to the human family. Human beings journey through this life in this world together. This solidarity is being brought home to us in striking ways in the twentieth century; our ontological oneness is assuming ever more concrete and historical forms.... What makes us united with God? The response of liberation theology to this question is that we are ultimately united to God through our being united with the neighbor; we love God through loving the neighbor.”<sup>135</sup>

In summary, prescriptive normative statements concerning what a person “ought to do,” are determined by descriptive statements that pertain to the goals they want to accomplish and those they want to avoid. It is important to establish a moral philosophy that has a solid metaphysical foundation. Atman and the inherent divinity of the Soul (Self) are the foundation of morality. Humans should be respected because within each and every person is: God as the Atman and the Universal Soul (Vivekananda), and our true Self (Abhedananda), the Image of God (Calvin), our own inner Being-in-Itself (Schopenhauer), and the Will-to-Live (Schweitzer). Attaining the realization of the divinity of the soul, an awakened person enters into a spiritual relationship with all aspects of existence.

Another factor to consider is that the Nondualism of Shankara and Vivekananda involves many years of ethical preparation before the enlightenment state can be reached. It is imperative that the spiritual

aspirant lives an exemplary moral life demonstrating the moral virtues such as restraint, honesty, truthfulness, continence, etc.

Since each individual self is at one with the Universal Self, it follows that an individual cannot inflict an injury on another without injuring oneself. To realize that the inner core of another person is Divine is to approach that person with a worshipful spirit. Since our inner nature is Divine, service to humanity properly performed is an elevated form of worship.<sup>136</sup> According to the American Declaration of Independence (1776), “All men [people] are created equal,” which is substantiated by the Atman doctrine.

### Atma-Dharma

Atma-dharma (Duty to the Atman) is the supreme obligation that all people owe to their Atman (Divine Self), the most universal of all dharmas (duties). Dharma concerns one’s actions, systems of beliefs, and values. People are obligated out of a sense of duty to their own higher intrinsic nature, to obey the moral law. Morality (the law of duty) is the law of our higher Self (Atman), the ground of moral obligation, the innermost essence of one’s being, which is necessary for attaining the supreme good. By adhering to dharma which is an unconditional command and moral imperative, a seeker discovers their essential Divinity. Duties to society come and go, but we can never escape our duty to our Atman. It is an overarching moral principle based on metaphysical and ontological principles. One must follow the Divine command of the Atman. As a system of virtue theory it is teleological since it involves the purpose (*telos*) and meaning of human life, the goal being self-realization, striving to realize one’s full potential by becoming a better person. It concerns good thought, feelings, actions; as well as the proper, values, desires, choices, attitudes, interests, perceptions, and expectations. Since we have an ego identification with a particular person our highest duty is to make that person as good as possible.

The consequences are most beneficial both for the society and for the person involved in the act. All moral truths, obligations, and actions are grounded in the fundamental and foundational metaphysical fact of the Atman, our own inherent Divinity. Knowledge of the characteristics of our essential nature (epistemology) informs us as to what is good (ethics) and reasonable. Atman is the metaphysical, axiological, and the soteriological



ultimate. The Atman is essentially the “highest good,” and its commands are obligatory and not arbitrary. There is nothing more sublime than realizing our own Divinity as soon as possible. When people seek happiness, pleasure, wealth, knowledge, etc., they are really seeking without knowing it and in a limited way the bliss of the Atman. Atma-dharma applies to all people in all societies, is not historically conditioned being eternally valid throughout all moments of time, and is applicable in every situation and under all conditions. Morality is both subjective dealing with the inherent character of the individual, their thoughts, feelings, and values and objective concerning the consequences of one’s actions, the desirability and undesirability of an outcome or result. Like all fundamental ethical systems, since it offers only general moral principles to follow, Atma-dharma must be supplemented by other sources of valid moral activity (such as those prescribed by religious scriptures and philosophical texts).

Atma-dharma (Duty to the Atman) is the highest form of morality and all other ethical systems are subsumed under it. It is the highest utility (Utilitarianism), value (Axiology); and the most practical (Pragmatism), results in the best outcome and consequences (Consequentialism), the greatest level of self-development (Evolutionary Ethics), and yields the most happiness (Epicureanism). In addition Atma-Dharma is the highest duty (Deontology) and the supreme virtue (Virtue Ethics).

According to the Utilitarians the best act is morally right if it produces "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" or "the greatest good for the greatest number" by increasing happiness and reducing suffering. Concerning happiness of utmost importance are the number of people involved and the intensity and duration of it. Mental pleasures are different in kind and superior in quality to purely physical ones. Utilitarianism is interested in the aggregate happiness, which is the happiness of everyone, and not just the happiness of a particular person. A rule is deemed moral if its existence increases the greater good. If an action conforms to a moral rule then the act is moral. Utilitarians as social reformers are motivated by the desire to create a better society and realize it is in their own best interest is to promote a well functioning society. For pluralist Utilitarians health, honesty, and knowledge are intrinsic values; while for monists Utilitarians they are extrinsic or instrumental values that are means to the one intrinsic value of happiness, which is an end in-itself. To say that something has intrinsic value means

that other virtues are grounded in it and that it is good in-itself.<sup>137</sup> The monistic position that happiness is the most important virtue is questionable since many great thinkers would prefer to have wisdom than happiness. Also, the wisdom of a Plato and Aristotle has influenced millions of people and brought them happiness, while the happiness of the most joyful people has probably had far less impact on others.

Axiology is the study and judgment of the nature, criteria, and metaphysical status of value, which include pleasure, virtue, and knowledge. Intrinsic values such as the true, the beautiful, and the holy are good in themselves. While extrinsic or instrumental value is a means to something else. Judgment of value concerns the goodness or badness, desirability or undesirability of objects, ends, experiences, dispositions, or states of affairs.<sup>138</sup>

Pragmatic ethics places the emphasis on the practical implications of an idea. What counts is the usefulness of the activity since the tasks of ethics is to solve practical problems in concrete situations. In doing so it concentrates on how morality is embedded in and relative to social and cultural events.

For consequentialism (also referred to as teleological ethics) a moral act is judged by the results it produces. A morally right act is one that will produce a good outcome and is judge by the consequences of the act. Emphasis is on future events not the past. While negative consequentialism seeks to minimize bad consequences.

Evolutionary Ethics explores the impact of evolutionary processes on ethics and self-development. They consider natural selection to be a major factor in determining moral behavior and moral sensitivity and consequently we are genetically inclined to be moral. Lawrence Kohlberg stated as children evolve their understanding of moral principles process through different stages of moral development. First they consider moral principles to be fixed rules governing reward and punishment, then as conventional social norms, and at a later stage as abstract principles of what is objectively right and wrong. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) believed that anything which supported the evolutionary process is good since evolution is progress for the better. If evolution advances the moral good, we ought to support it.

According to the ethics of Epicureanism, everything that brings happiness is good and all things that bring pain are bad. Pleasure and joys of the mind and to a lesser extent of the body are the ultimate goal of all human beings.

Virtue ethics concentrates on the moral character of the individual concerning virtues and vices, motives, and moral wisdom, rather than on the consequences of their action. Of fundamental importance is what sorts of person we should become and how we should live. It aims to cultivate specific moral traits such as generosity, honesty, compassion, kindness, courage, self-discipline, and unselfishness as the fundamental principle of morality. The goal of a society is to produce as many people with these desirable characteristics as possible. Acting in a virtuous manner involves feeling, thought, and will. Virtues are positive potentials residing in human nature that are actualized by leading a good life. Some virtues such as honesty and truthfulness are universal, while others are grounded in a particular time and culture. Certain methods must be followed in order to attain a virtuous character. We must first 'do this' before we can 'be this.' A system of virtue theory relates to the purpose and meaning of human life. Virtue is not reduced to another normative concept that is taken to be more fundamental.<sup>139</sup> Phronesis is a type of "Practical Virtue," the wisdom relevant to action involving both good judgment and moral character. It involves making decisions to act properly in a particular situation.

According to Swami Medhananda virtue ethics were taught by Swami Vivekananda, which is brought out in the following quote, "Doing good to others is virtue (Dharma); injuring others is sin. Strength and manliness are virtue; weakness and cowardice are sin. Independence is virtue; dependence is sin. Loving others is virtue; hating others is sin. Faith in God and in one's own Self is virtue; doubt is sin. Knowledge of oneness is virtue; seeing diversity is sin. The different scriptures only show the means of attaining virtue."<sup>140</sup>

Swami Vivekananda taught we become more selfless by performing virtuous action. If we see God in everyone then we will be virtuous helping, and sympathizing with other people. To attain to spiritual fulfillment one should be moral and cultivate a virtuous character. Moral behavior is a means to the end of realizing God. Vivekananda indicated, "Behind everything the same divinity is existing, and out of this comes the basis of morality. Do not injure another. Love everyone as your own self, because the whole universe is one. In injuring another, I am injuring myself; in loving another, I am loving myself." "We shall find that the philosophy of duty, whether it be in the form of ethics or of love, is the same as in every other Yoga--the object being the attenuating of the lower self, so that the real higher Self [Atman] may shine forth--the lessening of the frittering

away of energies on the lower plane of existence, so that the soul may manifest itself on the higher ones.” “Let the whole body be full of that one ideal, ‘I am the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious Soul.’ Think on it day and night; think on it till it becomes part and parcel of your life.”<sup>141</sup>

Deontologists hold that morality consists in fulfilling ones duties and obligations. General moral duties apply to all people, such as being truthful, honest, kind, etc., while specific duties depend on ones place in society. Certain duties are universal like feeding ones children. Deontologists derive the rightness or wrongness of a persons conduct from the motives and character of the behaviour itself rather than on the outcomes it produces. For an organization (such as the Ramakrishna Order) to run efficiently its members must follow their duties, which is an important aspect of karma yoga. Vivekananda considered, “Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action, and is our duty; any action that makes us go downward is evil, and is not our duty.”<sup>142</sup>

Human dharmas (duties) pertain to societal laws, moral obligations, religious practices, social duties, and customs. Dharmas include moral obligations and duties: to be performed by all people based on values and norms like kindness, truthfulness, and so on (sadharana-dharma); fulfilling one’s vocational or caste duties (varna-dharma); uniquely individual duties (sva-dharma) based on the person’s essential nature (sva-bhava); stages of life duties (ashrama-dharma); and striving for spiritual development (Atma-dharma). Duties are also performed toward one’s family, friends, political unit (city, nation), and groups a person belongs to.<sup>143</sup> Dharma not only deals with one’s actions but also their systems of beliefs and values.

Metaethics is the branch of ethics that seeks to comprehend the nature, scope, and meaning of ethical properties, statements, attitudes, and judgments. While normative ethics deals with practices and principles of action concerning questions like “What should I do,” metaethics seeks to understand the assumptions underlying normative theories. It raises questions such as “Why should I be moral?” and “What is goodness?” Metaethics investigates the meaning of moral terms or judgments (moral semantics); the nature of moral judgments, are they universal or do they vary from society to society (moral ontology); and how they are supported or defended, empirically, rationally, or through intuition (moral epistemology). It is a metatheory since it operates on a higher level of abstraction than normative ethics by investigating its underlying background assumptions.

Morality is both subjective dealing with the inherent character of the individual, their thoughts, feelings, and values (Axiology); and objective concerning the consequences of one's actions, the desirability and undesirability of an outcome or result. Plato (427-327 B.C.) and Immanuel Kant taught moral and ethical rationalism, that moral truths or at least general moral principles are knowable *a priori*, through reason. In addition, moral principles and facts are also known empirically through observation and experience. It is also possible to have direct intuitive or *a priori* awareness (without inference) of objective moral properties or moral truths (such as the property of goodness).<sup>144</sup> Are moral principles mind-independent having an objective existence existing outside of human thought like Platonic Ideals? Some ethical principles are universal applying to everyone and others vary from one society, group, and historical period to another. In which case it depends how the ethical principles interrelate with the other aspects of the society.

A universal foundation for ethics and morality is provided by Atma-dharma in at least three ways. First, it is spatially universal applying to all people in all societies of this world regardless of culture, race, gender, religion, nationality, or other distinguishing feature; and to people in any other world. Second, it is temporally universal and not historically conditioned, unchanging and eternally valid throughout all moments of time. Third, it is applicable in every situation and under all conditions.

Atma-dharma is what Immanuel Kant referred to in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) as a Categorical Imperative [Unconditional Command]. Differing in some ways from Kant's version of the Categorical Imperative, it has the same objectives. It is universal moral obligation applying to all people at all times, impartial and based on reason, the highest form of ethics, and the *summum bonum* or greatest good being the supreme goal of life. Atma-dharma is an end in itself, not a means to another end that is based on human desires and dispositions; is intrinsically good without qualification and instrumentally good leading to the supreme goal of life; and is the supreme duty and obligation both to ourself and to other people. Its findings are based on the spiritual experience of the great souls. As universal laws are the foundations of the natural science, so Atma-dharma is a universal principle based on the ontology of existence that is central to human morality and development. Divine Commands proceed not only from a Personal God, but from our own essence and inherent divinity (Atman).<sup>145</sup>

Swami Vivekananda informs us, “We shall find that the philosophy of duty, whether it be in the form of ethics or of love, is the same as in every other Yoga--the object being the attenuating of the lower self, so that the real higher Self [Atman] may shine forth--the lessening of the frittering away of energies on the lower plane of existence, so that the soul may manifest itself on the higher ones.”<sup>146</sup>

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) the German-American theologian explains that the theonomous form of religion “becomes ontological. It asserts (in agreement with the predominant trend of classical theology) that the law given by God is man’s Essential Nature, put against him as law. If man were not estranged from himself, if his essential nature were not distorted in his actual existence, no law would stand against him. The law is not strange to man. It is natural law. It represents his true nature from which he is estranged. Every valid ethical commandment is an expression of man’s essential relation to himself, to others and to the universe. This alone makes it obligatory and its denial self-destructive. This alone accounts for the unconditional form of the moral imperative.” Theonomy is “a principle or law that fulfills the law of one’s own being by uniting it with the ground and source of all being.” The authority of the moral imperative is derived from the ontological nature of a person, which is his or her own Essential Self.<sup>147</sup> All righteous acts aid in removing the barriers and bring us closer to our true Self. The moral law is both an expression of an individual’s higher spiritual Self; and the will and commands of God based on his/her goodness.

The Indian writer Balbir Gauchhwal adds, “Good then, becomes an essential or intrinsic attribute of reality insofar as it comes to be humanly conceived as the counterpart of the essential being of man [Svabhava or Atman], and therefore, the object of realization by him.... Hindu thought, is that ethics—understood as the subjective principle of acting as determined by the objective law of goodness [Sva-dharma or Atma-dharma]—and religion, regarded as the realization of this goodness either as the law of one's selfhood, or as one's law identical with God's ... the passionate search made by the Hindus to account for reality in terms of an eternal moral order whose laws are absolutely immutable and impersonal in their metaphysics aspect, and so absolutely unconditional in their application to human will in their ethical aspects.... Consequently, the highest good comes to be conceived, respectively, as self-realization, and as the attaining of a living communion with God [God-realization]. Corresponding to these two ways in which the goal to be attained is

represented, two springs of ethical activity are accepted. These are, respectfully, purification of the self and the undertaking of activity as the fulfillment of the will and command of God. In respect to the former aspect, the self [Atman] is looked upon as in itself the law of absolute goodness in much the same way as Brahman is conceived as the perfection of the law."<sup>148</sup> Thus, Brahman and God are the highest Reality (metaphysics, ontology), Goodness (ethics), and Value (axiology).

Concerning Axiology, something is intrinsically valuable if it is good in itself, such as happiness, virtue, knowledge, etc. Extrinsic values are beneficial only as a means to something else or for its own sake. The chain of extrinsic values must come to an end somewhere and that limit can only be an intrinsic value.<sup>149</sup>

## 5. Western Insights on Swami Vivekananda's Presentation of the Atman

In the West, leading philosophers like Georg Hegel, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and Albert Schweitzer vehemently opposed the idea of the world as an appearance. The middle two purposely turning British philosophy away from Neo-Hegelianism and the teachings of F. H. Bradley (Absolute idealism) that were in vogue in England at that time to Analytical Philosophy. Bradley's reasons for considering the phenomenal world to be an appearance (e.g., that space, time, relations, etc. are contradictory) are closer to the Indian Buddhist Nagarjuna than to the Hindu perspective. Interestingly, Bradley's fellowship did not require for him to teach these ideas to his students. His approach was far too negative. The contrast is between reality (this world) and ultimate reality (the higher world), not between appearance and reality. As Vivekananda stated, "The soul passing through its different stages goes from truth to truth, and each stage is true; it goes from lower truth to higher truth."<sup>150</sup> Its replacement, Analytical Philosophy under the leadership of B. Russell, G. E. Moore, L. Wittgenstein, A. J. Ayer, and others including Americans proved to be very successful in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was a switch from metaphysics to secular epistemology, resembling in some ways the non-religious aspects of the Indian Nyaya School of Philosophy and to a lesser extent Vaishesika.

Following G. E. Moore's (1873-1958) Common Sense Realism there is no need for a logical proof of the world's existence, because it is a self-evident fact known through direct perception, which is self-validating.

Veridical sense experience is foundational that does not require support from any other source of knowledge (else we run into an endless infinite regress or circular reasoning). Before him Rene Descartes (1596-1650) taught the indubitable truth, “I think, therefore I exist.” The fact that we think can never be doubted. It is impossible to think without existing. A self-evident truth is a statement in which its denial implies a contradiction. Other examples include: all bachelors are unmarried (by definition); a whole is greater than or equal to, any of its parts; and in logic, “All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal.”<sup>151</sup>

In 1896, Swami Vivekananda wanted to give a couple of speeches at Oxford University, but this did not come to pass. If so it is possible he might have made contact with the Oxford-Cambridge philosophers like F. H. Bradley, J. M. E. McTaggart (a believer in reincarnation), G. E. Moore, B. Russell, and A. N. Whitehead and possibly had some impact on their way of thinking.

The Indian Madhva (1238-1317) the founder of Dvaita (Dualistic-Theistic) Vedanta anticipated the modern Western School of Philosophical Realism. As G. E. Moore opposed F. H. Bradley’s idea that the world is an appearance, so also Madhva took issue with Shankara’s mayavadin concept that the world is related to Reality as an apparent snake to a real rope. According to Madhva’s realistic epistemology, our daily experiences confirm that it is an undeniable fact that the world exists and is real. Our normal experiences and perceptions are constantly being tested and most often found to be true and valid. The validity of sense experience in attaining knowledge is fundamental to our understanding of all things. The denial of the validity of sense perception as a means of knowledge completely contradicts our experiences, and undermines our ability to know things. Perception and inference must be innately valid and the reality they present to us must be actual. Without them we could not distinguish truth from falsity, and no scientific progress would be possible. Perception and inference are also necessary in order to know the content of religious scripture, which is understood in consonance with the data we receive from everyday life experience.<sup>152</sup>

Madhva’s philosophy is referred to as Dualistic (Theistic) in that Brahman (God) and the Jiva (Individual person) are two independent principles that are eternally separate and real. But Dvaita Vedanta is also Pluralistic in that according to Madhva each of Brahman’s multiple attributes are separate with varying characteristics and the empirical world is composed of a multitude of diverse objects.



Consequently, it was necessary for Vivekananda to teach Advaita Vedanta to the public employing the more positive approach that our Essential Nature is the Atman, our true Self. The world is not an illusion, but properly understood is Divine. This provided a life-affirming, realistic, and individualistic approach to the subject. The Nondual experience is not the losing of self but the acquiring of a new Self that is our true nature and individuality. According to Advaita, the end of all religions is the realizing of our divinity as the Atman.

Of Scottish descent, Professor Ninian Smart (1927-2001) added an additional insight concerning Vivekananda's teachings, "In reaching back into the Hindu heritage, Vivekananda picked on Advaita Vedanta, which he modified into a modern form. This argued that the eternal Self [Atman] in each being is identical with the Divine Being, Brahman. While in its classical form it argued that the universe as perceived by us as consisting of separate beings is in the higher truth illusory, made of maya; Vivekananda was more realist and world affirming. Truths about the world would remain true, though at a lower level. The higher truth signifies the identity of Brahman and Atman, the Divine Being and the Self."<sup>153</sup>

As explained by Marie Louise Burke (Sister Gargi) (1912-2004) author of the six-volume biographical masterpiece *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, "If I have rightly understood Vivekananda's teachings to the West, the centre lay in his teaching of the Self—the Atman. His reiterated definition of man as not body or mind but pure, infinite Spirit ... It remained for Swami Vivekananda to place Self-knowledge (with a capital S) on a rational, scientific and empirical or experiential basis, congenial to Western tradition. He explained from many angles and with closely reasoned argument the logical necessity of the unchanging Self; he discussed in detail the methods to be employed in its discovery, and, because the West automatically asked the question 'What Good is it?' he pointed out its utility. With prophetic urgency, he insisted that Western man experience for himself the indescribable wonder of his own Being. This done, all else—utility and all—would follow.... As defined by Swami Vivekananda, religion in its essence is the realisation and manifestation of man's own divinity. The Supreme Being, which all religions seek, is the God within. He is one's Self."<sup>154</sup>

As Professor Emeritus James Michael G. Fell, of Mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania describes it, "The reality which any finite being appears to possess does not really belong to that finite being as such, but to Brahman which underlies it. And yet Brahman is not to be thought of as

separate from the finite beings which It underlies. Each finite being is Brahman Itself [as Atman]—not a part of Brahman, but the ‘whole’ of It! The difficulty is only that we perceive it wrongly.... In truth there is nothing but God; diversity is only an appearance. At the heart of our being, we are one with God and with each other. We are infinite, all-knowing, all-loving, pure, and perfect [Atman]. The realization of this our Divine nature is the real urge behind every aspiration of every living creature. This is the core of Swami Vivekananda message to the world today.”<sup>155</sup>

On this subject three Lecturers in Philosophy at Open University the largest academic institution in the United Kingdom, Diane Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson came to the following logical conclusions concerning Vivekananda’s teachings, “The Atman or soul has no shape or form, and if it has neither shape nor form, it must be omnipresent, since whatever is without shape or form is without limit, and whatever has no limit or boundary logically cannot be located in a particular place. Again, time, space, and causality, the preconditions for and generators of the phenomenal world of individuals, pertain to the mind but not to the soul. If Atman is beyond space, time, and causality, it must be infinite. If Atman is infinite, it must be One. If Atman is omnipresent, infinite One, Atman and Brahman must be one and the same: thus Vivekananda returns to the classic doctrine of the *Upanishads*.... Vivekananda’s Nondualist metaphysic entails that our ordinary concept of the self as a limited individual is merely an instance of nama-rupa [limitations of name and form]. Our real nature, our true individuality, does not reside either in bodily identity or a set of memories or a congeries of habits. All these are mutable, and could form the basis only for a frail, inconstant individuality. The truth concerning our real nature is quite otherwise: ‘There is no individuality except in the infinite ... We are not individuals yet. We are struggling towards individuality; and that is the Infinite. That is the real nature of man.’ The real Self is the Atman, and the Atman and Brahman are one and the same. The real Self is Divine.”<sup>156</sup>

Professor Gustav Mensching (1901-78), head of the Department of Comparative Religion at the University of Bonn, Germany (1936-72) comprehended, “The ancient Aryan seers had a new task. They had realized that all their searches in the outer world could not give them the answer, even if they sought after it for centuries. They struck upon another path and taught that all aspirations of the senses and the desire for customs and external formalities cover up the truth with a veil which cannot be removed by these customs. They realized that they had to

come back to themselves and they found the truth there. The outside world failed and they turned towards the inner one. And from that came forth the philosophy of Vedanta. The eternal truth is only in the soul, the primeval basis of all existence.”<sup>157</sup>

## 6. The Atman and Western Personalism

In his later years the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) the son of a Rabbi saw the emergence of a new religion that would guide the West, which he called “the cult of the individual.” Europe is in a state of transition becoming more and more diverse and individualized. This new religion will form around the sacred object of the human person as represented in the individual. It is an outcome of the line of thinking that was established during the Enlightenment (c. 1637--1800). This collective dynamism first manifested in the democratic revolutions taking place in the United States, Europe and elsewhere during the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its ideals are human dignity, individualism, the inalienable rights of man; an autonomous individual endowed with rationality, born both free and equal to all other individuals; pursuing the moral ideals of equality, freedom, and justice; tolerance and promotion of differences, the autonomy of reason and free inquiry, with respect for scientific truths. Durkheim predicted that European society would once again find the unity and cohesion it was lacking; it would again have a sacred object.<sup>158</sup> Durkheim’s individualism is a stepping-stone to spiritual individualism, which includes many of the same values only on a higher plane.

When Swami Vivekananda’s told people they are the Atman, his approach is highly personalistic. For example, he explained, “It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realise Him.... He for whom you have been seeking all over the world ... is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it.”<sup>159</sup> His presentation of the Atman (which is related to the Western appreciation of the individual) and the practice of yoga, in some essential ways are compatible with the modern philosophy known as “Personalism.” The United States and the United Kingdom (along with Australia) where Vivekananda lectured are today considered by sociologists to be the most individualistic oriented countries in the world. There is a prevalent tendency in modern heterogeneous societies toward religious individualism. Stress is on moral responsibility of the individual toward his or her own self. Yoga with its

emphasis on contemplative introspection is certainly compatible with religious individualism. Emphasis on the Atman injects into people a confidence in their own powers, and awakes in them the dormant sense of their dignity. The idea of the divinity of the soul stresses the spiritual equality of all people. The yogi, “Sees only Brahman equally present. Knows his own Atman, in every creature, and all creation within that Atman” (BG 6:29). Vivekananda expressed Vedantic ideas in a highly personalistic, concrete, and charming manner, as compared to the dry scholastic abstract intellectual approach of some writers. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “What most clearly distinguishes Vedantic Personalism from Western Personalism is that the former builds on the fundamental teaching of all Vedanta that the true Self exists beyond the limitations of the transient body and the mind, and beyond the tendency—called in Sanskrit the *ahamkara* [ego], literally, the “I-maker”—to identify with these, whereas Western Personalism is often characteristically defined in terms which from the perspective of Vedanta must be seen as pertaining to the mental level, or sometimes, in particular in the twentieth century, to the physical body.... [Its goal is] the actualization of our true and higher nature as consciousness, as the *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being/Eternity, Knowledge, and Bliss).”<sup>160</sup>

It is best to think of Western Personalism as a “worldview,” since it represents more than one school of thought, yet there is an essential commonality between each of them. Personalism locates ultimate reality and value in personhood, both human and Divine. The title Personalism can therefore legitimately be applied to any school of philosophy that emphasizes the reality of the person. Personalists believe that the person (like the Atman) should be the ontological and epistemological focus of philosophical reflection, which gives meaning to all of reality and constitutes its supreme value. Phenomenological and Existential Personalism point beyond themselves, indicating a transcendence of the person, not reducible either to its human manifestations or to the sum-total of those manifestations.

Like Vivekananda, Personalistic philosophy affirms the dignity of the person, the inherent essential value of all people. Human dignity from this standpoint does not depend on intellectual, social, moral, or athletic skills or virtues (empirical existence), but is rooted in human nature itself, thus at the deepest level, all people share this dignity. Personalism lays stress on the unity of self-consciousness, on interiority, and personal autonomy. People act not in a purely deterministic way, but from their inner self, as a

subjective “I,” with the power of self-determination, self-mastery, and freedom. Since we are the authors of our actions, we possess an identity of our own making, which cannot be reduced to objective analysis. Humans experience themselves first of all not as objects but as subjects, not from the outside but from within, and thus they are present to themselves in a way that no other reality can be present to them. Personalists are quick to assert that personality is not superadded to humanity, but a quality of every human being.

Swami Vivekananda often spoke from the standpoint of the person, and it was the Personalist philosophers in the West who were attracted to his teachings. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* list five American philosophers as representatives of Personalism who were active when Swami Vivekananda was in the West, and interestingly each had a relationship with Vedanta. First, there was Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910) a Methodist minister of Boston University whose ideas are discussed in a book of comparative philosophy titled *Ramanuja and Bowne* (Bombay, 1962) by F. K. Lazarus. Bowne lectured in India between December 1905 and March 1906. Three Harvard philosophers are designated as Personalists: William James (1842–1910) of Harvard University an admirer of Vivekananda; Josiah Royce (1855–1916) who in 1897, together with James signed a letter of tribute expressing the need for Vivekananda to return from India to the United States; and William Ernest Hocking (1873–1966) a professor at Yale and Harvard University’s who attended the Parliament of Religions in 1893 and wrote this about Vivekananda’s opening address, “For me, this doctrine was a startling departure from anything which my scientific psychology could then recognize. One must live with these ideas and consider how one’s inner experience could entertain them. But what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he knew, not from what he had been told.” A few years later Hocking was present at two of Vivekananda’s informal classes in Cambridge, Massachusetts one at the home of Sara Bull and revealed, “It was in these informal gatherings that the quality of the man most directly spoke, and I was confirmed in my regard and my purpose to rethink my philosophical foundations.”<sup>161</sup>

The fifth American Personalist, George H. Howison (1834–1916) Professor of Philosophy extended an invitation to Swami Abhedananda (1866–1939) to lecture on “Vedanta Philosophy” for an hour and a half before 400 faculty members and students at the University of California, Berkeley in 1901. This special event was held only once every three years

at the University. Abhedananda was preceded by speakers Josiah Royce (1895) and William James (1898). Following Howison's system of "Personal Idealism," God a supreme Person could not exist without other persons or other persons without God, because of the social nature of personality. Self-consciousness and true personality are possible to God, only if there are other free spirits to whom He can interact with. Being an absolutely Perfect Being, God is affectingly related to other persons and His ideal nature is the standard by which they are measured. For Howison, Personal God who is an infinite nonspatial Being, is not the creator of the universe but its Final Cause, the goal, ideal, and supreme end of human existence toward which all life is struggling. He avoids the theodicy problem (of explaining the imperfections of the world) since God did not create the universe. Since that time the most prominent American Personalist is Edgar S. Brightman (1884–1953) of Boston University, who led the Philosophy Department from 1919 until his death. He "had a deep and personal appreciation and affection for" Swami Akhilananda (1894–1962) leader of the Boston-Providence Ramakrishna Vedanta Center.<sup>162</sup>

Reverend Martin Luther King (1929–68) the Afro-American Civil Rights leader acknowledged, "I studied philosophy and theology at Boston University under Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf ... It was mainly under these teachers that I studied Personalistic philosophy—the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality. This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism insistence that only personality—finite and infinite—is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality."<sup>163</sup>

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, tr. Bertha Bracey and Richenda Payne (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> BRU, II.4.12. Foreign words for soul, spirit include Atmos (Greek) and Anima (Roman).

<sup>3</sup> VC, pp. 62–64; #124–35.

<sup>4</sup> VC, pp. 64, 77, 79, 81, 141; #139, 202, 211, 220–22, 535.

<sup>5</sup> BSB, II.3.7; Radhakrishnan, II, pp. 475–87, 549, 607.

<sup>6</sup> CW, II:78.

<sup>7</sup> CW, I:384-85; II:249.

<sup>8</sup> CW, II:414.

<sup>9</sup> CW, II:196.

<sup>10</sup> CW, II:39.

<sup>11</sup> CW, I:420.

<sup>12</sup> CW, VIII: 237; III:341-42, 435; VIII:237.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Rollmann, "Deussen, Nietzsche and Vedanta", *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1978), pp. 125-32. One comparative study is Ram Lal Singh, *An Inquiry Concerning Reason in Kant and Samkara* (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> CPR, B158.

<sup>15</sup> CPR, A350.

<sup>16</sup> CPR, A780.

<sup>17</sup> CPR, A492.

<sup>18</sup> CPR, A538-40=B566-68.

<sup>19</sup> CPR, A553-54=B581-82; cf. Gopal Stavig, "Shankara, Kant and Schopenhauer," *Darshana International* 39 (Oct. 1999), pp. 17-35; G. Stavig, "Shankara, Kant and Schopenhauer on Reality and Phenomenality," *VK* 90 (Feb. 2003), pp. 62-67.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in *Religion in the Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, eds., J. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz (Princeton NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1967), pp.185-93.

<sup>21</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, tr. P. Koestenbaum (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), pp. L-LVII.

<sup>22</sup> Husserl (1975), pp. LVII-LX; William Sahakian, *History of Philosophy* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 330-31; R. Puligandla, "Phenomenological Reduction and Yogic Meditation," *Philosophy East and West* (1970), pp. 17-33.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. R. Kimball (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 13-15, 17, 22-23, 25; Hick, pp. 58-59.

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, I, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> Radhakrishnan, I, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup> For a general discussion of Atman see: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ātman\\_\(Hinduism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ātman_(Hinduism)). A good portion of Section 1 appeared in an article by G. Stavig in the PB (Oct-Nov. 2015), pp. 593-95, 656-63.

<sup>27</sup> CW, II:249.

<sup>28</sup> CW, II:431.

<sup>29</sup> BSB, I.3.19. Ātman is a central topic in the *Upanishads*.

<sup>30</sup> CW, VII:501.

<sup>31</sup> CW, II:202, 236-37.

<sup>32</sup> CW, I:388.

<sup>33</sup> CW, II:82.

<sup>34</sup> CW, III:20.

<sup>35</sup> CW, VIII:262.

<sup>36</sup> CW, IV:145-46.

<sup>37</sup> CW, II:78.

<sup>38</sup> CW, VII:7.

<sup>39</sup> Radhakrishnan, I, pp. 152, 157-58.

<sup>40</sup> William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), pp. 28-29

<sup>41</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Breakthrough*, tr. M. Fox (New York: Image, 1977), pp. 214-15, 217-18.

<sup>42</sup> John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978), p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> Huxley, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Radhakrishnan, II, pp. 485, 540; cf. J. Politella, "Meister Eckhart and Eastern Wisdom," *Philosophy East and West* (1965), pp. 117-33.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh Nicholson, *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 138, 166-67. This book compares Shankara ideas with those of Eckhart.

<sup>46</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism)

<sup>47</sup> CW, III:109.

<sup>48</sup> WWR, I, p. 282; II, pp. 182, 195.

<sup>49</sup> WWR, I, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Shoei Ando, *Zen and American Transcendentalism* (Japan: Hokuseido Press, 1970), pp. 72-74.

<sup>51</sup> S. L. Frank, *The Unknowable* (London: Ohio University Press, 1939, 1983), pp. 72-74.

<sup>52</sup> HCT, p. 194.

<sup>53</sup> Tillich, I, p. 206.

<sup>54</sup> HCT, pp. 438-39, 447, 539-40.

<sup>55</sup> Tillich, II, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 1 (1946), p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *The Essential Tillich*, ed. F. Forrester Church (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 191; *PB* (June 1970), p. 219.

<sup>58</sup> BG\*, p. 7. Aldous Huxley was a writer and philosopher who produced nearly 50 books, both novels and non-fiction. He wrote the Forward to Nikhilananda's translation of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (1942) and the Introductions to Prabhavananda and Isherwood's *Bhagavad Gita* (1944). His magnum opus *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945) illustrates similarities between Western and Eastern mysticism. Between 1941 and 1960, Huxley contributed over fifty articles to *Vedanta and the West* published by the Vedanta Society of Southern California, the *Vedanta Kesari*, or *Prabuddha Bharata*. In addition he wrote sixteen essays in *Vedanta for the Western World* (1945) and ten essays for *Vedanta for Modern Man* (1951). He also appeared as a speaker at the Vedanta Society in Hollywood and Santa Barbara (Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldous\\_Huxley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldous_Huxley); [www.vedantawritings.com/HVS4.pdf](http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS4.pdf); [www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf](http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf)).

<sup>59</sup> Hick, pp. 28-29.



<sup>60</sup> Web: [www.hinduwebsite.com/ask/pure-consciousness.asp](http://www.hinduwebsite.com/ask/pure-consciousness.asp);  
[www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/essays/pure-consciousness.asp](http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/essays/pure-consciousness.asp)

<sup>61</sup> The three paragraphs on the Witness Self are drawn largely from the 2016 lectures of Swami Sarvapriyananda. Much is from the *Panchadashi* (1386-91) a comprehensive manual of Advaita Vedanta written by the South Indian Vidyaranya (c. 1296-1391). A sample of these ideas can be found at Web: [youtube.com/watch?v=Jmfo0xZ-5R8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Jmfo0xZ-5R8) “How to Create The Eternal Witness Swami Sarvapriyananda.”

<sup>62</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakshi\\_\(Witness\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakshi_(Witness))

<sup>63</sup> To gain more understanding on this subject the following is highly recommended, Web: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls3NoRZD550>, particularly after 26 minutes into Swami Sarvapriyananda’s lecture. This is his third lecture on “Contemplating Non-duality at Dawn.”

<sup>64</sup> Web: [www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/witness-self](http://www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/witness-self)

<sup>65</sup> “Who is the Witness of the Mind?” Swami Sarvapriyananda, Web: [youtube.com/watch?v=XRmeL7UqE\\_g](https://youtube.com/watch?v=XRmeL7UqE_g)

<sup>66</sup> For a general discussion of Atman see: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ātman\\_\(Hinduism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ātman_(Hinduism)).

<sup>67</sup> A good portion of this section appeared in an article by G. Stavig in the PB (Oct-Nov. 2015), pp. 593-95, 656-63.

<sup>68</sup> Web: [iep.utm.edu/existent](http://iep.utm.edu/existent)

<sup>69</sup> C. G. Jung, *Psychology and the East*, tr. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 52.

<sup>70</sup> VC, pp. 62-64; #125-27, 132, 135.

<sup>71</sup> VC, p. 80; # 216-17.

<sup>72</sup> CW, I:381; II:305.

<sup>73</sup> CW, II:133.

<sup>74</sup> CW, II:321-22.

<sup>75</sup> CW, I:471.

<sup>76</sup> CW, II:233.

<sup>77</sup> CW, II:214.

<sup>78</sup> Web: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyzEoZIKnuc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyzEoZIKnuc)

<sup>79</sup> *Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 1105-06.

<sup>80</sup> CW, I:299.

<sup>81</sup> Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 34-35.

<sup>82</sup> BSB, II.2.31.

<sup>83</sup> CW, II:266-67; III:404-05; cf. I:362; IV:380-81.

<sup>84</sup> CW, I:299; cf. I:254-55; II:360-61; IV:382.

<sup>85</sup> CPR, A101-04, 106-08.

<sup>86</sup> CPR, B407-08.

<sup>87</sup> CPR, B132-34, 137.

<sup>88</sup> CW, II:196, 282-83.

<sup>89</sup> CW, I:254-55.

<sup>90</sup> CPR, A541=B59.

<sup>91</sup> CPR, A553=B581.

<sup>92</sup> CW, I:324.

<sup>93</sup> *Vedanta for the Western World*, ed. Christopher Isherwood (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 64. Swami Prabhavananda's initiated disciples include: Christopher Isherwood (1904-86) author of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (1965), Gerald Heard (1889-1971) a professional writer who deeded the entire Trabuco land and facilities to the Vedanta Society of Southern California for the Ramakrishna monastery, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) who wrote the seminal *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), John van Druten (1901-57) winner of the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for writing the best play of the year, and Joseph Kaplan (1902-91) chairman of the Department of Physics at the University of California, Los Angeles (Web: [www.vedantawritings.com/HVS4.pdf](http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS4.pdf); [www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf](http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf)).

<sup>94</sup> Enneads, V, 1.7. For the S. MacKenna translation see, Web: [classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.html)

<sup>95</sup> Huxley, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Sudhindra Chakravarti, *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaishnavism* (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1969), p. 274.

<sup>97</sup> CW, II:416-18; cf. V:274. When Vivekananda spoke in the 1890s the term Atman was not well known in the West, so he would use synonyms like Soul or Self.

<sup>98</sup> ST, I, 105.4-5. For another translation see, Web: [www.newadvent.org/summa/1.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1.htm)

<sup>99</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, eds. J. Hopkins and H. Richardson (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1975), I, pp. 21-22.

<sup>100</sup> Gregory Doolan, "The Causality of the Divine Ideas in Relation to Natural Agents in Thomas Aquinas," *International Philosophical Quarterly* (2004), pp. 393-409.

<sup>101</sup> *De Potentia Dei*, 3:5; cf. Web: [dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdePotentia.htm](http://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdePotentia.htm)

<sup>102</sup> Bede Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality* (London: Collins, 1989), pp. 248-51.

<sup>103</sup> Huxley, p. 57.

<sup>104</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), p. 57.

<sup>105</sup> CW, I:382.

<sup>106</sup> Radhakrishnan, I, p. 152.

<sup>107</sup> FP, IV, 4:9; G. Stavig, "Origen and Indian Thought," *BRMIC* (March 2003), pp.133-40.

<sup>108</sup> BSB, II.2.2.

<sup>109</sup> Radhakrishnan (1992), II, pp. 289-90.

<sup>110</sup> *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 1947), *Metaphysics* XII.7, p. 286; cf. Web:

[www.mycrandall.ca/courses/grphil/philrel/aristotle.htm](http://www.mycrandall.ca/courses/grphil/philrel/aristotle.htm);

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle/The-unmoved-mover>

<sup>111</sup> CW, I:254; II:183, 77, 146.

- <sup>112</sup> A good portion of this section appeared in an article by G. Stavig in the PB (March 2018), pp. 366-79.
- <sup>113</sup> CW, I:364, 384-85, 388-90.
- <sup>114</sup> CW, II:414-15.
- <sup>115</sup> CW, III:188-89.
- <sup>116</sup> CW, III:425; cf. Web: [sfvedanta.org/why-be-moral](http://sfvedanta.org/why-be-moral)
- <sup>117</sup> Tipple, pp. 621, 520.
- <sup>118</sup> Swami Abhedananda, *Attitude of Vedanta Towards Religion* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1947, 1990), p. 45.
- <sup>119</sup> Swami Akhilananda, *Hindu Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948, 1960), p. 226.
- <sup>120</sup> Up., II, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>121</sup> *Philology and Confrontation*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), pp. 298-305; Bryan Teixeira, "Comments on Ahimsa (Nonviolence)," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 19 (1987), pp. 3-4, 13.
- <sup>122</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. John Allen (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1928), I, 3:7.6, pp. 696-97.
- <sup>123</sup> WWR, I, p. 374.
- <sup>124</sup> WWR, I, p. 373.
- <sup>125</sup> WWR, I, pp. 378-79; cf. p. 354.
- <sup>126</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, tr. E. F. J. Payne (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 210-11.
- <sup>127</sup> Paul Deussen, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (Berlin: Karl Curtius, 1907), pp. 63-64.
- <sup>128</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *A Treasury of Albert Schweitzer*, ed. Thomas Kiernan (New York: Citadel Press, 1966), pp. 74-75, 89.
- <sup>129</sup> Schweitzer (1966), p. 77.
- <sup>130</sup> Schweitzer (1966), pp. 60-61, 213.
- <sup>131</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, tr. C. T. Champion (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 313.
- <sup>132</sup> Schweitzer (1949), p. 79.
- <sup>133</sup> Schweitzer (1966), pp. 92-93. Albert Schweitzer is rated as the third most famous theologian of the 20th century by an Internet source (Web: [www.thefamouspeople.com/20th-century-theologians.php](http://www.thefamouspeople.com/20th-century-theologians.php)).
- <sup>134</sup> Web: <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/p/relevant-quotes.html>
- <sup>135</sup> Roger Haight, S.J., *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 21, 23; Gopal Stavig, "Swami Vivekananda and Liberation Theology," *BRMIC* (Nov-Dec. 2009), p. 514.
- <sup>136</sup> Swami Ranganathananda (1908-2005) who later became a President of the Ramakrishna Order explains the connection between the equality of all people and the Atman, Web: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDEiOAYG-mE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDEiOAYG-mE)
- <sup>137</sup> Web: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics>; *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/util-a-r/Act> and Rule Utilitarianism
- <sup>138</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics); [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_theory)

- <sup>139</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Web: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue>; [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue\\_ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue_ethics); [www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/virtue.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/virtue.shtml)
- <sup>140</sup> CW, V, p. 419; Swami Medhananda, "From Good to God: Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Virtue Ethics," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (2023), pp. 67–96; Web: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11407-022-09330-1>
- <sup>141</sup> CW, I, pp. 66, 364; II, p. 302.
- <sup>142</sup> CW, I, p. 64; Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty).
- <sup>143</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty)
- <sup>144</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta-ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta-ethics)
- <sup>145</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical\\_imperative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical_imperative); [www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/medical\\_ethics\\_text/Chapter\\_2\\_Ethical\\_Traditions/Categorical\\_Imperative.htm](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/medical_ethics_text/Chapter_2_Ethical_Traditions/Categorical_Imperative.htm)
- <sup>146</sup> CW, I:66.
- <sup>147</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 76-77; Van Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Macmillan, 1964, 1979), p. 118.
- <sup>148</sup> Balbir Gauchhwal, "The Metaphysical Foundations of Hindu Religion and Ethics," *Philosophy East and West* 16 (1966), pp. 143-45, 147.
- <sup>149</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiology)
- <sup>150</sup> CW, I:385.
- <sup>151</sup> Web: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-evidence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-evidence)
- <sup>152</sup> B. N. K. Sharma, *Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 201-07.
- <sup>153</sup> Paul Heelas, et al., *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), pp. 81-82; *WARHD*, pp. 573-74.
- <sup>154</sup> Marie Louise Burke, "Swami Vivekananda: Hope of America-II," *Samvit* (April 1982), p. 14.
- <sup>155</sup> J. M. G. Fell, "Some Thoughts on Swami Vivekananda," *BRMIC* (March 1963), pp. 101-02.
- <sup>156</sup> *Fifty Eastern Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 143-44 on GBS.
- <sup>157</sup> Gustav Mensching, "The Importance of Vivekananda in Religion and the Science of Religion," *BRMIC* (March 1963), p. 132.
- <sup>158</sup> Web: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/durkheim>
- <sup>159</sup> CW, II:81-82.
- <sup>160</sup> Web: [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism)
- <sup>161</sup> William Hocking, "Recollections of Swami Vivekananda," *Vedanta and the West* (163), 1962, pp. 58-62; *WARHD*, p. 417.
- <sup>162</sup> Albert C. Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1927, 1969), pp. 53-56, 58, 61; Web: [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism); [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar\\_S.\\_Brightman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_S._Brightman); *WARHD*, pp. 144, 155-56, 423-31, 439, 795.
- <sup>163</sup> Web: [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism)